



# Mrs Bennett's Seasonal Newsletter



Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Dear Parents and Carers,

As our first Half Term draws to a close, it is a really exciting time for me to be sharing my first newsletter with you.

My role of Assistant Headteacher for Academic Inclusion & SENDCo at Colmers is such a rewarding one because I get to work with our most academically vulnerable students and ensure that everything is in place for them to make the most progress possible. Lower ability students may struggle in the classroom because they may find the pace of the lesson too challenging, or they may not be able to access the work set for them because they don't understand the language or the tone of the instructions given to them. This can lead to feelings of frustration, low self-worth and anger. My job is to help these students address these barriers by working with them, alongside their parents and their teachers, to make the curriculum more accessible for them so in turn they can achieve and feel more successful.

Children with SEN respond very well to structure and therefore more than ever the School's approach of 'Every Classroom, Every Day' is vital. We have worked hard this year at making each lesson begin and end in the same way, with the same consistently applied expectations and rules. This creates a feeling of familiarity and safety which then means students are more likely to achieve. You as parents and carers can also help with this consistent approach by making sure your child has all the correct equipment, attends school every day and arrives in plenty of time for a positive and settled start to the School day. These things help all children to succeed, but especially those with SEN.

As you can see, providing this support is very complex and challenging at times, but I am very fortunate in that I work with a great team of expert practitioners who help us to do this. I thought this would be a fantastic opportunity for me to introduce you to the SEND Department – both recognising some of the work that has taken place over our first seven weeks and also help to provide you with some guidance and information should you feel your child needs further support within school. Below, I will introduce you to some of the people who work within the SEND Department, and they also share some advice with you on things that might be concerning you:

## **Mrs Quinney – Lead Practitioner for children with ASC (Autism Spectrum Condition)**

*My role is to support the students who have an autistic spectrum condition to cope in the school setting. This means that a part of my job is to try and resolve the students' anxieties with them so that they can go into their lessons and learn. I also try and create a calm environment so each of the students feel safe and secure in school, such as in the 'Pit Stop' where they can make friends and socialise. I work closely with the parents/carers of the student as well as with outside agencies to ensure that the students have the best support in which to develop.*



### **My child has a meltdown with homework at home. What can I do?**

Create a visual plan with your child at home that clearly shows what is happening when he or she arrives home from school and at weekends. Include timings. Plan time for dinner, x-box, family time, homework, dinnertime etc.

Ensure that your child is fully involved in developing the plan. Being prepared for events and keeping to routines is key to reducing the anxieties. Discuss rewards with your child as a motivator.

### **Mrs Storrie – Lead Practitioner for children with Specific Learning Difficulties**

*'My job is to screen for and support pupils with Dyslexia, low literacy and/or Speech & Language concerns. I also regularly talk to parents/carers, either via phone calls or meetings face to face.*

*I talk to outside agencies if and when needed both for dyslexia and speech and language (as multi agencies are often involved). I also help to put in place any entitlements for pupils with specific needs (communicating these to Teachers and Heads of Year).*



### **My child struggles with their spellings. How can I help them at home?**

To assist your child at home go back to the basics. We use LOOK. SAY. COVER. WRITE. CHECK. By doing this you are strengthening their visual memory of the words. You are also encouraging their auditory processing which allows them to hear the letter sounds of the word. Finally, they are using kinaesthetic practice when writing the words, which also encourages clear cursive handwriting. Repeat this process. With lots of practice your child will start to remember the spelling rules and hopefully they will become more confident.

### **Mrs Quinn – Intervention Lead for pupils with ASC**

*Within school I support pupils who are identified prior to or during their time at Colmers who have a diagnosis of ASC or are considered vulnerable due to ASC traits. They may have low confidence, low self-awareness, or emotional, communication and friendship difficulties.*

*We work in small groups and I use work sheets, social stories, comic strip conversations, role-play and discussion to develop the students' skills. I observe in lessons and request information from staff to identify transference of skills.*



*I also support life skills by encouraging independence within pupils. This includes how to use the microwave, toaster and kettle in preparing meals and refreshments for themselves and a friend. It may also include understanding a washing label, operating a washing machine and tumble drier, use of an iron, clothes repair and changing bedding, and shopping independently in the supermarket.*

**My child isolates themselves and finds communication difficult. What can I do?**

Support your child in understanding how to start and end a conversation appropriately and consider what changes need to be considered according to the age of the person. Support your child in their understanding of good turn taking and asking a relevant question.

Encourage them to time interacting with siblings and relatives, limiting isolating activities such as the use of their phone.

**Mrs Richardson – PA to the SEND Department and responsibility for Children in Care**

I am the Personal Assistant to Mrs Bennett and work alongside her within the SEN Department, providing support with the administrative aspect of the SEN Department.

I also have responsibility over Children in Care, and work closely with Carers, Social Workers and other Outside Agencies. I attend regular meetings with carers and social workers to discuss the progress of children in care, and any concerns that the children or their carers may have. It is important that the child's views are taken into consideration when discussing their education and welfare.



**What should I do if I am a carer and I have a concern?**

Firstly, by all means contact me, and I will be happy to discuss any issues or concerns with you. If necessary we can arrange a meeting to discuss your concern, inviting along your Social Worker if necessary.

Finally, one of our students with additional needs has written the closing part of my newsletter:

A school day can prove challenging for a SEN Child like me. Small things such as socialising or being in a classroom environment can be difficult and lead to us feeling anxious. At Colmers we have a fantastic team of staff who work closely with children with additional needs (for example, Cerebral Palsy or Autism). These members of staff are accessible to us whenever it is necessary to help us enjoy school and to get the best out of our education. Make sure you speak to them if you need any advice as they are really helpful. **Aaron Carmichael (Year 10)**

As Aaron says, if you would like to talk to me about any concerns, please do get in touch at any time.

Have a wonderful weekend and a very happy Half Term holiday.



Mrs R. Bennett

Assistant Headteacher and SENDCo

