

Tuesday 27th June 2023

Golden Time

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to you following a couple of enquires we have had regarding the recent removal of Golden Time from the school timetable. To avoid any misconceptions, I think it is important that you understand why we took that step and how this is part of a wider plan to raise standards at Whitby Heath and provide your children with the best possible start in life.

Firstly, Golden Time was used as a sanction time for those children who had received a red card during the week. Those children would be made to miss Golden Time on a Friday afternoon, and instead spend the time thinking about their actions with a senior leader. In effect, a child who did something wrong on a Monday, would still be being punished on a Friday afternoon – this is not an approach I believe we should maintain as a school. Behavioural research has demonstrated that children are more likely to learn from their mistakes if they receive consequences for their actions in a much swifter timeframe. This will be reflected within the new behaviour policy that will be introduced in September.

Furthermore, Golden Time was not a 'creative time', or a time used in any other helpful or productive way across school. In fact, it was simply unstructured time whereby children would be looking for something to do, or just spending additional free time with friends, much the same as a 'wet play' session we have at break times when it rains - but extended to 30-60 minutes. Such unstructured time brings with it additional problems, as staff are simply child minding or managing crowd control whilst trying to prevent low level behaviour problems.

Finally, all primary schools find it almost impossible to fit the demands of the National Curriculum into the weekly timetable; before we even consider the additional support many children need. Our school would be heavily criticised for allowing further lost learning by maintaining Golden Time. Our timetable is being redesigned to prevent this lost learning time and to provide children with an exceptionally strong educational offer, whilst also ensuring children's health and well-being is prioritised.

I also want to reassure you that there are many opportunities in school where children's efforts and achievements are celebrated and rewarded, including class reward systems, house points, celebration assemblies, the school newsletter, extended breaks, etc. We look to take every opportunity to show our children how special they are and how they are valued for their efforts as well as their achievements.

Finally, I would like to explain to you what we have replaced Golden Time with, and why this new approach is so important. Educational research and cognitive science have demonstrated that children learn more and remember more through a process called '**Spaced Retrieval**'. This means that children are asked to recall something new that they

have learned after repeated 'spaced intervals' (days and then weeks later). This helps move new learning from the working memory to the long-term memory. Our method of doing this has been well established over the last few weeks right across school. The SODA (Start Of Day Activity) for every class from Y1-6 each morning is to do an activity based on previous learning during the week, with each day having a different subject focus. This builds up to the **Quiz of the Week** on a Friday afternoon; an activity which is designed to be lots of fun, much like a game show and with many of the staff taking the opportunity to dress up like game show hosts! Evidence shows that this 'spaced retrieval' approach works best with children when it is low stakes and fun. Therefore, the focus from staff has been fun, fun, fun and there has been a real buzz about this around school. The impact we have seen in just a few short weeks has been amazing and we have so many examples of children retaining new knowledge and becoming better learners. We will soon be moving on to the next step of the 'spaced retrieval' process with a Monthly Monster Quiz – we are very excited to see how much the children have remembered!

I hope this letter has answered any questions you may have had around this timetable change. In the months and years ahead, I am sure you will see further changes in school as we strive to raise standards and give our children the best possible start in life. Please know that all changes will always be considered carefully by the team and will be based on evidence and research. Keeping Whitby Heath children safe and helping them thrive in all aspects of life will always be our top priorities.

Thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards



Mr S. Wright
Headteacher

