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Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back to school! We have enjoyed the first full week at school settling into our new classes and routines. It has been so lovely to welcome the children back into school - they have been eager to tell us all about their summer trips and look very smart in their school uniforms too. Thank you to all families for your efforts in making sure your children wear the correct uniform.

A warm welcome to all our new families joining us this year, especially our new Nursery and Reception children, as well as those who have joined us across other year groups. We are delighted that you have joined us at Rockmount and look forward to supporting your child's learning and development.

We believe that a successful partnership between school, parents/carers and pupils supports everyone to take full advantage of all opportunities and we look forward to working together with you over the year ahead to achieve the highest possible levels of success for all pupils. Our Rockmount School Values are revisited throughout the school year. Each of these values has been identified as key to the children developing emotional intelligence and being successful learners. They also underpin our school ethos and support a collaborative home-school approach centred on our overarching value- Respect.



Many of you have already attended the class or year group Curriculum Meetings this week with others planned for the week ahead. Staff enjoy meeting you at these meetings and they provide a valuable opportunity to meet your child's teacher, learn about the exciting opportunities planned, understand our school expectations and ask any questions you may have. Our year group Curriculum Letters for the first half of the Autumn term have been emailed out this week and should provide you with additional information. The school calendar on the website will be added to as we move forward so you will be able to check any dates for events as well as the website year group pages which will be kept up to date so that you can share in the year group learning journey. If you have any queries, please use the year group contact email which is on your child's class curriculum letter.

A little reminder that we ask for the playground to be cleared promptly at the end of the school day. This is to ensure that our clubs can safely use the grounds and that only authorised individuals remain on site. We also request that football/ball games **do not** take place in the playground at the start or end of the day - due to the high number of children and adults moving around at these

times, it becomes unsafe to have a ball in play. Please also remember to walk your bikes and scooters when on the school site to ensure safety.

Last year we received unwavering support from all the families in Years 5 and 6, who respected and embraced our decision to become a smartphone-free school. From September 2024, Rockmount became a smartphone-free school. This means that children in Years 5 and 6, who are permitted to bring phones to school, are no longer allowed to bring in smartphones. They may only bring a basic 'brick' phone solely for safety purposes, such as calling or texting you when travelling to and from school. This is part of a broader national trend aimed at addressing the impact of smartphones on children's mental health. While technology offers numerous benefits and opportunities, recent research has highlighted a concerning link between the age at which a child gets their first smartphone and mental health issues in young adulthood. We encourage parents who feel the need for their child to have a phone for safety reasons to consider pay-as-you-go basic phones without internet access. These phones are both affordable and readily available. Please note, pupils will still be required to hand in their phones at the beginning of each school day. Here is a link for brick phone alternatives- <https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/alternatives>

We have enjoyed a fantastic two-week thematic start to the year, with the whole school focusing on oracy in maths through the engaging texts *How Many Jelly Beans?* and *Ralf Moves In*. It has been wonderful to see pupils building their confidence, reasoning skills and mathematical language in such a creative and collaborative way. The thematic approach has also given children opportunities to work together, share ideas and enjoy learning in a way that feels purposeful and fun. Staff have been impressed with the enthusiasm shown across all year groups and we are excited to see how these strong foundations in oracy will continue to support progress throughout the year.

Have a lovely weekend,

Helen Carvall