Dear Parents and Carers,

Following our first Parent Forum meeting this half term, I have compiled some key information in this booklet, to ensure that parents are kept updated about various school initiatives at Dormansland. In addition, since our meeting, there have been a couple of further updates that I would like to bring to your attention, which appear at the end of this booklet. I hope you find it useful.

Sarah Stokes, December 2015

1. It’s Good to be Green!

We sent home a leaflet at the beginning of September, outlining our new approach to behaviour in school this year. Children have the task of staying on green by making the right choices about their behaviour in class. The charts used in each class look like this (although Ruby and Opal Classes have their own versions, with a similar principle):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gold: Great choice</th>
<th>Silver: Good choice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green: You’re ready to learn</td>
<td>Yellow: Think about your choice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blue: Turn that choice around</td>
<td>Red: Work in isolation</td>
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By being on Green, Silver or Gold at the end of each day, the children can earn:

- Green: 1 house point
- Silver: 2 house points
- Gold: 3 house points

If they stay on green or above all week, they earn a session of ‘Green Time’, usually on a Friday afternoon. Stay on green or above for four weeks, and they automatically qualify for the school’s ‘Green Treat.’ So far, these treats have included:

- working with a professional mosaic artist to help design our school values mosaic installation;
- listening to a professional story teller weave his magical tales;
- watching a DVD with popcorn;
- seeing a magician’s show (coming up this week).

If any parent or carer thinks that they may be able to help support us with our promotion of positive attitudes to learning by offering to run a ‘Green Treat’ session for us, we would love to hear from you! It can be absolutely anything at all, inside or outside, that you think the children would enjoy. Please contact Mr Pritchard, our Behaviour for Learning Lead, at mpritchard@dormansland.surrey.sch.uk.
2. Our Golden Thread

Following a discussion with the children in Years 1 to 6, we have decided that our standards of behaviour in school are now so high, that we no longer need to be reminded of our five ‘Golden Rules.’ Staff and governors have confidence in the children’s abilities to take full responsibility for their own behaviours.

With this in mind, we have replaced the rules with a single ‘Golden Thread’ that permeates the whole school ….

Younger children will still explore what ‘good’ choices look and feel like, and we would encourage you to use the language of choice at home too.

3. School Dinners

Having had a few teething problems (sorry, forgive me, I couldn’t resist …) with the launch of our new approach to school dinners, we are now working towards introducing our new restaurant-inspired dining experience in the new year.

The children have been phenomenal in their embracing of this new initiative. With very little input from me, they have advertised, interviewed and appointed a team of staff as the school’s ‘Food Hero’ team, designed their own restaurant uniform, launched a competition to name the restaurant, hereafter to be referred to as ‘The Cherry Blossom Café’ and harangued me incessantly (and rightly so!) for some proper catering training from a local hotel. In the meantime, we have ordered a new suite of dining furniture, crockery with a mathematical flavour, table activities and bread baskets, and the Food Hero team are now busily preparing a range of exciting activities for the children to undertake while they wait to be served in the Cherry Blossom Café.

Those of you who came along to our Pasta King food tasting afternoon will probably agree with me that the quality of the food on offer left rather a lot to be desired. We have, therefore, decided not to use this company and are currently exploring other possibilities, still in consultation with our food adviser, Mr Paul Aagaard, from ‘Recipe for Change’. Mr Aagaard will be back in school with us on Wednesday 6th January to launch the new approach to lunchtime sittings, based on the children’s own choices about who they would like to sit with. He will also be talking to our Governors about alternative ways in which we might approach our school meal provision at Dormansland.

Despite my own frustrations that this remains an unresolved issue, I will not compromise on the quality of food and nutrition that we are able to provide here for your children. As Dr Alex Richardson, the UK’s lead consultant on the links between food and behaviour, points out;
‘The brain, like the body, needs the right nutrients to function properly …. [and] the diet we provide is key to making the most of every child’s potential, both mentally and physically.’ (2006).

We see the effects every day on the children’s levels of concentration when they have had a sensible lunchtime meal, and I want to do all I can to extend and enrich the children’s lunchtime experience, as well as their understanding of how food makes a difference to them as learners.

Finally, I have been working on a new school food plan with the Governors, which I intend to take to the next Parent Forum meeting in January, before putting it out to all parents for consultation.

4. ‘Seven Summits’ Reading Scheme

The key to this new initiative is reading with an adult regularly at home. You have all received a booklet this term, entitled Top Ten Tips for Supporting Your Child’s Reading at Home. If you haven’t had a chance to read it, please take a few moments to give it a look, as we have put together all kinds of activities that promote a healthy approach to reading behaviours outside of school.

There is also a pull out section in the centre of the booklet, designed to support you when reading with your child each night, in terms of questions and discussion starters for you to increase their comprehension and interpretation of what they read. We are particularly aware that, as children become more proficient in their independent reading abilities, it can be hard to know quite how to help them. However, every child in primary school should still be reading aloud to an adult at least four times a week, and discussing the books that they read. This is essential, especially as the language and complexity of the texts they choose become increasingly more subtle.

We have also provided a range of reading lists for different age groups, although this is by no means exhaustive. You know your child best and will be able to use these lists as a guide to what is available.

All of these materials are available on the school website (‘Parents’ menu) or from the school office in hard copy.

Watch out for a new set of ‘summits’ to be reached in the Spring term, designed specifically to tie in with our involvement with the latest International Space Station project.
5. Home Learning

At Dormansland, we continue to promote a positive approach to home learning, as a way of consolidating key concepts covered in school, extending children’s understanding of these ideas and enabling them to explore things that fascinate them or interest them outside of school.

As they move on to secondary school, the amount of home learning will increase, so we see it as our duty to foster positive home learning habits during their time with us here.

All children are expected to complete some form of home learning task on a regular basis. The length this work should take is determined by their age and is usually designed as something that can be completed with just a little input from adults at home. We encourage the children to make choices about the home learning task they do, and offer a selection of tasks each week. These are posted on the class webpage and we encourage you to discuss your child’s options with him/her and decide together which task would be the most appropriate. Don’t forget, we want the children to challenge themselves as learners, but also to feel successful, so please work with them to make sensible, achievable choices.

If your child is struggling to complete a task, please don’t let this deteriorate into a battle that causes you both unnecessary anxiety. Just make a note for the teacher on the home learning sheet or in your child’s diary, to say how long you have spent on the task and your teacher can then follow this up in a positive way in class with your child in school.

We do not believe in punitive sanctions with regards to home learning at Dormansland, and your child will not be made to feel bad about not having completed a task. Instead, the option of completing it in school will be offered, and a discussion about how we might be able to improve home learning will take place with your child.

In addition, every child is expected to read to an adult each night and will receive regular spelling check lists and times tables tasks to practise at home.

You can find out more about our approach to home learning at Dormansland in our policy, which can be found on the ‘About Us’ menu on the school website.

6. Mathletics and other Online Resources

Please don’t forget that we subscribe to two wonderful online educational resources at Dormansland, which parents have access to from home too. Every child has been issued with a ‘credit card’ sticker that should sit somewhere in his/her home-school contact book. This details the passwords needed to log on to Mathletics and Espresso from home. Although this book should be travelling from home to school and back again every day, we
recommend that you make a note of these log in details to keep at home, just in case the diary is ever left in school overnight.

Children can access all kinds of fun educational learning activities through these sites, which have been carefully chosen by staff to support the children’s learning in school. Sometimes, class teachers will set specific tasks for the children to complete, while at other times they will be encouraged to explore the site and complete activities that are of particular interest to them.

If you are unaware of these resources or have never seen your child’s log in details, please drop your class teacher an email via the class page on the school website and these can be sent out to you again, or another card re-issued for your child’s home-school diary.

7. Prevent Strategy

- **What is the Prevent Strategy?**

  Prevent is a government strategy designed to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorist or extremist causes.

  The Prevent strategy covers all types of terrorism and extremism, including extreme right wing, violent Islamist groups and other causes.

- **How does the Prevent strategy apply to schools?**

  Since July 2015, all schools have had a statutory duty to safeguard children from radicalisation and extremism. This means that we have a responsibility to protect children from extremist and violent views in the same way that we protect them from other dangers, such as drugs misuse or playing near roads.

  Most importantly, at Dormansland, we provide a safe place for children to discuss these issues so that they better understand how to protect themselves.

- **What does this mean in practice?**

  Many of the things that we already do in school, that help our children to become positive, happy members of society with a strong sense of identity and belonging, also contribute to the Prevent strategy. These include:

  - exploring other cultures and religions and promoting diversity;
  - challenging prejudiced viewpoints and racist comments;
  - developing critical thinking skills and a strong, positive self-identity;
  - promoting British values, such as democrat, the rule of law and tolerance of individual faiths and beliefs;
  - promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all our children.
We also protect children from the risk of radicalisation, for example, by using stringent filters on the internet to limit their access to unsuitable websites and by vetting all new staff and visitors who come into our school.

- **How does Prevent relate to British Values?**

Schools have been required to promote British values since 2014, and this will continue to be part of our response to the Prevent strategy at Dormansland.

You can read more about our work with British Values on the school website.

- **Isn’t my child too young to learn about extremism?**

The Prevent strategy is not just about discussing extremism itself, which would not be appropriate for younger children. It is also about teaching children values, such as tolerance and mutual respect. Children’s positive self-identity and self-esteem are of paramount importance to us when they begin school and we focus heavily on this throughout their educational journey with us over the following years.

We always make sure that any discussions are suitable for the age and maturity of the children involved.

- **Is extremism really a risk in our area?**

Extremism can take many forms, some of which may be a bigger threat in our area than others.

Our focus is on providing the children with the skills to protect themselves from any extremist views they may encounter, now or later in their lives.

Our staff and Governors take Prevent extremely seriously, as part of our duty of care to safeguard every child at Dormansland. We receive regular training, review our policies and procedures frequently and keep ourselves updated with the latest research and governmental guidance documents, as part of this duty.
8. Cyber Safety

I am pleased to confirm that we will be running a cyber safety workshop for parents early in the Spring term. This will be run by an independent consultant and will cover such topics as:

- keeping safe on social networks
- additional risks associated with mobile phones and instant messaging
- child sexual exploitation/grooming
- how to report any online harassment
- cyber bullying
- online gaming
- inappropriate websites
- parental controls

Once I have the date confirmed for this session, I will send out a formal letter, inviting you to attend, but please keep an eye on the calendar on our website for further updates in the meantime.

**Whether your child is currently in Reception, Year 6 or any other year group in between, I urge you to attend this presentation if you possibly can.**

We must work together effectively to keep your children safe online.

ParentView: [https://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk/](https://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk/)