



NEWSLETTER for Blackwell First School

...developing the whole child...

January 2020

Dear Families,

January theatre trip and new Nursery photos...

Other photos available on parentapp

Where did the last two weeks go? The children are thoroughly enjoying their 'Off to Scotland' topic and from learning about Bears in Nursery, 'Katie Morag and the Isle of Struay' in Red, Green and Purple Classes to the tale of 'Peter Pan' in the older classes, the children have certainly been inspired by the work of these famous authors.

It is so important that the children read both their phonic linked reading books (Red and Green classes) to 'real' books designed to develop vocabulary and comprehension skills later in school. Reading stories at bedtime (or any other time) at home is also so important and helps the children's language development. Did you know that children need to learn 8 new words each day to develop an age appropriate vocabulary by the age of 11? 5 of these are learned in school and usually around 3 at home and reading books is a good way in. If you are stuck for ideas about which books to share at home, then look at the children's Home Reading cards or look at links on 'Carnegie Greenaway' awards for ideas. It is crucial that the children's language is developed by them being exposed to texts that are above their reading age.

The challenges of the National Curriculum are present in each year group and we work hard to continue to make learning meaningful for the children through the use of topics and exciting projects to end topic work. We are really looking forward to Green and Blue Classes family assemblies later this half term. These are ways for the children to demonstrate their learning to you all.

We work in school to develop the children's academic skills, but also value the life skills that we help to develop alongside you as parents. Developing these skills as part of the school teaching day and afternoon clubs is an important part of the children's experience and these photographs exemplify some of the activities that the children are involved in in school. Some of the main skills we try to develop in the children are our key competencies: co-operation; communication; independence; resilience and problem solving.

These competencies support our work to develop the core values linked to our vision. These are:

- Respectful and responsible citizens;
- Competent and confident learners and
- Aspirational individuals.

Help us to help them by ensuring they take responsibility for themselves by carrying book bags themselves, remembering to hand in notes and also encouraging and praising them for hard work. Try to encourage concentration in the children rather than a flitting between activities. The more support you can give by talking to the children about their learning, sharing books, practising mental maths and focussing on practising skills shared on class newsletters will only benefit them as they move through the school. Working together will help the children achieve these skills sooner.

Thank you as always for your support.

Best wishes, Mrs Moss



Other photos available on parentapp



Just before we went in, Miss Townsend took a photo of us outside. It was chilly! Resilience!



We love being outdoors in our Forest School, on the swing, pattern making, playing in the sand and mud or any other adventures we choose...

Local Authority and Partnership Annual Review

As a school designated as 'Outstanding' in 2011, we do not currently receive inspections from Ofsted. Therefore, we commission external reviews annually. Last Tuesday was our annual review, carried out by our external partners in Bromsgrove Learning Network and an inspector from Worcestershire County Council.

The main areas investigated during the visit were:

- progress in developing children's language skills
- progress in developing excellence in reading provision

The team found evidence that we are progressing well with these areas of focus and also praised the following:

- highly consistent approaches to provision
- highly consistent approaches to behaviour management
- staff who consistently follow the vision of the school
- strong middle leadership from EYs leaders

The parent questionnaire will be sent home shortly. Feedback on that will be provided in a future newsletter and we will highlight an area for development as a result of your feedback and make any changes as needed.



SCHOOL SPORT/ HEALTH AND THE ARTS

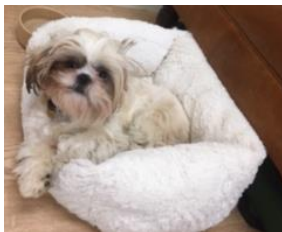
Sport- Sporting fixtures have been set through the 'All Active Academy' in Bromsgrove and last week's Collective Worship' focused on courage through sport, highlighting winter sports such as ski jumping as well as a visit from Eden Francis, a real life athlete. We are delighted to have been awarded the Platinum Sports Mark for our contribution to school sport.

Arts – We are very pleased that some of our piano and violin pupils have recently been presented with their music medals (a stage towards their graded exams) and even a grade 1 flute! Well done.

Hetty

Hetty, our school dog, has now started attending school full time and for the first two weeks has been getting used to the school and its new environment. She has passed her 'tests' and will spend a few hours 'resting' each day and will have regular contact with all children who wish to at playtimes and lunchtimes and we will encourage supported contact with those who are a little reluctant. Hetty will also visit Nursery with Mrs Allen following her daily walk.

Hetty is at school to help teach children non-violence, empathy, respect, kindness, love, responsibility, friendship and trust. We are very lucky that the PFTA is funding Hetty and Claire Richards has worked hard to train her and care for her at home.



Hetty enjoys much of the day sleeping and watching the world go by. What a life!

Hot lunches

Mrs Barker's fabulous homemade lunches are enjoyed by 75% of the school. Everything is made fresh each day and is a healthy, hot meal for the children at lunch time.

Please encourage those eating sandwiches to choose hot meals on some days (or all) as it is such a good meal and a far healthier option than much of what is in lunchboxes.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP Our themes for the next few weeks are, **Honesty, Sustainability, Tolerance and Wonderful World**. We will think about Tolerance in the context of sharing and playing out on the playground and also in the wider world context of tolerating other

HELPING AT HOME

As teachers, we know that we are only part of the children's success with learning and that children have a far greater chance of success in education if they are supported at home. We are very fortunate to have a school where children are very often well supported. Below is a list of ways you can support your child at home:

- Give your child time and talk to them (expecting eye contact) and a discussion where the children speak to you in sentences;
- Ask your child, "What did you learn today?" rather than "What did you do today?" and they **may** tell you more than the standard, "Nothing!"
- Give them time off so that they don't feel they are constantly 'working';
- Use the homework sheet as a guide to what the children are learning and this will enable you to talk more about school (even if they don't complete the homework activities);
- Read with the children at least four times a week, asking them to talk about what they are reading and not just read the words;
- Read them bedtime stories as this helps to develop language and vocabulary (suggestions are on the Home Reading Cards);
- Practise mental maths as outlined on the homework sheets as these skills form the basis of the children's ability to calculate in maths and
- **Children in Y2-4 need help to learn their times tables by heart out of order- please help them.**

Finally, the children are children. They need time to rest and sleep, please make sure they have plenty of sleep and time away from electronic games/ toys, particularly before bedtime. (Current advice is no blue light for at least an hour before bedtime).

Professional development

Our staff have the most up to date professional development, in line with research and during the autumn term, some highlights have been:

- Phonics – for all staff to ensure consistency of provision;
- Elklan language training – for key staff to share good practice as part of a training day in January;
- Art training – for most staff to share good practice as part of a second training day in January and
- Reading – supporting all staff in developing strong provision.

This ensures that the children have the best possible teaching.

20.1.20 Hearing tests- Red Class TBC

21.1.20 First 'Forest Friends' 0-3 session- please sign up

21.1.20 Assembly for the children (child friendly) and drop in for families between 9-10am (in hall) from Dementia charity for families who may wish to find out about support

30.1.20 Blue Class Family assembly- 8.45am

31.1.20 Green Class Family assembly- 8.45am

31.1.20 Grand concert and show (child only event)

17-21.2.20 Half term

4.3.20 Phonics day with external trainer delivering to the children

4.3.20 High 5 competition- Year 4s

4/5.4.20 Parent Consultation meetings and written reports

25.3.20 Dance Festival- Y2s

3.4.20 Easter Coffee Morning and Nursery Coffee Afternoon 'Sing Song' / Term ends

6-9.4.20 Holiday Club

6-17.4.20 Easter holiday

20.4.20 School opens for Summer term

