



Panto day was a Christmas treat!

Christmas 2019- we thought you may enjoy some photos...

Further photos are available on the parentapp version of the Newsletter.

NEWSLETTER for Blackwell First School

...developing the whole child...

January 2020

Dear Families,

Happy New Year everyone. It is 2020! Remembering 2000 and the 'millennium bug' as only yesterday is no doubt a sign of age. Luckily, the only bugs we had around before Christmas have hopefully disappeared following the break. Fingers crossed. The end of term was a highlight of the autumn term, with super productions of 'Little Fir Tree' and 'Nativity'. They performed so well. Thank you on behalf of the staff and myself for attending the productions, piano and violin concerts and for kind Christmas gifts, cards and words we received.

We start this Spring term with an exciting 'Off to Scotland' topic, and work on 'Bears' in Nursery. Red, Green and Purple Classes will base some learning on the Katie Morag series of books and Yellow and Blue on 'Peter Pan'. The imaginary island of Never Never Land is based on a small Scottish island in the Inner Hebrides and Katie Morag's island of Struay is also based on the Isle of Coll so there will be new learning based on comparisons between Worcestershire and the west coast of Scotland. The whole school theatre trip will support their work on storytelling. Green and Blue Classes look forward to sharing learning in a Family Assembly in a few weeks. The whole school project at the end of this topic is a 'Grand Concert and Show Day' where classes will share and enjoy a day together.

We said goodbye to Miss Turner and wish her well in her new home and know a new school will be lucky to gain her expertise shortly. We welcome lots of little Blackwell Nursery children this Spring and look forward to meeting them and their families.

The Spring term is an important term for your child. The children have settled in their classes and it is a time to focus on moving on the learning, dealing with any parts of the curriculum that the children find challenging and further developing new learning. Expectations of skills, in order to reach national expectations, have been outlined in our own Blackwell curriculum and we support the children in developing as many life long learning skills as possible without 'teaching to the test'. We do need your help though. In this age of technology, children are spending increased amounts of time in front of screens and are not reading as they previously did. Please ensure they read to you regularly (at least 4 times per week) and that you read to them to help develop their vocabulary, their use of standard English and their enjoyment of reading. Suggestions for age relevant bedtime story books are on their Home Reading cards. A new national times tables test will be introduced for our current Year 4s and the children will need to know all their times tables up to 12x12 by heart. They will only have 6 seconds per question and there are 25 questions, 20 of which will be the 6,7,8,9,12 times tables. This 6 seconds includes navigating the online response, so their recall needs to be instant. Please help them learn these at home. It is crucial for the children to learn these number facts in order to calculate mentally in Key Stage 2. This will help their transition to Middle School.

The key to successful learning is the quality of teaching. Here at Blackwell, we are fortunate to have very strong teachers and teaching assistants. This year, training for staff has included: work on developing children's communication and language skills, including developing vocabulary; phonics for Early Years; problem solving in maths using a method called bar modelling and reading comprehension by supporting verbal reasoning. For all children, though, despite strong teaching, there will be times when 'they just don't get it' and this is when we introduce an individual or a group of children to intervention support. This means that the child/ children will take part in additional support on specific areas of the curriculum for a short amount of time to enable them to make more rapid progress. If your child comments that they are receiving small group or one to one support then they are likely to be taking part in intervention. This aims to ensure that no child is 'left behind' and has the chance to reach national expectation.

As well as Parent Consultation meetings this term, you will receive a written report on their progress and information about how to help them with their learning on class newsletters. Thank you. Best wishes, Mrs A Moss.



It's panto day!
'Oh no it isn't!'
'Oh yes it is!'



PARENT QUESTIONNAIRES

As part of working in partnership with our families, we send out a questionnaire each year for parents to complete. These help us to develop our practice and are useful evaluation tools. The questionnaire that we send out is identical to the OFSTED (School Inspection Team) questionnaires. This means that we are able to evaluate our practice from your feedback in advance of an inspection and address any issues. (For example previous feedback on pre school provision, homework, home reading, after school provision and sport led to us developing our own After School Club, increasing the sport on offer and changing homework and reading provision). Blackwell First School was last inspected in January 2011 and although OfSTED currently no longer inspects schools that were previously judged outstanding unless there is a change in performance data or any safeguarding concerns, we expect that this practice will change and we continue to work hard to ensure that we do our best for all the children in terms of academic progress, behaviour, safety, life skills and working in collaboration. From September 2019, there were significant changes to the Ofsted Inspection process (including the questionnaire) making it, as ever, increasingly challenging to be graded as good or outstanding. We will, as always, strive to do our best for the children and are not driven by the inspection process. This will ultimately be best for the children, the school and hopefully an inspection outcome! Your feedback is useful to help us prioritise our work. Please complete the Feedback Questionnaire which will be sent home in the middle of January by FRIDAY 7th FEBRUARY. Thank you.



SCHOOL SPORT/ HEALTH AND THE ARTS

Mrs Webb continues to plan fixtures for the children this term. A High 5 and Dance Festival feature this term.

We will be delighted to welcome back Mark Riley, artist in residence, next term. He will work with Year 4s on an arts project based around 'Picture Perfect' work focussing on the art of the Pre Raphaelites in preparation for an art display as part of Worcester Cathedral's 'Voices and Visions' in May/June 2020. The PFTA is funding this project alongside Meadow Arts.

PSHE Policy (including SRE- Sex and relationship education)

In September 2020, all schools nationally will implement a new PSHE (Personal, Social, Health Education) curriculum. This includes many aspects of children's development from road safety to basic financial understanding and relationships to hygiene and puberty (Year 4). As part of this work, we will update our existing PSHE policy and Behaviour Policy as well as our SRE policy in line with new requirements.

Our current SRE policy will not change but we are obliged to consult with you regarding this policy and will therefore send out a copy of the updated policy on parentapp and for those not accessing parentapp, please request a policy from the School Office or via email office@blackwell.worcs.sch.uk

Our current policy outlines the specific aspects taught in school which relate to relationships and bullying as well as teaching children about puberty in Year 4.

I will be available during both parent consultation meeting evenings on 4 and 5. 3.20 for anyone wishing to speak with me regarding this policy. If you wish to book a specific appointment with me, please book through the school office.

Parent app – A few parents have commented that the app is hard to read newsletters on and so this letter has ensured that text boxes are not spread across the width of the page but in sections. I hope this makes it easier to navigate!

School Council charity work – As well as supporting Comic Relief, Children in Need and iplan international that supports Srikan't's education in India, we will ask the School Council to consider charitable causes that they would like to support in 2020.

At **Blackwell First School** we aim to educate the whole child and to ensure children are happy, healthy and fulfil their potential in terms of development of skills for life, social and moral values and academic success.

We work towards the aims on our vision statement in all we do. Progress towards our School Development Plan during the autumn term is outlined below:

Quality of Education

Last term, significant progress was made towards the teaching of reading and the development of communication as well as problem solving in Maths. Staff, alongside other Bromsgrove schools received training from Anthony Reddy, a national maths consultant. The training days in January for teachers explored the development of language (including vocabulary) and communication and the use of art to inspire learning. Outcomes for pupils - Monitoring of the children's progress last term showed that the vast majority of children are well on their way to achieving their challenging targets for this year. Children who have made less progress than expected are being supported additionally through small group or individualised programmes, monitored closely by Miss Townsend.

Personal development and behaviour and attitudes

A focus on safeguarding alongside trauma, well being and mental health first aid training with staff and governors during the last term has ensured that we have the latest training to support the children.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

This section of school self evaluation focusses on leadership, including governance and this year the focus is on developing the skills of subject leaders. As a staff team we have monitored all subjects and spent time creating effective self evaluation of all subject areas. The senior leaders at school are working on finalising the Curriculum Strategy for all areas of the school curriculum.

Work will continue towards this year's school development plan targets and we will update you on progress.

State of the Nation 2019- children and young people's wellbeing

Last year, the government's report on children and young people's well being was published. The main findings are summarised below:

- The majority of children and young people report being relatively happy with their lives, but many are not.
- Wellbeing declines as children and young people get older. This highlights the need to equip children and young people with the skills to support their wellbeing as they move into the world.
- There were few consistent differences in wellbeing by gender in children, but young females were more likely to report recently feeling anxious than males.
- There were no discernible differences in children's wellbeing based on their ethnicity.
- There is some evidence that for children in receipt of Free School Meals, their wellbeing is lower than their non FSM peers.

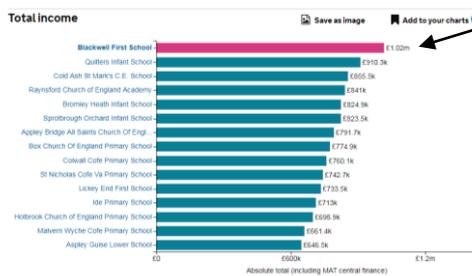
Whilst this makes for concerning reading, as schools and families, we can make a difference. Mrs Webb and I have trained as Mental Health First Aiders and Mrs Webb has also trained in Mental Well being as part of her role leading PSHE. Several staff will receive training in dealing with the impact of trauma on children and will be better equipped to support children facing such challenges. As we gain in skills, we will share them with you so that, as families, you are able to support your children as they develop.

Health and Safety audit- five yearly inspection

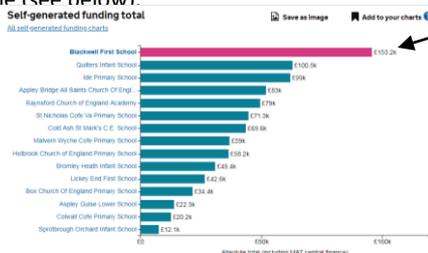
Worcestershire County Council carried out its five yearly audit in December. The leadership team, including Mr Checkley (governor) alongside Mrs Wilson as Site Manager were pleased with a very successful outcome with very few recommendations

PFTA support

Congratulations to the PFTA and thank you to you all for raising £2,700 at the Christmas Fair and for continuing to support the work of the school through fundraising. Thank you to Mrs Evans, Mrs Richards, Mrs Ehlertsen, Mrs Jenner and the whole PFTA team. The funding raised this year will support the purchase of new laptops, chime sets, a visit by a world champion athlete and a significant contribution to the theatre trip this week. We have also had a large donation from an anonymous donor and will be considering how best to spend this to support the children and bring a lasting benefit to the children. Thank you to our donor. You may have read or heard reports of a national school funding challenge and here at Blackwell national funding mirrors the national picture and I would like to explain why our PFTA and in school fundraising is as crucial as it is. The Department for Education (DfE) provides us with financial benchmarking information, comparing us with schools of a similar size and deprivation. Below are some tables that highlight both our income and expenditure for last year compared with similar sized schools.



This total income includes all funding from DfE (Department of Education) and funding for the Nursery, applied for grants and Universal School Meals (Red, Green and Purple Classes). It also includes all self generated income, including the PFTA income, Before and After School income and the Blackwell Kitchen. Our income is higher than other schools due to this self generated income (see below).



It is clear to see how without the self generated income, our total expenditure on the children would be in line with average and the school would not be as successful academically or socially and the opportunities and experiences would not be as rich. There is even the possibility that without self generated income, a change in offer from the school would be the only viable future for it. It is, therefore, with huge thanks to the PFTA and the hard work of the school in running the Club, Kitchen and Nursery in order to generate income for the school that enables us to continue to offer the quality provision that we do. Finally, thank you to you all for paying for and eating refreshments at events, popping coins into collection pots at Christmas and supporting the PFTA. It is for the benefit of the school and the children.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

We start the New Year with the following themes for discussion: New Year (focusing on making positive changes and reflecting on the old and moving on); Courage (personal courage and making the right moral choices as well as safety and safety) and Honesty. The children will consider these themes using art.

We will also consider sporting events for 2020, such as the Summer Olympics Tokyo 2020, Cricket T20 World Cup and the Football European Championships as well as Arts events, including our local Worcester based 'Voices and Visions'.

I wonder what New Year resolutions you have made? Are your children's resolutions linked to citizenship and consideration of others as discussed in Collective Worship? We are trying to encourage the children to think of others, rather than themselves with their resolutions. Our aim through Collective Worship is to support a sense of community within the school and develop this as a positive experience for the children to foster community responsibility in their adult lives.

Later this half term, the children will learn about unity, discovering that there are more things that unite countries than divide them and how this links to other children in school. We will discuss the questions raised by children through the divisive issue of Brexit and consider our relationship with Europe and the wider world. As part of this theme, we will work on British values and the universal values outlined by the United Nations and the way in which they impact on everyone in the UK. As world events unfold, we tackle them through our discussions so that the children have an informed understanding, at their level, of issues that they are increasingly exposed to through television and media but without the background understanding.

HEALTHY SNACKS AND LUNCH BOXES

Now that the festive season has passed, we wish to remind families that as a healthy school we encourage children to bring in healthy snacks (such as fruit, tuck shop items, cheese, dried fruit etc) and lunchboxes. Sandwiches, fruit, yoghurts, dried fruit etc are healthy ideas. We wish to remind you that sweets, crisps and chocolates are not part of a healthy lunchbox and we ask you to view them as treats for having at home. The message we teach the children is "everything in moderation" and in school we strive to promote healthy eating where possible. We also remind you that we cannot have snacks with nuts in school, including cereal bars, as a result of children having severe nut allergies.

We also ask that you do send a snack or 30p in daily as an increasing number of children are not receiving a snack mid morning and it is a long time to wait until lunchtime. If we provide a snack for them, we will invoice every few weeks.

- 9.1.20 Whole School theatre trip- all classes except Nursery
- 13.1.20 Visiting athlete- day event in school
- 20.1.20 First Baby Yoga session- please sign up
- 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