

NEWSLETTER for Blackwell First School



Blackwell First School,
St. Catherine's Rd.,
Blackwell,
Near Bromsgrove,
Worcestershire.
B60 1BN
February 2018

Dear Families,

Year 2s waiting to dance as part of the Bromsgrove District Dance Festival - 14th February

Here we are half way through the year already! It is a good time to reflect on our work this year. As a school we work hard to continually improve the school both in terms of experiences for the children and learning outcomes. OFSTED does not routinely inspect schools that have been judged Outstanding unless there are significant changes in data or safeguarding. We do not feel that it is supportive to us as a school to be left without external scrutiny, and we therefore request external reviews each year. Our next one is due this term and we will report on the outcomes from this review.

During the year, Governors monitor the work of the school independently and this term their focus was on the quality and provision of **Afternoon Clubs**. The afternoon clubs take place between 1.50-3pm and offer the children a wide range of activities that do not form part of the National Curriculum. These clubs support the children's social skills as well as life skills such as independence and resilience. They also enable the children to apply learned skills from lessons in different contexts. It is important for the Governors to understand the value of the clubs as a proportion of the school budget is spent on enabling this innovative approach to the school day to happen. Excerpts from the Governor report are listed below:

The children were working on tapestry and their mastery of the various skills was documented in their folders. (Sewing- Mrs Moran)

Children were involved in using mime to explore feelings within stories which they were familiar with. (Drama- Miss Chamberlain)

The cooperative use of specific shapes in order to produce a frieze based on multicultural art, linked to RE. (Art-Mrs Marks)
Building on skills introduced in the formal day and benefitting from the covered play area! Work on games skills has seen a rise in standards in PE. (Sports- Mrs Edney)

Improving balance, with reference to Winter Olympics! (Yoga- Mrs Hampton)

Using the chosen film as a vehicle for discussions and language development. (Film-Mrs Roberts and Mrs Reid)

Observed co-operation in building dens, making a fire, cooking, and sharing of tools; resilience when trying out something and then modifying to achieve more success. (Forest School-Mrs Cain, Miss Turner and Mrs Franklin)

Music club takes place on some days on a rotational basis for all groups. (Mrs Hipkiss)

In all cases, the children were focused on the activities and the leaders were clearly enthusiastic about their subjects. Staff were consistently developing children's independence and, through skilful questioning, were encouraging children to develop self-evaluation of their own ideas and their work and perseverance to improve the outcome of the work. Where appropriate, most of the clubs had a clear link to the whole school topic which allowed children to share and extend their learning with children from other classes.

Mrs Edney leads afternoon clubs and her planning supports these outcomes. Standards in both PE and the Arts have risen since the introduction of the afternoon clubs.

Parent Consultations - keeping you informed

As we move into the fourth half term of the year, we can reflect on the children's progress so far this year. It is time for Parent Consultation meetings and letters will be sent home after half term for you to book appointments. These times are opportunities for routine appointments to consider the children's progress so far this year, share information regarding their social and emotional development and any other relevant information that the teachers or families find useful to share. If you have specific issues that will require further discussion, the classteachers may advise you to book a separate appointment so that they do not keep other parents waiting unnecessarily. School termly reports will also be sent home following this consultation and these are designed to keep you informed of your child's individual progress and targets. As a school we aim to keep you informed about how to **support your child** and also about their **progress** through:

- School newsletters that keep you up to date with school events as well as educational news;
- Class newsletters and homework sheets that share the learning in each class so that you are aware of learning in all curriculum areas each half term;
- Early Years workshops;
- Termly reports (2 short and 1 longer- by law we are only required to provide one report per year, but we feel that three regular ones are more helpful to families) that provide information on your child's progress in line with the assessments teachers complete in school and
- Termly parent consultations.

We know that a small minority of parents feel that they would like further information on their child's progress and we urge parents to make appointments with teachers if this is felt necessary outside of regular meetings (see feedback from parent questionnaires below).

SPORT AND ARTS

Sporting Success for our 'Blue Class Wake and Shake Champions'. They won the half termly intra school competition during half term. Well done Purple Class for a splendid performance at Bromsgrove School for the regional Dance Festival. Thanks to our external dance coach for all of her help with the dance. Cricket continues for Sport's club and Year 4 and skills are improving week by week!

Congratulations – Mark Riley, artist in residence, will be working with Year 4 on a large scale art project to be exhibited at Worcester Cathedral in June. A celebration for Year 4 families will take place on March 26th. This is being funded by a grant from Meadow Arts. As part of this work, the children will complete 'Arts Award- Discover' national award.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP After half term we will be focussing on Caring and Friendship, with a focus on anti-bullying. We will use pieces of art to demonstrate these values and discuss how people make a difference through their behaviours. During work on anti bullying we will watch DAISY CHAIN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGxmschkhNg> and discuss the importance of:

- Standing up to bullies
- Telling other children and adults about what is happening

Towards Easter, we will focus on Christian values and the importance of religious stories in providing important messages. This focus will link with work on Hinduism and Buddhism this year.

Sainsbury's
SCHOOL
GAMES

Feedback from parent questionnaires

Thank you to all of those families that filled in our annual questionnaires (61%). This was an increase on last year which is supportive.

We are very grateful for your positive comments as they ensure that we continue to focus on what we do well. From the responses we received, the following aspects were considered as strengths of the school.

Strengths (98% or more agree/ *=100% agree)

- My child is happy
- My child feels safe*
- My child makes good progress at Blackwell
- My child is well looked after at Blackwell*
- My child is taught well at Blackwell
- My child receives appropriate homework for their age
- Blackwell makes sure its pupils are well behaved*
- Blackwell deals effectively with bullying*
- Blackwell is well led and managed*
- Blackwell responds well to any concerns I raise
- I receive valuable information from the school about my child's progress
- Would you recommend this school to another parent*

Area for development

Although all areas had over 98% of parents agreeing with the statements (and of these over 90% were strongly agree), there was a slightly lower percentage of strongly agree for the following areas:

- My child receives appropriate homework for their age
- I receive valuable information from the school about my child's progress

We are particularly pleased that all scores far exceed national scores, showing that satisfaction is high amongst our families. Thank you.

We have been pleased that a large percentage increase in satisfaction regarding homework has been achieved as we have focussed on this area over the past four years. We now consider that we offer a wide range of **options**, from reading, work on all curriculum subjects, work that can be completed independently, work on times tables, worksheets for those who want children to work on homework without support and projects to complete with families. Often the process of talking to your children about their learning is more valuable than anything else and the homework sheets are a great way for you to know what is being taught in school for that half term. It is important to remember that we value reading practise most for the younger children and that all other homework is **entirely optional. With new national times tables tests being introduced in Year 4 for our current Year 2s**, it is important that these are also given priority for the children in Year 2-4. It is this flexible approach that we believe offers something for everyone. We have created a flexible approach that is optional until Year 4 when we have compulsory homework in order to prepare the children for middle school.

Sometimes there are individual issues that arise from questionnaires, that are not typical school issues, and I always urge parents to speak with me directly so that any particular issues can be addressed throughout the year.

Our area for development will continue to be about the information we share with you regarding your child's progress. This has been an issue for two years and as a result we adapted our 'Home reading' to suit and I plan on meeting with some parents as part of a working party and asking them their opinion of home/ school learning links in order to further improve our links. Your suggestions will be considered (as long as they are realistic for teachers who spend all day with thirty little people!). **Please let me know if you are able to help with this.**

Having not had this has an action until recently, we have investigated information sharing at other schools. We have been made aware of the significant changes in Nursery information shared through the use of online assessment tools that inform parents. This is not an avenue we will pursue as, having investigated its use and visiting schools and settings where it is used, we feel that the use of such assessment and feedback to parents, significantly detracts from the time spent teaching and interacting with the children in the classrooms. It is the skilful adult child interaction that leads to the most progress for children in school.

Currently we meet parents each term to discuss progress and send home termly reports. We also send home class newsletters and homework sheets (Years 1-4) that help you understand what is being taught in school for a particular few weeks. On the school website there is a wealth of information regarding the school curriculum and day. We look forward to finding any improvements that we are able to offer that are valuable.

If you have any further comments to add to the home/school learning link discussion please send them to the school office, marked for the attention of Mrs Moss.

Music lessons

A number of children receive flute, violin and piano lessons through Worcestershire Youth Music. Please remember that children need to practise at home, just like with their reading. If parents decide not to continue with lessons, a full term's notice must be given as we pay for a term's worth of lessons in advance.

If children arrive after the main gate has closed and there is not a member of staff on the gate, please sign them in to the main office and they will access the building via the main office. This is for safety reasons.

PARKING – neighbours will be provided with parking notices from school to place in the windscreen of cars blocking driveways or parking in an inconsiderate manner.

Playground

Work on the playground has been completed and the children are enjoying their new toys thanks to funding by the PTA. We immediately saw an improvement in playtime social development and also a reduction in head bumps!

World Book Day

Children have been set a task in classes and will celebrate the day in school by sharing tasks, reading stories and being given their book token to spend before March 25th.

Miss Steele is getting married on March 10th – from March 12th March we need to remember to call her Mrs Dudek. I wonder how long it will take us to remember? Congratulations Miss Steele.



Year 3s at the gymnastics festival.

