

NEWSLETTER for Blackwell First School



Christmas pantomime

Blackwell First School,
St. Catherine's Rd.,
Blackwell,
Near Bromsgrove,
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B60 1BN
January 2017

Dear Families,

Christmas 2016- Christmas Dinner thanks to Mrs Barker. We had a super lunch. We need some more Year 3 and 4 children to enjoy our school lunches, providing a hot meal of very high nutritional standards, that helps to develop social and healthy eating habits.

Happy New Year to you all.

We had an excellent end of term in school and thank you for all your support last term and thank you on behalf of myself and the staff for kind Christmas gifts, cards and words we received. The children were a credit to themselves, and to you as families, as they enjoyed the end of term celebrations, including their productions and the pantomime. We start this Spring term with an exciting 'Roald Dahl' topic, including work on 'Revolting Rhymes' for Red Class, 'The Twits' for Green Class, 'The Giraffe and the Pelly and me' for Purple Class, 'Fantastic Mr Fox' for Yellow Class and 'The Enormous Crocodile' for Blue Class. Green Class looks forward to sharing learning in a Family Assembly and everyone will display their learning for you to enjoy during a Storynight in January. (Details below)

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. The National Curriculum (introduced in 2014) has new, increased expectations for primary children and we are working to support the children in achieving these challenging expectations. For many children the age related expectations are highly challenging, but we aim to support the children in developing as many life long learning skills as possible without 'teaching to the test'. We want children to enjoy their learning as well as developing the skills they need for the future. 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.

The key to successful learning is the quality of teaching. Here at Blackwell, we are fortunate to have very strong teachers and teaching assistants. The level of training that they receive ensures that they are regularly upskilled in the latest educational developments which impacts positively on their practice in the classroom. For all children, though, despite strong teaching, there will be times when something 'doesn't click' and this is when we introduce an individual or a group of children to intervention support. This means that the child/ children will receive targeted 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. Most children will take part in intervention. In fact, research shows that in Finland, where educational standards are considerably higher than in the UK, almost all children participate in intervention during their time at primary school. The aim is that no child is 'left behind.' This is a focus for us this year in our aim to ensure that all children make strong progress in light of the increased expectations.

New Year

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:

Effectiveness of leadership and management

This section of school evaluation is dominated by school Governance, senior leadership (headteacher and deputy headteacher) and middle leadership (all teachers who are not newly qualified and who lead subject areas, such as Mrs Webb and PE). Last term most progress was made towards ensuring that standards of education remained high, with a focus on reading.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Last term, significant progress was made towards induction for new staff to enable a smooth transition for the children. Further work towards refining assessment procedures took place to ensure that teacher judgments on the new curriculum were secure and moderated across the Blackwell, Charford, Millfields network of schools. High priority was given to the teaching of reading, including the introduction of the new Home Reading system supporting families in helping at home.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

A national focus on health and wellbeing, including mental well being, for young children has been the focus of our work. Our behaviour policy and the work we carry out as part of the school ethos for relationships in school, form a very strong basis for providing the children with a firm foundation for the future.

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.

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

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 honesty) and Honesty.

The children will consider these themes using famous art (Bruegel 'Pleasures of winter' and Lowry 'A Protest March'), music (Vivaldi 'Winter' and Handel 'Messiah'), RE and history (William Wilberforce and the abolition of slavery) to help them develop their understanding of these complex issues.

I wonder what New Year resolutions you have made? Are your children's resolutions linked to humanity 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.

Following on from the theme in the Queen's Christmas message and Jo Cox's husband's alternative Christmas message, we want to share with the children that we can all do 'small things with great love'. This was the underlying message in the Queen's message, taken from Mother Theresa. Both speeches acknowledged that we cannot all make extraordinary changes to the world, but we can do small things for those around us with great love.

In an increasingly self centred world, where community has become less of a priority, we want to focus the children's attention on their place in society and the role that they play towards making the world a good place to live for the future.

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 that they issue. 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 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 2016, there have again been changes to the Ofsted Inspection process, 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 by TUESDAY 31ST JANUARY. Thank you.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Although the weather is mild and we always aim to remain open, in the event of very bad weather or severe conditions making it dangerous for staff and children to travel, the school may have to be closed. We will endeavour to remain open if possible. Please check the school website www.blackwellfirstschool.com for latest advice.

STORYNIGHT

On Wednesday January 25th from 5.30-6.30pm, children are invited to school for a 'Roald Dahl' themed storynight. The cost is £2.00 and for this, they receive sessions with the teachers in classrooms and refreshments (joining you in the hall if you stay or with their friends if you are not able to stay). All proceeds are added to our School Fund, which is used to fund resources and learning opportunities in school or on school educational visits.

Families are invited to wait in school and enjoy some refreshments in the hall. The children's work will be on display for you to view. Children are invited to come dressed in their pyjamas and with a teddy (small!).



Letters from Father Christmas



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. Can 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. Thank you for your support.

SCHOOL SPORT/ HEALTH AND THE ARTS

Mrs Webb continues to plan fixtures for the children this term. (Cross Country for KS2 on 11th January). This term there will be further afternoon sport clubs following requests from the children. Well done Red Class for winning the Wake and Shake intra school competition!

Following our Christmas productions that showcased the strong music at the school, we are now looking forward to further developing drama in school during this topic using training provided by South Bromsgrove High School. Mrs Marks also runs an afternoon club. We have submitted our Artsmark award case study and await the result next term.



We are delighted to announce that Mrs Thompson is expecting a baby. She will remain in school until the start of the Summer term. Congratulations Mrs Thompson!

Dates for Spring term

- 4.1.17 – term starts for children
- 4.1.17- Red and Green Classes- library visit
- 11.1.17 – Cross Country - Y3s and 4s
- 20.1.17 – Piano performance by children 8.45am
- 25.1.17 – Gym festival – Y3s
- 25.1.17 – Storynight – children arrive in pyjamas - 5.30-6.30pm in school (children's story event in classes and refreshments for parents in the hall)
- 27.1.17 – Green Class assembly- Green Class families welcome- 8.45am
- 13.2.17 – Museum visit for Years 2-4 (late return)
- 16.2.17 – Purple Class Assembly – Purple Class families welcome – 8.45am
- 20-24.2.17 – February Half Term holiday

***New dates**