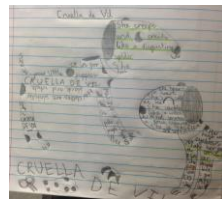


# NEWSLETTER for Blackwell First School



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

Dear Families,

Following a trip to see '101 Dalmatians' at The Rep in Birmingham (Miss Townsend is checking that everyone is happy in this photograph!), work in Art and Literacy has developed painting and writing skills.

Happy New Year to you all. We had a snowy but exciting end of term in school and thank you for all of your support last term and during the snow. Thank you on behalf of the staff and myself for kind Christmas gifts, cards and words we received. The children showed resilience and flexibility, performing after very few rehearsals, and they were a credit to us and to you as families, as they enjoyed the end of term celebrations. We start this Spring term with an exciting 'Traditional tales' topic, including work on 'Bears' in Nursery, 'We're going on a bear hunt' for Red and Green Classes, '101 Dalmatians' for the other classes with some additional visits from the Lynley Dodd doggy characters in Purple and some interesting characters as well as Cruella De Vil in Blue Class. Green Class looks forward to sharing learning in a Family Assembly next week.

We welcome Mrs Lewis to our staff team and she will be working in Nursery. We are fortunate to add another skilled and experienced member of staff to our team. 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 a challenging set of expectations for children in terms of knowledge. Expectations of skills, in order to reach these goals, 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 test is to be introduced for our current Year 2s when they reach Year 4. It is a times table test and the children will need to know all their times tables up to 12x12 by heart. Please help them learn these at home. It is crucial for the children to learn these number facts in order to calculate mentally.

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. This year, a focus on developing writing teaching has supported work on grammar teaching and also training on the use of mathematical apparatus to develop mathematical fluency has featured. Our main focus has been on developing children's ability to master the curriculum content and this work is ongoing. 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. This aims to ensure that no child is 'left behind'.

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 self evaluation focusses on leadership, including governance and this year the focus is on the leadership of middle leaders (subject leaders). These leaders have been supported by work on evaluating teaching of their lead subjects across the school and their ability to impact on pupil progress through their own development work. Some middle leaders have developed their skills through participation in an external Performance Board process to validate judgements.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Last term, significant progress was made towards the teaching focus of teaching children to master the curriculum. Work with Charford and Millfields has developed moderation of teacher assessment to ensure that judgements are consistent and accurate.

### **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. Training from our Educational Psychologist, Anita Soni, on emotion coaching has been supportive in coaching children with emotional needs as well as all children in moments of emotional difficulty. Further training will develop this area of need.

### **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 esafety and safety) and Honesty.

The children will consider these themes using art (Snack Bar- Herbert Badham and Wenzel Peter's Garden of Eden). Following on from the Queen's speech on working alongside other nations and as a link to the Commonwealth Games, we introduced this year's games as well as the Winter Olympics in South Korea.

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.

Later this half term, the children will learn about unity linking with the Queen's message and discover that there are more things that unite countries than divide them and how this links to other children in school. 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. This beautifully illustrated book outlines the UN Rights of the Child and is used by us to share these rights with the children.



## 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 were 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 WEDNESDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY. Thank you.

- 24.1.18 Y3s gym festival
- 25.1.18 Green Class – family assembly (8.45am)
- 26.1.18 Purple Class cake sale after school
- 3.2.18 Beer and Pasty event- PFTA
- 16.2.18 Red Class cake sale after school
- 19-23.2.18 – Half term
- 28.2.18 Height/weight measure for Red Class
- 8/9.3.18 Mothering Sunday present sale after school
- 13.3.18 Mrs Thompson returns following maternity leave- we are looking forward to her being back with us!
- 14/15.3.18 Parent consultations
- 22.3.18 esafety meeting for parents at Charford First School 4pm – all welcome
- 27.3.18 Y1 drama event
- 29.3.18 Coffee morning (afternoon for Nursev)/Easter Ead hunt after school-PFTA

## 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. Thank you for your support.



## SCHOOL SPORT/ HEALTH AND THE ARTS

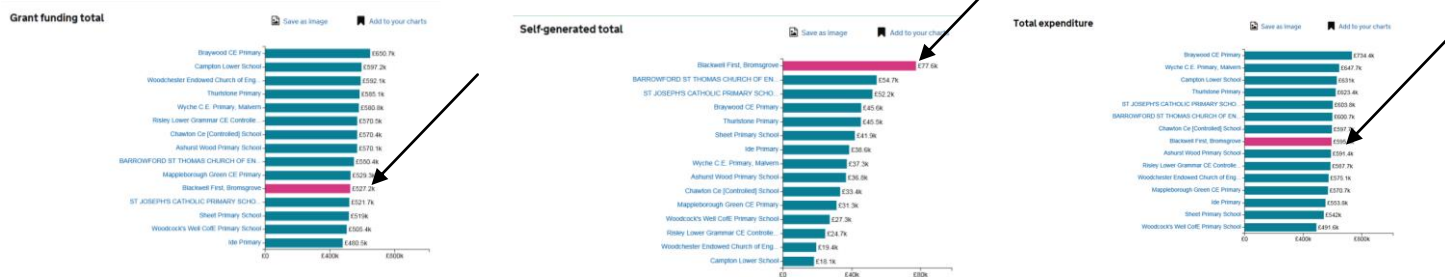
Mrs Webb continues to plan fixtures for the children this term. A gymnastics festival starts off the season. Cricket coaching for Y4s is also underway thanks to 'All Active Academy'.

Following our Christmas productions that showcased the strong music at the school, we are now looking forward to further developing music provision by welcoming back Mrs Cutler (who has worked with the school for a number of years as Miss Evans, but is now married). Congratulations Mrs Cutler! Mrs Cutler is supporting the monitoring of music leadership and working with Miss Steele on developing music at school and she is also teaching piano to more of the children as we have a long waiting list!



## 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. You may well hear in the media reports of national school funding challenges and here at Blackwell things are no better, in fact they are worse than nationally 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.



This is the funding we receive from the DfE.

This is income raised through our Care provision, Holiday club, School kitchen, donations from parents and community and PFTA.

This is our total expenditure.

It is clear to see how without the self generated income, our total expenditure on the children would be far less than 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 streamlined offer from the school would be the only viable future for it. It is, therefore, with huge thanks to the PFTA that we now have 15 new laptops for the children at a cost of £5,000 and another 15 on the way. Last year, the PFTA also funded a complete set of home reading books linked to our phonics teaching at a cost of £7,000. This year, they plan to support the development of the outdoor areas for the older children, following on from work on the outdoor areas for younger children. We also thank everyone working in the Blackwell School Club, holiday club, school kitchen and now the Nursery for generating 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.

We do try to keep them clean! Teamwork when putting on painting shirts.



Mrs Anna Moss  
Headteacher

Mrs Barker and Mr Hopkins prepared a delicious Christmas lunch. We are lucky to be able to develop the children's healthy eating in school with our own kitchen.



Cricket Coaching from the 'All Active Academy' for Year 4s

