



Designing and making gingerbread houses in DT.

# NEWSLETTER for Blackwell First School

*...developing the whole child...*

January 2021

Dear Families,



Enjoying Advent and Christmas in classes.

**Christmas 2020- we thought you may enjoy some photos...**



Party Day in Blue Class – an active musical statues.



Party hats at the ready for Christmas Lunch day...



Happy New Year everyone. It is 2021! What an unusual start to the year we are having with continued uncertainty and disruption. Whatever this year may bring, we will be here to support your child and you through this time. The end of term was a highlight of the autumn term, with super productions of 'Letters from Father Christmas' 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 'Music to our ears' topic. Red and Green Classes will base some learning on 'The Rainbow Fish', using Saint Seans 'Aquarium' as inspiration, with Purple Class focusing on 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice', Yellow Class reading and listening to 'Peter and the Wolf' and Blue Class finding out all about the trolls of Norway whilst listening to Grieg's 'Hall of the Mountain King'.

We said goodbye to Miss Checkley from Nursery and welcome Miss Turner and Mr Beattie to Nursery and wish them both a happy start to their time at BFS. We wish Miss Checkley luck in her Nursing training.

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 lifelong 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. Expectations for times tables by the end of Year 4 is that the children will need to know all their times tables up to 12x12 by heart. In the national test, they 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, whether or not the children take a test this year.

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. In the event of further disruption to school, we will continue to offer this intervention as a priority.

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.



Carols around the campfire at Forest School.



Storynight with Father Christmas was an exciting night for everyone.



## **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 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 shortly and return it by the end of January 2021. Thank you.



## **SCHOOL SPORT/ HEALTH AND THE ARTS**

Mrs Barker and Mr Wilson are preparing wonderful lunches to start off 2021 as a healthy year for us all. Please see the details below regarding healthy snacks.

Following on from 'Our Rainbow Project' with Mark Riley and the creation of the beautiful tree now housed in the main school office, we will be moving onto a community project to support us through these first few weeks of January and February. More news to follow...

## **Parking**

I know the vast majority of families park sensibly and safely. During the Autumn term, parking was a particular challenge at school as a result of road works on St Catherine's Rd. Unfortunately, there were a few incidents resulting in complaints from neighbours regarding parents parking across drives or speaking in a less than positive way and one incident with a child who was fortunate to escape an accident as a car parked and reversed on the yellow zig zags outside the After School Club gate. Please be considerate when you park and also drive carefully up and down the road to ensure that children are safe. Many thanks.

**Parent app** – PLEASE ENSURE YOU HAVE ACCESS TO THE PARENTAPP AND THAT YOUR BFS FRIENDS DO TOO SO THAT WE CAN COMMUNICATE WITH YOU IN THE EVENT OF COVID-19 DISRUPTION.

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 teaching as well as reasoning in Maths. Staff, alongside other Bromsgrove schools received training from Anthony Reddy, a national maths consultant. The training day in January for teachers explored the development of the school's remote learning as well as handwriting training.

Outcomes for pupils - Monitoring of the children's progress last term showed that the vast majority of children are making good progress towards their challenging 'catch up' targets. 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. This is particularly useful during this global pandemic.

### **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 a Curriculum Strategy to support all areas of the school curriculum.

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

## **Development: – COVID-19**

In light of rising COVID-19 figures nationally, we have prepared ourselves for the various scenarios that may unfold over the coming weeks. In the event of a further period of school closure, we would need to send home resource packs and we will therefore send these 'Home Learning' packs this week. These are only to be used in the event of a school closure. We would send home letters outlining how 'Home Learning' would work and in many ways we have kept the structure similar to last year but with some additions of video lessons and daily 'Registration sessions' with teachers. The weekly phonecalls will operate to ensure everyone is safe and well. For when school is open for everyone, but there are bubble closures, the teachers will operate a similar system to full closure. The most common 'Home Learning' last term was when individual children were self isolating and you have packs at home already for that eventuality. These packs are also on the Parentapp. Teachers are busy preparing new sets of packs for the children who will have used most of these during the autumn term. Unless a child is ill, we will expect children to access this learning in order to maintain a routine, support their mental wellbeing and enable them to continue with their learning. Rest assured, we will work with you, whatever happens with schools nationally, and support you with any government directive.

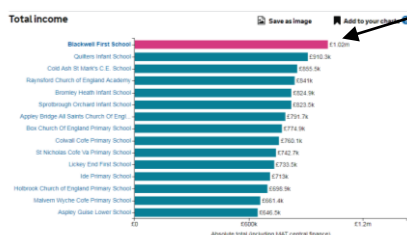
### PFTA support

Congratulations to the PFTA and thank you to you all for raising over £2,000 at the Storynight, Christmas Tree sales and various other lovely Christmas events last term. Thank you for continuing to support the work of the school through fundraising. Thank you to Sally Teare, Claire Richards, Carrie Whitehouse and the whole PFTA team. The funding raised this year will support the purchase of new resources as well as supporting some School Council playground projects.

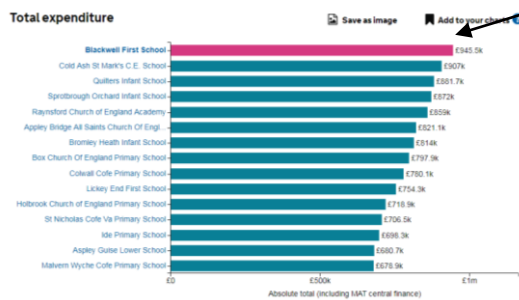
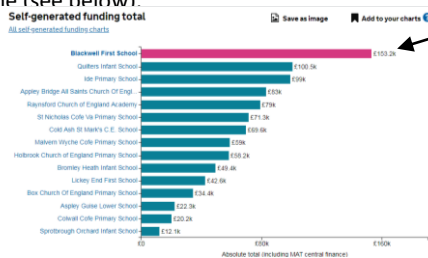
We have also had some donations from families after the PFTA sent out a letter requesting contributions due to depleted fundraising opportunities.

You may have read or heard reports of a national school funding challenge and here at Blackwell things mirror 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.



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 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. 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, during this extremely financially challenging year, thank you to you all for supporting events and 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 esafety and safety) and Honesty. The children will consider these themes using art.

We will also consider sporting events for 2021, such as the Summer Olympics Tokyo 2021 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.

We will work on answering current issues that the children ask about sensitively as they arise in a factual way. We expect further questions regarding COVID-19 and will answer these questions simply but honestly in a way that does not cause anxiety but that helps children feel empowered by their own behaviours.

### 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.