

December 2016

Dear Families,

It is only a few months since we put the finishing touches to the new build but it seems much longer. We are now truly settled into our new building and grounds. The indoor and outdoor space have equal impact on our children's development. Good sized classrooms with the latest technology, breakout areas for small group work, spacious library, separate area for dining, all weather playground, trail, Early Years area, growing garden area, outside classroom space for the first three classes support learning. The facilities we can now access are contributing to our strategic vision of developing the whole child by nurturing positive attitudes to learning, resilience and independence as well as good progress in key subjects.

It is wonderful to hear and see the enriching activities that are taking place as I walk around school. From the minute children arrive in school activities begin; piano practice, Year 4s applying themselves to special jobs, reading, responding to teachers' feedback. This term's Indian festival with Bhangra dancing, amazing artwork, written work, the variety of afternoon clubs, the music being created, and lots of small groups working on specific tasks engaged all. Some of the most impressive observations from Governors are that all children are engaged and participating, moving between whole class activities and small group work so unobtrusively. Congratulations to all children for such excellent attitudes to behaviour and learning as well as all they have achieved.

Thank you also to Thomas and Kaitlyn for representing BFS at Worcester Cathedral meeting the Arch Bishop of Canterbury. Thank you and congratulations to everyone who participated in the multi sports competition this autumn. We have become used to hearing people's positive comments about children from BFS when they are out and about as they display mature sportsmanship and behaviour, though these should never diminish in significance. I hope children, staff, and parents are very proud to receive such recognition.

At BFS we aim to offer an inspiring curriculum through varied learning environments. Our school day reflects this with classroom based learning followed by a variety of clubs that extend skills and interests. We are blessed with aspirational staff who constantly look to improve and develop the learning experience. Professional Development courses, alongside building networks of internal coaching, Bromsgrove School partnerships, contribute to innovative and inspiring teaching. Specific projects are undertaken and results are fed back into lesson planning and learning provision. The more I discover through monitoring the more I realise that lessons are like the tip of an iceberg supported by a mass of activity underneath. Designing classrooms with thought provoking displays and encouraging children to interact with challenges are also part of the daily learning. The quality of teaching and teaching support at BFS is high, with more instances of outstanding practice than ever before.

The Governing Body has visited school to monitor the usual statutory elements of Safeguarding and Finance, but also to observe initiatives to address our focus areas this year of promoting reading, developing leadership and ensuring progress for low attaining pupils. Initially reading is encouraged by teaching strategies including phonics through individual, small group and whole class contexts. Reading is developed by teaching more sophisticated grammar. Opportunities for reading are varied: reminders to read work through, group and individual reading with a varied range of non-fiction and fiction books available in classrooms, attractively displayed, relaxing areas provided for individual reading.

Reading was observed across subjects such as Geography, History and RE. These initiatives in school are backed up by cultivating a love of reading at home, practising phonics, key words, sharing a book or piece of text such as a recipe or sport's write up, discussing reading and favourite texts. We would like to thank parents for their



contribution in formulating our reading strategy.

As well as Governors visiting staff meetings to see leadership in action, we underwent a review from our partnership schools via a performance board. This process highlights the link between leadership activities with impact and improvements for pupils. At BFS we keep improving outcomes for children at the heart of our leadership focus. Analysis by teachers of children's needs to close any gap in their learning is followed by specific intervention. The intervention progress is recorded and results evaluated. Any amendments being fed back into the planning cycle until the gap is closed. Teachers are supported by each other and with strong leadership when planning. Intervention is carried out by trained competent Teaching Assistants. Intervention can be seen happening throughout the school. It is usual practice for all children. Evaluation shows that intervention is very effective, contributing towards good progress for those involved. Fine tuning assessments procedures is a continual process as we reconcile the new Curriculum requirements with a non-consistent national approach to recording and reporting attainment data. This is being achieved in partnership with Charford and Millfields and external school improvement advice.

I was privileged to be involved in last Friday's lunchtime and I never cease to marvel at the nurture, organisation and home cooked food that Blackwell Kitchen provides as well as the choices children were making for themselves. Children are benefitting from trying nutritious fresh foods, encouraged with co-ordinating a knife and fork as well as social graces around a school family meal table. I am not sure if I passed my apprenticeship but the children were very gracious.

Congratulations to all staff for the quality of provision that you offer the children at BFS.

The governing body has been keeping its ear to the ground regarding the academy situation. We have been to two information evenings from two very different organisations. Generally, we do not see the benefit in becoming an academy as it is not financially viable for small schools on their own. However, the decreasing amount and quality of support services from Local Authorities means that we need to form alliances with other schools to ensure that we can continue to provide an excellent education for children at BFS. Our partnership with BCM (Blackwell, Charford, Millfields) has been a start in this process. We have accessed high quality teacher training, some purchasing, leadership and school improvement support. Further alliances are needed to provide professional support and economies of scale for more occasional but very necessary functions. As BCM we are developing relationships with other schools in the area. The uncertainty of the political climate means the picture is open to change. We are concentrating on thinking ahead and planning for the direct benefit of the children at BFS.

The fabric and furnishing facilities we have recently invested in, will hopefully see us through the foreseeable future. Though most of the capital expenditure was planned, we have been supported by the school and village community. The governing body would like to thank the generous people in the community who have donated materials, expertise and finance for aspects of the grounds development including Burcot Grange for their kind donation. The PFTA has also been working tirelessly on multiple events this term. Bringing the community together for a lot of fun and raising much appreciated funds in the Run a Mile event and colouring competition, the Christmas Fair and Jewellery party. This support is very valuable especially as government funding will be decreasing over the next few years. Thank you to everyone involved.

I am looking forward to the Spring term; being slightly longer than usual we have more time to plan exciting activities, I believe a library trip is the starting point for some of our younger children and I hope to meet the newly appointed school council members too. Though first we have the Christmas celebrations to look forward to. Christmas at school has been a very enjoyable time. It is very inspiring seeing the children working together, growing in confidence and enjoying themselves at the same time. On behalf of the governing body I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Kind regards

Debbie Wilson

