

Dear Families,

The school seems to be in an energised state of activity this term, matching the season! It has been a joy to listen to the enthusiasm and animation as children have been recounting their thoughts about their term at school. The common theme is enjoying trips, be it for a learning topic or for sporting events. A highlight for the older year groups was the visit to the British Museum and handball/netball tournaments. Children have been keen to talk about their learning in topics such as Easter and Adventures as well as 'real science experiments' and getting ideas for new books to read from their friends.

We have been continuing our initiatives on promoting reading. At BFS we aim to teach the Curriculum by presenting learning in a creative and inspiring way. Initiatives to help spelling and recognition of key words have been introduced as well as increasing opportunities for reading throughout the school day. A big thank you to the school council for organising a story swap. I was impressed at the variety of books chosen and the positive responses the children fed back. The event had an inspirational effect and I know the children would like to repeat the experience. We saw a similar impact during the Roald Dahl topic. Congratulations to all involved.

The standard of work displayed around school, the level at which the pupils can explain their learning and the concentration demonstrated is impressive. The children are working hard and achieving a good level of progress throughout the year, with some groups achieving accelerated progress. As work is assessed, please remember that the system assessing their work has changed. There is a much narrower set of criteria generally aimed at one or two years above the previous system. The difference this makes can be stark. It is important to realise the children's work itself displays a more complete picture of their attainment and progress and if there was any cause for concern your child's teacher would let you know.

The County Council used to perform an annual inspection to review our school's activities in relation to our development plan and Ofsted criteria. As with many changes at County we are not receiving the same level of support, so with our partner schools we have sourced other external experts to perform this important function. Feedback on the quality of teaching, the inspirational curriculum, the progress in books, the effectiveness of feedback to learners for all groups of learners highlight the strengths of the school. Particular note was made of the teachers' knowledge of individual pupils' needs, the deployment of teaching assistants, the way the pupils conducted themselves, the consistency of initiatives and behaviour across the school. As a result of the review, fine tuning of mental maths strategies has already had an impact on children's attainment. It is a testament to the quality of leadership at BFS that improvements are planned for and progressed promptly as well as the quality of staff to implement and sustain them.

With core and foundation subjects developing across the 5 year group classes, our strategic attention moved to think about developing our Early Years to aid transition into reception by expanding our Early Excellence programme in a forest school setting to include 3 year olds. We are hopeful that from September our Nursery will grow and feel part of the school so that transition into reception is a smooth experience.

This term we have been very proud to be awarded the Platinum Kite Mark for the Arts. This recognition ratifies the commitment to the broad, high quality, creative curriculum on offer at BFS. The combination of the official morning curriculum and afternoon clubs as well as the expertise of staff to be able to facilitate such interest in the children is a real benefit of the school. We are very lucky to have leadership which values the impact of these opportunities on the children to take forward into their future lives, as well as working with subject experts who support our staff. The children I spoke to this week were excited about participating in drama workshops at South Bromsgrove High School. This event is included in a package negotiated with South Bromsgrove to extend the teaching of drama at BFS.



The impact of an excellent arts curriculum is evident in our assessment of opportunities for the children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development which the Governing Body reviews each year as a golden thread running across the school. Opportunities to realise creative skills, using the arts to aid relaxation and balance in modern lives, to understand different religions and cultures, to extend concentration and focus, to appreciate the awe and wonder of creative arts, to be inspired to try new things, to develop robust, confident, considerate young people, to name but a few areas. Another aspect of SMSC is understanding what makes us British. British values are shared in topic work, assemblies, Philosophy for Children and PHSE, so that the children can understand democracy, justice and tolerance. During the SMSC visit one of the reasons the children felt proud of their school was its cleanliness! I was impressed how many children referred to this. We thank our conscientious cleaning team, Mrs Thornton and Mrs Joiner, the children for respecting their learning environment, and the teaching staff, many of whom have end of term cleaning tasks!

Participation in the school council is one of many opportunities for children to grow in SMSC. The council has meetings discussing aspects of the school, reflecting the 4 key areas on the school development plan. Information is gathered and quality decisions are made, adding value to everyone at school. They regularly interview Mrs Moss to find out what the key issues are for the school and how they can help. The school council has influenced and improved reading initiatives as well as systems for every day routines including adding an e-safety measure for the netbooks and keeping certain areas of the school in tiptop condition.

The governing body has visited the school and reported on the afternoon clubs, School club and after school clubs, Health and Safety, finance, safeguarding, teaching and learning, as well as attitudes to learning. I would like to thank all governors for their time and commitment to visiting the school. Greater appreciation and understanding of our school aids us in monitoring and planning strategy for the future. Thank you to all parents and carers who completed the questionnaires. Your answers are important to enable us to move forward and improve everyone's experience of BFS. The greater the number of responses, the more our conclusions are valid for the whole school. After review, we can confirm homework has a wide-ranging content, reflecting aspects of the curriculum, encouraging a variety of skills for differing abilities. Homework is intended to be voluntary and, though supported by adults, is accessible for the children. Homework is celebrated and linked to learning in school. Sharing information regarding pupil's progress will be the subject of the next Parent Consultation group.

Under the new government funding formula we believe our funding will decrease by approx. £15,000 per year. All schools are worried about sustaining adequate future funds. Alternative income streams are becoming common place as schools attempt to maintain income to cope with increasing demands of delivering education. At BFS we have invested in our Blackwell Kitchen and School Club extending the BFS culture throughout the day.

We are actively pursuing an alternative model to academy status. Becoming an academy is even less attractive now the Government has withdrawn short term financial incentives to convert. Since last term cooperation with other local first schools has increased, extending partnerships to ensure sharing best practice, supporting school improvement, effective supply and use of resources including those previously provided by County. We are subject to a nationally and locally changing picture, however we are clear about our aim to provide a high quality all round education for pupils at BFS.

Congratulations to everyone at BFS for a very successful and enjoyable Spring term. I hope everyone has a relaxing Easter and I look forward to catching up with you in the Summer term.

With best wishes,

Mrs D Wilson
Chair of Governors

