

NEWSLETTER

for Blackwell First School



Blackwell First School,
St. Catherine's Rd.,
Blackwell,
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B60 1BN
November 2017

Dear Families,

Our competition winners burying the time capsule at Burcot Grange residential care home. October 2017

Another half term is underway and this half term is always one of the busiest in school as the children learn through new and exciting projects in school and also Christmas arrives before we know it.

'Festivals around the world' is our topic for most of this half term with a focus on Buddhism ending with a 'Celebration' in school (children only event) as our project on 1.12.17. Each class is focussing on a different part of the world and this will develop their **wider cultural awareness** and support work on religious tolerance and developing a sense of global diversity. During this topic, the children will learn about the wider world through RE and Geography.

After 'Festivals', Christmas festivities begin in December and learning is focussed around the Nativity story. Red and Green Classes will perform this story at the church whilst the older classes will perform 'The Snowman' a performance based on Raymond Briggs' 'The Snowman'.

Developing learning behaviours and attitudes is a significant area of our work here at school. Nationally, there is a concern regarding children's mental well being and emotional resilience. Our main focus, as part of our planning for learning, is to develop **children's independence**. It is so much quicker to do it for the children and our patience as parents and teachers is tested when we leave the children to do things for themselves, BUT we need to. These life skills are essential, and developing them now will support their future school life and beyond. Ask yourself, do they make their own bed? Do they tidy away their own toys? Do they carry their own bag to school? Do they dress themselves? These little steps will really help.

As a staff, we have received training in **emotion coaching** to support children's varied emotional needs. The key messages, that may be useful for you as parents to know, are that distraction and hiding emotions is not always a healthy approach. Expressing the correct emotion to the children with an explanation is helpful to them in developing their understanding of the emotions they experience. When the children themselves are displaying an emotion, it helps when you verbalise the emotion, 'I can see that you are angry and I understand why, but it is important that when you are angry that you.....'

As you can imagine, friendships are the main area requiring emotional support. Bullying is not tolerated and we react swiftly when any bullying starts to be displayed. Most friendship issues, however, need time and patience from adults to support children in resolving issues themselves. It is important to help children identify strategies for solving their own issues, as adults will not always be around to help.

Finally, we are working hard on trying to undo the work of the media, advertising and social pressures with regard to **gender stereotyping**. It is interesting to talk to the children and realise how many of them have fixed ideas about the roles of boys/girls and men/women. Our work in Collective worship is supporting the development of non gender stereotyping career aspiration as we share examples of famous female scientists and male dancers as well as female environmentalists and male writers. It is so important that the children feel that all options are open to them and their interests can be followed.

It is not what you do for
your children,
but what you have taught
them to do for themselves,
that will make them
successful human beings.

Ann Landers

After a half term in school, it is a good time to reflect on the successes of the last half term

- Nursery – our very youngest little learners have learned their routines brilliantly. They are great at eating their dinners too.
- Red Class – Well done for settling in so well and for learning lots of new routines. Mrs Webb and Miss Turner in Red Class are enjoying helping you discover what school is all about.
- Year 4s – Your ability to take on responsibility has been the most obvious thing we have noticed. What a fantastic year group you are!
- Year 3s – You are settling into the new higher expectations. It has been lovely seeing the quality of some of your work.
- Year 2s – Miss Kuriger and Mrs Moran are very pleased with your behaviour and hard work. Well done.
- Year 1s – You have had a super start to Year 1 and I know how tricky it is settling into Year 1. The work is hard!

The teachers are carefully managing the increased expectations of the National Curriculum as well as ensuring that the learning is meaningful and helps them to develop their learning skills.

SCHOOL SPORT and THE ARTS

- Congratulations Yellow Class – Wake and Shake champions for last half term.
- Sports competitions continue and our last group to take part was Green Class. Well done for superb teamwork.
- Art club with Mrs Marks is providing children with the opportunity to explore and apply their art skills to a wider range of artworks. The children really enjoy this close link between the curriculum and their clubs.

Sainsbury's
SCHOOL GAMES



Writing

The expectations for the National Curriculum writing curriculum are very demanding and one of the tricky aspects for the children is spelling criteria for each year group. This relates to both phonic application and spelling of 'tricky' words. We are using a programme called 'No nonsense' spelling from Year 2 upwards and are also using spelling journals with the children. Any work at home that you do on spelling (see word lists provided at Parent Meetings) will support the children further.

Children in Need

The children may come to school wearing non uniform on Friday for Children in Need in exchange for £1.00. Year 4s are also planning and running some playtime stalls selling homemade badges and trinkets. They will be charging between 30p-£1.00. Please send in some money for the children if you wish, although we are not sure of the stock taking of the Y4s, so warn the children in case there are not enough items to purchase. This will develop resilience!

Complaints procedure

At this time of year, we outline the procedures schools nationally have in place to deal with complaints. Any complaints should be addressed to the Headteacher. In the event of formal complaints being necessary, schools require a letter of formal complaint to be written and addressed to the Headteacher. If the matter remains unresolved, a further complaint should be addressed to the Governors. In the event of the complaint not being resolved, the County Council no longer deals with complaints and any further complaints should be addressed to the Secretary of State for Education. (For a copy of the Complaints procedure ask at school)

Developing mastery

Our curriculum development work this year centres on mastery. The essence of this is that children should master the curriculum at whatever level that they are working, without being pushed onto new content before they are secure in the current level. In practice, this means teachers need to ask searching, open ended questions, set problems and puzzles for children to solve and set tasks that enable children to apply their learning in different subject areas. When you look through the children's books, you will see examples of this. In maths, we are using concrete resources such as the abacus or counting beads and blocks at all levels to engage children in explaining their maths clearly, showing that they have genuinely understood the concepts that they are learning. Explanation of learning is a key way of assessing children's mastery of their learning.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Here at Blackwell, we use the daily act of worship to support children's development as tolerant, kind and understanding individuals. Each week, there is a theme and these times often include information about famous people, places, artists or scientists in order to broaden the children's horizons. We base all of our worship on the 'UN Convention - Rights of the Child' and the children are increasingly able to understand their own place in society and their responsibility as they mature in school. This month our themes include: Safety; Co-operation; Our Wonderful World; Trust and Democracy. We will include anti-bullying as part of these themes.

PTFA support – Thanks to the PTFA for their support as ever. We hope many of you enjoy the jewellery night this Friday. The PTFA has supported the cost of the theatre trips in January and we are very grateful for their support. Please look out for the Christmas Fair letters and notes in book bags.

Children and a teacher from St John's Middle School visited to support our work on Remembrance Day. The children in Year 4 learned lots of new information.

Mrs A Moss (Headteacher)

ATTENDANCE

Good attendance is linked to success. Children learn and develop:

- Good social skills
- Safe lifestyles
- A good work ethic

This leads to becoming qualified for the workplace.

We want children to have the best attendance they can in order to develop their learning. Please help us to improve our attendance rates by encouraging your child to attend unless they are particularly ill. **We are also grateful for the reduction in holiday absences.** We are currently required by law to class all holiday absence as unauthorised. It does matter when your child misses learning. Last year our attendance rate was 97.6%, thank you. We are striving to maintain this and hope that your child's attendance is higher than 97.6%. It will be listed on their termly report. Thank you for your continued support.

Proposed changes to national assessment

Currently, the children are tested according to national assessment requirements. This means that they are assessed as below:

- End of Reception using teacher assessment
- End of Year 1 - phonics test
- End of Year 2 – tests in reading, writing and maths
- End of Year 6 – tests in reading, writing and maths

The government is proposing the following:

- Entry to Reception as a baseline test (not teacher assessment)
- End of Year 1 – phonics test
- End of Year 2 – removal of tests for through primaries
- End of Year 2 tests OR base First school data on Year 6 results from Middle School- to be confirmed
- End of Year 4 – times tables test
- End of Year 6 – tests in reading, writing and maths

The introduction of the times tables test for Year 4 will have a significant impact in 2019 as this is the first year that children will sit these tests (current Y3s). Without passing the times tables test, it is unlikely that children will be classed as reaching national expectation. **Your help in learning these at home would be much appreciated as it makes a big difference.**

DIARY DATES

Autumn term 2017

- 17.11.17 Evening PTFA event- Jewellery Sale
- 30.11.17 8.45am Blue Class family assembly – Blue Class families welcome
- 8.12.17 Christmas plays being filmed for DVD sale- please look out for a letter
- 13.12.17 1.30pm Red and Green Class Christmas Play at church- toddlers welcome
- 14.12.17 9.30am Red and Green Class Christmas Play at church – **ADULT ONLY**
- 14.12.17 1.30am Purple, Yellow and Blue Christmas Play at church – toddlers welcome
- 15.12.17 9.30am Purple, Yellow and Blue Christmas Play at church – **ADULT ONLY**
- 18.12.17 2.30pm Nursery Coffee Afternoon
- 19.12.17 Pantomime (YR-4) and party (whole school including Nursery)
- 19.12.17 Term ends

Spring term 2018

- 3.1.18 Teacher Education day- no children
- 4.1.18 School opens for children
- 5.1.18 Theatre trip for YR-4 (not Nursery)- Y2-4 late return- see letters

