

# NEWSLETTER

## for Blackwell First School



Mud kitchen fun in Nursery – learning to explore.

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

We are all pleased with how quickly the children have settled at school over the past week. Red Class children have picked up routines quickly and it has been a delight to watch them start to build confidence! The reality has now hit that they are here every day and they are quite fired as a result of so much new learning and many new routines. Thanks to Mrs Webb, Mrs Reid, Mrs Thompson, Mrs Cain and Mrs Roberts for their hard work with Red Class at this busy time of year for them. Well done to Nursery children and families also for supporting with the drop off and settling in and as they begin to feel safe and secure they will also grow in confidence. Well done to Mrs Mander, Mrs Allen, Mrs Franklin, Mrs Broome and Mrs Lewis for their wonderful patience at this time of year. Thank you to all parents and staff for all their hard work in helping everyone settle in. **We would like Red Class parents to begin a gradual retreat!** Please judge your child and decide whether to leave them at the classroom door, bottom of the steps, side of the playground or school entrance over the next few weeks. Remember all children are different and need different things at the start of the day. This may take many weeks.

To ensure messages reach the office, there are two boxes in the reception area fixed to the wall to the left of the hall. One is for 'Items for the office' to be placed in and the other is for 'Hot Lunch orders'. We hope this enables you to drop off messages, money and forms more quickly and securely. Urgent messages should be passed to the office or myself on the gate.

**High attendance has a direct link to high attainment and progress** in schools and we strive to improve attendance rates in our school. Last year our attendance figure was above 97%, which is high. This is thanks to parents supporting school attendance. Term time holidays is the main reason for poor attendance by children at Blackwell. Whilst we appreciate the financial benefits of taking children out of school during term time and also know that some work situations do not enable holidays to coincide with school holidays, we ask that you consider taking holidays during school holidays where possible as a holiday in term time can significantly impact a child's progress. Imagine if they miss the first ever lesson on addition, using a full stop or fractions whilst they are away, this can definitely impact on their future learning. The children are also often disappointed when they have to miss either the start or end of a topic of work and they miss either the big introduction or the finale where all their hard work comes to fruition!

**Late to school – We know that almost everyone is on time. Well done!** Unless you have a specific arrangement with school, if your child arrives late to school (after the main gate is closed at 8.30am), they must be signed in at the office by you and will appear as late on the register. If they arrive after 9am, they will be marked as absent for the morning session, following national guidance. This will impact on their attendance figure. If there are specific issues impacting on punctuality, please speak to me and we will discuss options for your circumstances. Thank you for your continued support.

### Growth Mindset

We are focussing on 'Growth Mindset' during this year as part of our School Development Plan, in order to support the development of children's learning behaviours and attitudes. Our Educational Psychologist, Mrs Soni and Mrs Evans (a parent of two children in school) have been working with us on this, as the school where she works has been working on this aspect of development for a while and we can learn from the practice at Anderton Park where Mrs Evans works.

On the reverse of this letter is an introduction to Growth Mindset to support you in understanding the concepts to which your children have been introduced this week in school. Mrs Evans will also work with Yellow and Blue Classes as well as plan sessions for the younger children to ensure that, across the school, children are developing a consistent understanding.

Please come along to our open evening (no appointments) on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> September 6-7.30pm. This is an opportunity for children, parents and the wider community to come into school together and visit all classrooms, look at work and informally speak with class teachers. The children are working towards this and their work will be on display. We hope you will take this opportunity to look around all classes and see for yourselves what goes on in school. We would love to see you all. We will also launch our 'Blackwell First School' website film all through the evening.

The School Book Fair will be on site the following week and you are invited to find a few books to buy, maybe for a Christmas present? We receive some free books dependent on the amount we sell, so this also benefits the children in school. We look forward to seeing you at the open evening or book fair or both!

### Year 1 – exploring learning

The first couple of weeks have been exciting for Year 1 as they explore new learning areas and resources based on the Year 1 curriculum. Part of the day is spent with Mrs James with the whole class learning new skills and knowledge and part of the day is now spent in small groups, focussing on learning suited to the needs of individuals. The remaining time is spent in 'Play and Explore' where children select the activities they want to engage in within the curriculum areas provided in the classroom: explore; perform; experiment; design; explore the world; read; write and calculate. As the expectations increase over the coming weeks, the children will be expected to complete set tasks in these areas during each day ensuring that they cover all curriculum learning and applying new skills independently. Mrs James and Miss Turner are certainly enjoying the time that they have to get to know the children well during 'Play and Explore' and the children are having a very smooth transition into Year 1.

### SPORT and THE ARTS

Sport- congratulations Mrs Webb who submitted our application based on sport in school last year and was awarded a Gold Mark. This validates the work we do to teach skills, include all children in extra curricular sport (afternoon clubs) and enable all children to participate in cross school competitive sporting events.

ARTS- all children take part in a variety of extra curricular arts clubs, from sewing to art, dance to drama. Thanks to Mrs Dudek, Mrs Roberts, Mrs Moran and all of our staff for their contributions to the arts.



Playtimes- the children continue to enjoy access to the resources funded by the PFTA last year.



**Parking** – please remember to park courteously, without blocking driveways of neighbours, staying off yellow zig zags and also supervising the children as they walk/scoot back and forth.

This week, children have been learning about growth mindset and how it could help them in their learning.

### What is a growth mindset?

A growth mindset is believing in the power of yourself and your brain. We know our intellect and abilities develop when we try hard things, use the right strategies, and don't give up. A growth mindset is when we understand that, with practice, we can get better at something.

Some children give up on challenging tasks easily, or avoid tasks they've failed at before. They tend to believe that being 'good' at a particular activity is a fixed state, and is something they can't control. In psychology, this way of thinking is called a '**fixed mindset**'.

Others might bounce back quickly from failure and be more likely to explore how they can get better at doing something. They tend to be children who believe that you can improve your abilities by practising, or by finding a different way to achieve your goal. This way of thinking is called a '**growth mindset**', and developing it can help make children more resilient for life.

### Is ability something innate?

Professor Carol Dweck, an American psychologist, found that we all have different beliefs about the underlying nature of ability.

Children (and adults!) with a growth mindset believe that intelligence and abilities can be developed through effort, persistence, trying different strategies and learning from mistakes. Although no one likes failing, children with a growth mindset do not let failure define them; instead, they use setbacks to motivate them. Children encouraged to adopt a growth mindset enjoy challenges and the sense of achievement they get when they succeed.

On the other hand, people with a fixed mindset believe that our intelligence and abilities are fixed traits; something that you are born with and that you can't really do anything about. According to someone with a fixed mindset, if you fail at something, make a mistake, or even have to put effort in, it must be because 'you're just not good enough'. Because of that belief, children begin to avoid challenges and choose activities that they find easy.

Researchers have found that building a growth mindset helps children at school; making them more motivated, more engaged in the classroom and likely to receive higher marks and greater rewards from their work. But it's not all about educational outcomes. Research also suggests that having a growth mindset increases children's ability to try all sorts of different challenges and problems that they might not have otherwise tackled.

Developing a growth mindset also appears to improve behaviour, increase life satisfaction, and help children to control their emotions.

### How can I help my child to develop a Growth Mindset?

Research has shown that Mindsets can be changed relatively quickly and there are plenty of things that parents and families can do to help. Below are a few tips and ideas that can help promote a growth mindset in children.

1. Reward effort – if your child tried really hard at something and didn't give up – tell them. They have used a growth mindset and have persevered.
2. Encourage children not to give up, being resilient and embracing a challenge is brilliant and will help them when tackling tricky work.
3. Celebrate mistakes - We all make mistakes! Use them as a learning opportunity rather than feeling embarrassed by them. If we don't make mistakes we are not challenging ourselves.
4. Use role models- Think about athletes or musicians. They were not born being able to run quickly or play an instrument. They achieved through practising over and over again.

### How can the way I praise my child help develop a Growth Mindset?

It's natural to want to praise children when they do something well, but we need to do this carefully. Research suggests that the type of praise that we use can have a big impact. It's all a matter of context in fact and even positive praise can encourage a fixed mindset.

Praising our children by saying things like "you're a natural!" or "you seem to be able to turn your hand to anything!" without clarity of the process by which they got to that point can lead to the belief that being good at something is out of their control. In other words understanding how they got there is the key.

Instead the grown-ups around the child can focus praise on the effort they've made to get to that point of triumph, the strategy they used or the outcome itself, saying things like "you've worked so hard on this, well done!" or "you get better every time because of all the practise you've been doing" or "you have found a great way to do that, it worked out really well".

This kind of feedback helps to develop children's resilience to failure as it teaches them what to do when they are challenged or fail – try again, try harder or try a different way, all things that are within their own control.

This type of praise is sometimes called 'process praise' and Dweck's research found that children were more motivated when their parents used more of this kind of praise.

Give it a go!