

NEWSLETTER

for Blackwell First School

Blackwell First School,
St. Catherine's Rd.,
Blackwell,
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B60 1BN
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Examining the mosaics at Chedworth Roman Villa. The children were in awe of these.

Dear Families,

A steep climb up to the museum. It was great to be out and about after COVID.



Off we go...there's a lot of walking on this trip!



Finding out about Roman toilets was a highlight. Without toilet paper, the alternative was a sponge.

We are all very pleased with how well the children have settled into the new school year and the new routines. Red Class children are superstars and it has been a delight to watch them build confidence! The reality has now hit that they are here every day and they are quite tired as a result of so much new learning. Thanks to Mrs Webb and Mrs Reid supported by Mrs Hampton, Miss Edwards, Mrs Edney and Mrs Dyson 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 they too have amazed us with their confidence. Well done to Mrs Mander, Mrs Allen, Mrs Franklin, Miss Turner and Mrs Hampton for their amazing patience at this time of year. Thank you to all parents and staff for all their hard work in helping everyone settle in. During the first few weeks in Reception and Nursery, the teachers are playing with the children as well as teaching, getting to know them really well. This helps the teachers plan their next steps in learning to ensure it matches their needs.

High attendance has a direct link to high attainment and progress in schools and we strive to improve attendance rates in our school. Over the last 10 years our attendance has consistently been above 97%. 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!

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we don't expect that holidays will be a particular issue, but know that self isolation times will occur and we have been informed that this will not impact on the children's attendance figures.

I will share some updates with you in this letter, regarding self isolation learning, parent consultation appointments and reports, a reading project to bring the school together as a community and even...Christmas. Sshh...

Best wishes,
Mrs Moss



Investigating artefacts at Chedworth Roman Villa



Miss Phipps set us a challenge...a treasure hunt. Here we are looking for clues.



Romans had underfloor heating. Wow!

SPORT and THE ARTS

Sport- congratulations Mrs Webb who submitted our application based on sport in school last year and was awarded a Platinum 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 our Afternoon Club staff for running such fantastic clubs for the children. The aim of these is to broaden and deepen the children's learning.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

In school, children take part in a daily act of worship in accordance with law. Here at Blackwell, we follow 'Universal Values' as set out in the UN 'Rights of the Child'. During the last few weeks we have considered children's 'rights' and alongside that 'their responsibilities'. Knowing that children have the right to be safe goes hand in hand with them keeping others safe by playing using kind hands and words. As part of work on respectful relationships and work against bullying, we have reinforced the school's approach to working together.

PARENT CONSULTATIONS

Zoom meetings took place last week and the teachers really valued the opportunity to meet with you and share the children's progress so far this half term. Following assessments during the past two weeks, the teachers will write reports and the children's targets will be shared with you (Red - Blue Classes). These will be sent home after half term and we ask that you support your child/ children in working on their targets. Reading and mental maths skills are particularly helpful. Newsletters, homework, the website and the reports all help you find out what the children are learning.

REMOTE LEARNING

Our approach to remote learning during this academic year, remains the same as last year but with the hope that there is less disruption. This includes our approach to full closure, bubble closure, self isolation of individuals and teachers. We will only send home the Self Isolation packs if it is relevant to your child. This will be sent home if your child tests positive for COVID-19 and is required to self isolate. We will send it on the ParentApp and you are also able to collect reading books and an exercise book. Fingers crossed few children need to use these packs. Thank you.

...We are the rainbow children, staying together when the world was apart...

Following on from our Arts Projects with Mark Riley last year, he will work with the School Council this year to consider developments to the front playground, including planning for our 'Happy and Healthy' shop on the 'Blackwell High Street'.

As the children have been getting used to all being together again since September, we are developing further opportunities for the children to work together across the school. This was such as strength of the school prior to COVID-19 and we have now returned to this way of working again.

After half term, we have planned a whole school 'Wonderful Words- a celebration of books' event as part of our project work leading up to Christmas. The children all work towards projects from Reception onwards during each topic. These projects enable the learning in classrooms to have a purpose and be more meaningful to the children.

'Wonderful Words' will be an opportunity for each class to share their learning with other classes as well as develop their reading, performance and musical skills.

As we move towards the end of this half term, it is a good time to reflect on the successes of the first few weeks of school.

- Nursery- The Nursery children have been introduced to almost all of the outdoor areas and are learning the ropes (and rules). Once you feel that your child is feeling happy to walk in alone down the snake, let them. But there is no rush!
- Red Class – Starting school is hard work and lots of Red Class children are adapting to life in a classroom. Mrs Webb and her team worked hard on listening and looking and it is paying off! Work on phonics and maths has started through songs and games and the children love them. Everyone is starting to read.
- Blue Class –Expectations are high for Year 4s. Miss Townsend, Miss Kuriger and the team are so impressed with your developing stamina. Get ready for your range of 'exclusive to Y4' experiences this year.
- Green Class – You have settled well into Year 1 and we are enjoying having time to get to know you during 'Play and Explore'. Focus group work is really helping you to develop. Mrs James and the team are impressed.
- Yellow Class – You have settled into Yellow Class well and are adapting to the challenge of Key Stage 2! Now that you are maturing, expectations increase so watch out, there's more work coming your way from Miss Davis and the team...
- Purple Class- There is a lot to do in Year 2 and you are showing that you can work well. Miss Phipps and the Y2 team are working well and have had an excellent start.

The opportunities the teachers are planning for the children this term are supporting them in developing their skills as independent learners by encouraging them to think for themselves, make choices about their learning and work co-operatively with others. Please help with this at home. Well done children.

Christmas celebrations

Before you know it, December will be here so we are making plans following the advice from Public Health Worcestershire. We have been advised not to plan for gatherings on site so the following is all able to happen following this guidance.

Festive Film

Our usual Christmas Productions will need to be organised differently as we are unable to invite an audience. We are planning to perform and film them (the ideal Christmas gift for family I may suggest...) altogether at the church or on site if needed.

Panto Season- 17.12.21

Our panto is booked to happen on site so we will plan a day of 'panto and party' for December 17th.

Christmas Lunch- 16.12.21

We are able to enjoy Christmas lunch courtesy of Mrs Barker and her new kitchen team, including Mrs Miles and Miss Shepherd, so that is an enjoyable treat for everyone.

Christmas Gifts

Ordering a 2021 calendar and Christmas Film for the family (to include a Nativity from Nursery and Reception as well as a 'Christmas around the world' play) will be part of our festive treats.

Storynight – 13.12.21 6-7pm

A night in Christmas pyjamas is planned for the children to enjoy a Christmas story by candlelight and a visit from a very important person with a gift for everyone.

We are looking forward to sharing some seasonal joy with you all during December.

National Poetry Day

October 7th was National Poetry Day and we shared a poem with the children from Year 1 upwards during Collective Worship. It was about the Rights of the Child. We had been considering the work of the United Nations, following on from the 'UN Rights of the Child'. Sharing with the children, in an age appropriate way, that the world is not equal and that we should strive towards a more equal world forms the basis of much of our work in Collective Worship.

Our school curriculum is steeped in the SMSC (Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural) work and sharing the work of aspirational men and women across the world in the fields of the Arts, Science, Sport, Religion as well as those with a humanitarian mission is central to the work of the school.

Family Learning in Red Class

We had planned two workshop evenings in November, one in person and in virtual, but because of the current outbreak in Year 3, we are not permitted to have external visitors on site. We will, therefore, invite you to our virtual meeting on Wednesday 3rd November at 6pm. A meeting ID and passcode will be sent out on ParentApp.

Join us to find out about our approach to teaching reading and how you can help the children, as well as ways to support writing, maths and other useful tips.

Operation Encompass

As a school, part of our safeguarding systems and procedures include notifications from the Police with regard to any Domestic Abuse incidents involving children at the school. This is called Operation Encompass. Remember, we are here to support the children and families so do get in touch if you feel we need to know something significant that impacts any children in school.

A FOCUS FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS HAS BEEN DEVELOPING GROWTH MINDSET. WE CONTINUE TO WORK ON THIS AND THE NOTES BELOW MAY HELP NEW FAMILIES SUPPORT A GROWTH MINDSET WITH THEIR CHILDREN AT HOME.

Following the disruption of COVID-19, we are talking about growth mindset with the children to support their resilience and ability to strengthen their attitudes to 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!