

December 2019

Dear Families

This has been another busy and productive term at Blackwell First School. A number of staff have been welcomed back from maternity leave and we have recruited further staff to cover specific needs as we aim to provide excellent support to all the children.

We have welcomed new children, mainly to the Nursery and Reception classes this term but some into Year 3 and are pleased that they have all settled in so well and are getting involved in the wide range of activities at the school.

I am delighted that Mrs Moss has returned after her operation and should like to thank all the staff, and Miss Townsend in particular, for ensuring that the school continued to run calmly and efficiently during her absence. This was a further example of how the staff operate as an effective team – and team working is a skill they are emphasising to the children every day!

There have been two changes to the Governing Body this autumn. Claire McNeill is now an Associate Governor as her children have left the school but in view of her expertise she has kindly agreed to continue supporting us. Her place as Parent Governor has been taken by Claire Kirkby-Webb following the election earlier in the term. She has previously served as a Community Governor at the school and so can make an immediate contribution.

Since my last letter, the School Room has been built and is proving to be an invaluable asset as it allows a wide range of small meetings to be carried out without impacting on the routine activities of the school. A number of smaller maintenance projects are under discussion for the coming months but these should be carried out over holiday periods and further planting for a new Forest School site is scheduled due to the heavy use at the school.

In my last letter, I explained that Ofsted, the body responsible for assessing the performance of schools, would introduce a new framework from September 2019 (and that they are likely to reintroduce inspections for schools rated as Outstanding at their last inspection).

Their aim is to assess whether schools have

‘a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all learners, particularly the most disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and /or disabilities (SEND) or high needs, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.’



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They are thus giving more attention to the broader aspects of education than in the past.

This fits well with the long term vision at BFS which led to the reorganisation of the school day some years ago in order to ensure that the children are given a broad education as well as a good grounding in reading, writing and mathematics. The range of activities during the school day and the various external quality marks which are shown on the website give strong evidence of this. Of particular note is the Platinum Artsmark held only by a handful of schools nationally and the Platinum Sportsmark emphasizing the school's focus on these areas of school life.

The Ofsted inspection team will make judgements on Quality of Education, Behaviour and Attitudes, Personal Development and Leadership and Management. The various independent assessments of the school's performance which we have had during the last year suggest that we should be able to demonstrate a strong performance in all these areas.

The Inspectors will also look for evidence that the school is giving support to schools in the need of help and our status as a Teaching School in collaboration with Charford School and wider alliance partners provides strong evidence of this.

As a result of the Ofsted changes to inspection, the school has reviewed and revised the Self-Evaluation Programme which is produced each year. The objectives in the School Development Plan for this academic year include raising standards in writing at length, developing problem solving in mathematics, reading (with an emphasis on understanding) and improving children's language development. Support from families, especially on the last two of these, is particularly valuable.

Governors have attended training to ensure that they are aware of the revised requirements and objectives in order that they can make informed judgements when they carry out their regular visits to the classrooms and when they monitor progress against the School Development Plan drawn up in conjunction with the Head Teacher.

In conclusion, I should also like to celebrate the wide range of activities that take place such as School trips, Sports events, Christmas Concerts, Summer Fete and Christmas Fayre which involve so many people including School Staff, Governors, the PTFA and volunteers and thank all concerned for their major efforts.

I hope you will all have a good holiday this Christmas.

Hugh Evans

Chair of Governors

