



Key Stage 1 enjoyed performing their Nativity in the school hall this year.

Christmas 2022- we thought you may enjoy some photos...



Purple Class ready to perform their Nativity. Dressing up makes each event special!



Mrs Marks loves reading stories and here she is in full flow during our storyswap.



Mrs Barker, Mrs Miles and Miss Shepherd cooked a super Christmas Lunch for everyone.

As we start 2023, we wish you all a Happy New Year.

NEWSLETTER for Blackwell First School

...developing the whole child...

Dear Families,

Happy New Year everyone. Roll on 2023! The end of last term was a highlight of the autumn term, with super productions of 'The Nutcracker', 'Nativity' and a special Nursery and Reception 'Christmas Singing' as well as their pre recorded 'Nativity'. The children performed so well. Thank you on behalf of the staff and myself for attending the productions and piano concert and for kind Christmas gifts, cards and words we received.

We start this Spring term with an exciting 'Building a Business' project, including art and Science as focus subjects in addition to the inspirational texts that the children will read. Setting up a business to support a local charity will be the focus for the children's learning over the coming weeks. The texts that the children read in school are all award winning and are planned and chosen to support the children's vocabulary and written language.

We will be very sad to be saying farewell to Mrs Hargreaves and Mrs Bailey at the end of January as they retire and start new adventures. Between them, they have served the school tirelessly for almost forty years as our administration team. Working in a primary school takes commitment and a great deal of goodwill and both Mrs Bailey and Mrs Hargreaves have demonstrated this in abundance, shovelling snow at weekends to enable school to open on a Monday, emptying the post box all through school holidays and going above and beyond in their everyday jobs. Everyone will miss them, but I will particularly miss them as they have kept the school going through all of the highs and lows of running a primary school and have been a huge support to me as headteacher. In their professional style, they have stayed on for the past few months to oversee the induction of new administration staff, enabling a smooth transition and we are grateful for their tremendous support and dedication. We will be collecting for retirement gifts for them both and if you would like to donate, please do donate via Mrs Garner in the office.

The Spring term is an important term for your child. The children have settled into their classes and it is a time to focus on moving on the learning, dealing with any parts of the curriculum that the children find challenging and further developing new learning. Expectations of skills, in order to reach national expectations, have been outlined in our own Blackwell curriculum and we support the children in developing as many lifelong learning skills as possible without 'teaching to the test'. We do need your help though. In this age of technology, children are spending increased amounts of time in front of screens and are not reading as they previously did. Please ensure they read to you regularly (at least 4 times per week and use the ebooks in Red, Green and the start of Purple Classes) and that you read to them to help develop their vocabulary, their use of standard English and their enjoyment of reading. Suggestions for age relevant bedtime story books are on their Home Reading cards. Expectations for times tables by the end of Year 4s is that the children will need to know all their times tables up to 12x12 by heart. In the national test, they only have 6 seconds per question and there are 25 questions, 20 of which will be the 6,7,8,9,12 times tables. This 6 seconds includes navigating the online response, so their recall needs to be instant. Please help them learn these at home. It is crucial for the children to learn these number facts in order to calculate mentally in Key Stage 2. This will help their transition to Middle School, whether or not the children take a test this year.

The key to successful learning is the quality of teaching. Here at Blackwell, we are fortunate to have very strong teachers and teaching assistants. This year, training for staff has included ensuring new staff have accessed all training that has previously been accessed by established staff, mental maths training and further Little Wandle phonics training. We have embedded Group Reading Practice sessions three times per week for children in Red to Purple Classes to ensure that reading skills are a high priority. This is for all children. For many children, though, despite strong teaching, there will be times when 'they just don't get it' and this is when we introduce an individual or a group of children to intervention support. This means that the child/ children will take part in additional support on specific areas of the curriculum for a short amount of time to enable them to make more rapid progress. If your child comments that they are receiving small group or one to one support (with the exception of reading) then they are likely to be taking part in intervention. This aims to ensure that no child is 'left behind' and has the chance to reach national expectation.

As well as Parent Consultation 'meetings' in March, with information about the children's progress between the autumn and spring terms you will receive information about how to help them with their learning on class newsletters. Thank you.

Best wishes for 2023, Mrs A Moss.

A visit from Father Christmas and his Elf made storynight especially enjoyable.



Some of the Year 4s sang to the residents at Burgot Grange at Christmas.



We thank you all for sharing in our on site performances. It made them extra special this year.



PARENT QUESTIONNAIRES

As part of working in partnership with our families, we send out a questionnaire each year for parents to complete. These help us to develop our practice and are useful evaluation tools. The questionnaire that we send out is identical to the OFSTED (School Inspection Team) questionnaires that they issue. This means that we are able to evaluate our practice from your feedback in advance of an inspection and address any issues. (For example previous feedback on pre school provision, homework, home reading, after school provision and sport led to us developing our own After School Club, increasing the sport on offer and changing homework and reading provision).

Blackwell First School was last inspected in January 2011 and Ofsted has not inspected schools previously rate outstanding for a number of years. This has now changed and we expect an Ofsted inspection within the near future and we continue to work hard to ensure that we do our best for all of the children in terms of academic progress, behaviour, safety, life skills and working in collaboration. From September 2019, there were significant changes to the Ofsted Inspection process (including the questionnaire) making it, as ever, increasingly challenging to be graded as good or outstanding. We will, as always, strive to do our best for the children. This will ultimately be best for the children, the school and hopefully an inspection outcome!

Your feedback is useful to help us prioritise our work. Please complete the Feedback Questionnaire which will be sent home shortly and return it by the end of January 2023. Thank you.



SCHOOL SPORT/ HEALTH AND THE ARTS

Mrs Barker, Mrs Miles and Miss Shepherd are preparing our lunches to start off 2023 as a healthy year for us all. Please see the details below regarding healthy snacks.

Following on from art projects with Mark Riley, working to develop the front of school, we will be working with the PFTA to develop the back playground during this year. We will design playground displays to support children's retention of key learning, whilst at play!

Parking Please continue to park safely and respectfully along St Catherine's Road and Woodcroft Close. Our neighbours are often long suffering with regards to parking on the road and we aim to maintain good relationships with them. Please help us by leaving driveways clear and avoiding turning in the road. We have offered residents BFS parking slips to place on windscreens of cars blocking driveways. Please avoid those on yours! Many thanks.

Parent app – PLEASE ENSURE YOU HAVE ACCESS TO THE PARENTAPP AND THAT YOUR BFS FRIENDS DO TOO SO THAT WE CAN COMMUNICATE WITH YOU.

We are aware that some families do have access but are not always 'in the loop' so the more families who have notifications turned on, the more likely everyone is to know what is happening in a timely way.

Many thanks.

Returning to school- January 2023

Staffing had become a challenge at the end of term as COVID and a variety of other illnesses spread around school. We hope that the break has helped but ask that you support us.

When returning to school, please:

- Keep children away from school with **any** covid symptoms for 3 days (testing if possible and informing school of results) and
- Take children with symptoms of scarlet fever to the GP.

We will:

- Ventilate regularly;
- Handwash regularly;
- Clean equipment and areas regularly;
- Ensure staff with covid symptoms test and are absent when positive and
- Continue to operate following guidelines from Public Health.

At **Blackwell First School** we aim to educate the whole child and to ensure children are happy, healthy and fulfil their potential in terms of development of skills for life, social and moral values and academic success.

We work towards the aims on our vision statement in all we do. Progress towards our School Development Plan during the autumn term is outlined below:

Quality of Education

Last term, we worked with Rebecca Kennedy, English consultant, to further refine our English curriculum. This will enable teachers to be supported with a wide range of creative ideas for teaching English and to motivate the children to write.

Outcomes for pupils - Monitoring of the children's progress last term showed that the vast majority of children are making good progress towards their challenging targets. Children who have made less progress than expected are being supported additionally through small group or individualised programmes, monitored closely by Miss Townsend.

Personal development and behaviour and attitudes

A focus on manners and respect has been a part of PSHE teaching as well as Collective Worship and relationships across school.

Outcomes for pupils- We have seen a noticeable difference in the children's ability to use 'please' and 'thank you' as well as giving eye contact and speaking to each other and staff when they are spoken to.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

This section of school self evaluation focusses on leadership, including governance and this year the focus is on developing the skills of subject leaders. As a staff team we have monitored all subjects and spent time creating effective self evaluation of all subject areas. The senior leaders at school are being coached by an Educational Consultant in order to further develop their skills. Work will continue towards this year's school development plan targets and we will update you on progress.

Tea and Toast

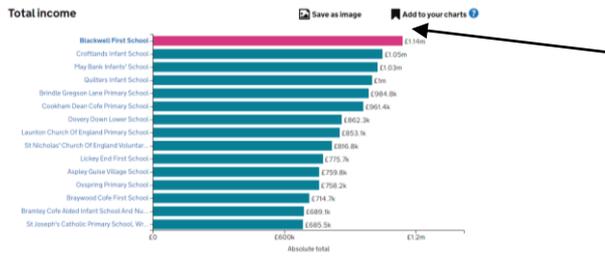
Many thanks to those supporting our 'Tea and Toast' café which opens each day 8.30-9.30am and 3-4pm. Volunteers bake and serve in this, supporting school with much needed income. If each family bought one item from 'Tea and Toast' each week during the school year, this could fund 50% of the salary of a Teaching Assistant or 30% of the salary of a teacher. This would be amazing! We do not wish to reduce staffing levels so any support that you can provide would be much appreciated. Huge thanks to our 'Tea and Toast' volunteers and to the PFTA for their hard work.

With a trip to Midland Art Centre and Birmingham Hippodrome as well as their Christmas Pantomime in school, the children have certainly had an opportunity to develop culturally during December.

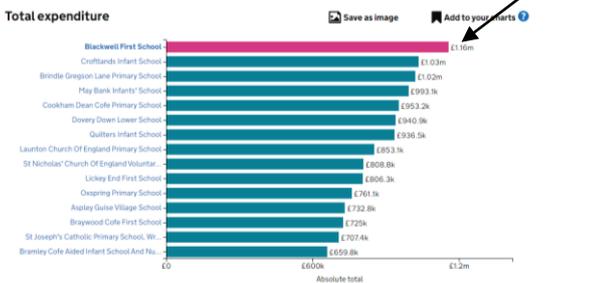
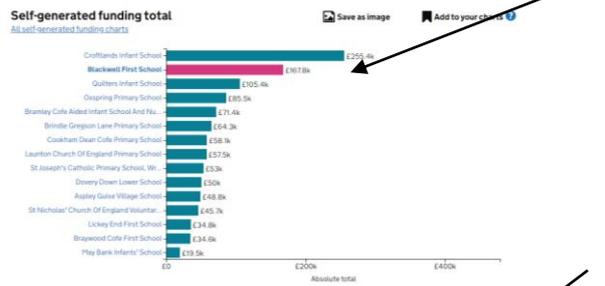


PFTA support

Congratulations to the PFTA and thank you to you all for raising over £1,500 at the Storynight and various other lovely events last term. Thank you for continuing to support the work of the school through fundraising. Thank you to Claire Richards (1), Claire Richards (2), Becky Myatt, Carrie Whitehouse and the whole PFTA team. The funding raised this year will support the purchase of new resources as well as supporting some School Council back playground projects. You may have read or heard reports of a national school funding challenge and here at Blackwell things mirror the national picture and I would like to explain why our PFTA and in school fundraising is as crucial as it is. The Department for Education (DfE) provides us with financial benchmarking information, comparing us with schools of a similar size and deprivation. Below are some tables that highlight both our income and expenditure.



This total income includes all funding from DfE (Department of Education) and funding for the Nursery, applied for grants and Universal School Meals (Red, Green and Purple Classes). It also includes all self generated income, including the PFTA income, Before and After School income and the Blackwell Kitchen. Our income is higher than other schools due to this self generated income (see below).



It is clear to see how without the self generated income, our total expenditure on the children would be far less than average and the school would not be as successful academically or socially and the opportunities and experiences would not be as rich. It is, therefore, with huge thanks to the PFTA/ Tea and Toast volunteers and the hard work of the school in running the Club, Kitchen and Nursery in order to generate income for the school that enables us to continue to offer the quality provision that we do. Finally, during this extremely financially challenging year, thank you to you all for supporting events and popping coins into collection pots at Christmas and supporting the PFTA. It is for the benefit of the school and the children.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

We start the New Year with the following themes for discussion: New Year (focusing on making positive changes and reflecting on the old and moving on); Courage (personal courage and making the right moral choices as well as online safety and safety) and Honesty. The children will consider these themes using art.

We will also consider sporting events for 2023, such as the Cricket and Rugby World Cups as well as Arts events, including our local Worcester based 'Voices and Visions' and the King's Coronation.

I wonder what New Year resolutions you have made? Are your children's resolutions linked to citizenship and consideration of others as discussed in Collective Worship and as mentioned in HM King's Speech? We are trying to encourage the children to think of others, rather than themselves with their resolutions. Our aim through Collective Worship is to support a sense of community within the school and this is particularly important when COVID-19 has led to many people looking inwards. We are in danger of losing the sense of community that was central to many during COVID. Opening their eyes to their role in community is particularly relevant and important.

Later this half term, the children will learn about unity, discovering that there are more things that unite countries than divide them and how this links to other children in school. We will consider our relationship with Europe and the wider world. As part of this theme, we will work on British values and the universal values outlined by the United Nations and the way in which they impact on everyone in the UK. As world events unfold, we tackle them through our discussions so that the children have an informed understanding at their level of issues that they are increasingly exposed to through television and media but without the background understanding.

We will work on answering current issues that the children ask about sensitively as they arise in a factual way. We expect further questions regarding the ongoing war in Ukraine and will answer these questions simply but honestly in a way that does not cause anxiety but that helps children feel empowered by their own behaviours, such as charitable donations.

HEALTHY SNACKS AND LUNCH BOXES

Now that the festive season has passed, we wish to remind families that as a healthy school we encourage children to bring in healthy snacks (such as fruit, tuck shop items, cheese, dried fruit etc) and lunchboxes. Sandwiches, fruit, yoghurts, dried fruit etc are healthy ideas. We wish to remind you that sweets, crisps and chocolates are not part of a healthy lunchbox and we ask you to view them as treats for having at home. The message we teach the children is "everything in moderation" and in school we strive to promote healthy eating where possible. **We also remind you that we cannot have snacks with nuts in school, including cereal bars, as a result of children having severe nut allergies.**

We also ask that you do send a snack or 40p in daily as an increasing number of children are not receiving a snack mid morning and it is a long time to wait until lunchtime. If we provide a snack for them, we will let you know via a parentapp message.

Spring term dates

- 3.1.23 Teacher training day for – school closed for children
- 4.1.23 School opens for all children
- 5.1.23 Hearing tests for Red Class
- 16.1.23 PFTA meeting 7pm
- 6.2.23 Y3 (Yellow) RE visit
- 13.2.23 Y1 (Green) and Y4 (Blue) RE visits
- 16.2.23 Purple Class Bake Sale
- 17.2.23 Teacher training day – school closed for children