



NEWSLETTER for Blackwell First School

...developing the whole child...

During our 'What's Special?' topic, the children have been learning about world religions and some visits have been made to different places of worship.

February 24

Dear Families,

The Year 4 children visited a Hindu temple as part of their learning about Hinduism. The visits are an important part of their learning as it brings to life the facts that they have learned about in their classrooms.

What a super start we have had to 2024 with our Blackwell Film Festival and What's Special? topics! The children have used their English, Art and Science skills to create their films and enjoyed sharing them with another class. They have also learned about different religions and enjoyed fabulous trips to places of worship (see photos). With conflict around us in the world, developing the children's tolerance, understanding and respect is increasingly important. Each class focuses on a different world religion and through both classroom lessons and the enriching visits to the places of worship, the children will hopefully develop into kind, tolerant adults. Rev Sheri visited us during this topic and compared different religions working together as similar to different parts of the body working together. Her message, 'Just because we have eyes doesn't mean we wouldn't want our ears,' resonated when we considered our world and all its wonderful differences.



The children in Red Class will visit St Catherine's church, the Year 3s will visit the Central Mosque in Birmingham and the Year 2s will visit Worcester Cathedral.

It is so important that the children read both their phonic linked reading books and 'real' books (phonic linked) and that you share their library books, designed to develop vocabulary and comprehension skills later in school. Reading stories at bedtime (or any other time) at home is also important and helps the children's language development. Did you know that children need to learn 8 new words each day to develop an age appropriate vocabulary by the age of 11? 5 of these are learned in school and usually around 3 at home and reading books is a good way in. If you are short of ideas about which books to share at home, then look at the children's Home Reading cards or look at links on 'Carnegie Greenaway' awards for ideas. It is crucial that the children's language is developed by them being exposed to texts that are above their reading age.



The challenges of the National Curriculum are present in each year group and we work hard to continue to make learning meaningful for the children through the use of topics and exciting projects to end topic work.

We work in school to develop the children's academic skills, but also value the life skills that we help to develop alongside you as parents. Developing these skills as part of the school teaching day and afternoon extra curricular clubs is an important part of the children's experience. Some of the main skills we try to develop in the children are our key competencies: co-operation; communication; independence; resilience and problem solving.

These competencies support our work to develop the core values linked to our vision. These are:

- Respectful and responsible citizens;
- Competent and confident learners and
- Aspirational individuals.

Help us to help them by ensuring they take responsibility for themselves wherever possible. Try to encourage concentration in the children rather than a flitting between activities. The more support you can give by talking to the children about their learning, sharing books, practising mental maths and focussing on practising skills shared on class newsletters will only benefit them as they move through the school. Working together will help the children achieve these skills sooner.

The teachers are really looking forward to welcoming you into school later this half term to enjoy sharing the children's work books with you as part of parent consultation meetings.

Thank you as always for your support.

Best wishes, Mrs Moss

In our conflict filled world, it is crucial that we support the children in developing tolerance and respect for people of all faiths and no faith. Our RE learning supports this.



The Year 1 children learn about Judaism and have visited a Synagogue this week. They enjoyed finding out about the Torah Scrolls.



At Blackwell, each year group has a religion of focus during RE learning:
Reception- Christianity
Year 1- Judaism
Year 2- Christianity
Year 3- Islam
Year 4- Hinduism
We follow the Worcestershire Agreed Syllabus for RE and the children explore the factual aspects of the religion, including beliefs and practices.

Local Authority and Partnership Annual Review/ OFSTED report

As a school designated as 'Outstanding' in 2011, we had not received inspections from Ofsted since then, but were inspected in December 2023. We are awaiting publication of the final report. During the past twelve years, we have commissioned external reviews annually. Our annual review took place during the autumn term. Some activity took place on site and lessons were visited, staff interviewed, children talked to and children's books scrutinised. The external reviewers were pleased with their observations and have agreed with the school's self evaluation and focus priorities. The parent questionnaire has been sent home and we value your contributions. Feedback on these will be provided in a future newsletter and we will highlight an area for development as a result of your feedback and make any changes as needed. Many thanks for your support.

SCHOOL SPORT/ HEALTH AND THE ARTS

Sport- All Sporting Fixtures at other schools have been set for this year and we continue to develop sport in PE lessons and to have our Sport's Club as part of enrichment and extra curricular clubs. We restart our football club after half term.

Arts – We are excited to work with Mark Riley on developing the school with some whole school art work. They will represent the school and the community that is at its heart. Many thanks to the PFTA for their support with funding the children's art work.

Sainsbury's
SCHOOL
GAMES

Reading support at home

The children in Red and Green Classes learn to read using Little Wandle phonics. Purple Class upwards also use the strategies from the programme to support reading with the older children. There is a short video below that explains how to help with reading at home. This includes why the children bring home a phonic matched book as well as a 'Reading for Pleasure' book. Many thanks for supporting your child's reading.

[Click here](#)

Mrs Moss absence

I will be absent for a short time following planned surgery over the February half term period and also for a little later in the spring. I will be working from home when I am able and when I am not on site, Miss Townsend and the wonderful staff will cover for me and ensure that everything runs as smoothly as ever. I will be back before you know it!

Hot lunches Mrs Barker, Mrs Miles and Miss Shepherd prepare freshly cooked homemade lunches which are enjoyed by 75% of the school, including most staff. Everything is made fresh each day and is a healthy, hot meal for the children at lunch time. Please encourage those eating sandwiches to choose hot meals on some days (or all) as it is such a good meal and a far healthier option than much of what is in lunchboxes. Thank you.

HELPING AT HOME

As teachers, we know that we are only part of the children's success with learning and that children have a far greater chance of success in education if they are supported at home. We are very fortunate to have a school where children are very often well supported. Below is a list of ways you can support your child at home:

- Give your child time and talk to them (expecting eye contact) and a discussion where the children speak to you in sentences;
- Give them time off so that they don't feel they are constantly 'working';
- Use the homework sheet as a guide to what the children are learning and this will enable you to talk more about school (even if they don't complete the homework activities);
- Read with the children at least four times a week, asking them to talk about what they are reading and not just read the words;
- Read them bedtime stories as this helps to develop language and vocabulary (suggestions are on the Home Reading Cards);
- Practise mental maths as outlined on the homework sheets as these skills form the basis of the children's ability to calculate in maths and
- **Children in Y2-4 need help to learn their times tables by heart out of order- please help them.**

Finally, the children are children. They need time to rest and sleep, please make sure they have plenty of sleep and time away from electronic games/ toys, particularly before bedtime. (Current advice is no blue light for at least an hour before bedtime).

Professional development

Our staff have the most up to date professional development, in line with research and during the autumn term, some highlights have been:

- Reading/ Phonics – for all staff to ensure consistency of provision;
- Mental Maths fluency– for most staff to share good practice and
- Writing Curriculum.

New staff always have a detailed plan of induction CPD to ensure that they are quickly up to speed.

This ensures that the children have the best possible teaching with highly skilled staff.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP Our themes for the next two weeks are **Tolerance and Wonderful World**. We will think about Tolerance in the context of sharing and playing out on the playground and also in the wider world context of tolerating other viewpoints from our own, both cultural and religious. We will consider works of art and stories that support our understanding of these complex themes.

Please remember that we are here to support you all. We are a telephone call or email away.

Best wishes to you all,
Mrs Moss