

NEWSLETTER

for Blackwell First School

Blackwell First School,
St. Catherine's Rd.,
Blackwell,
Near Bromsgrove,
Worcestershire.
B60 1BN
October 23

Dear Families,

Learning an instrument is part of the KS2 music curriculum and many children also have lessons. Ask at the office for further details of up and coming fife lessons for Year 1 upwards, with Mrs Spurgeon. Try this out before deciding to learn the flute.



The start of term is a very busy time when children learn new routines and get into the swing of new expectations as they are one year older! Everyone is settling in very well. Well done Team BFS.



We are all very pleased with how well the children are beginning to settle into the new school year. Red Class children are learning routines 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 and many new routines. Thanks to Mrs Webb, Mrs Birley and Mrs Spurgeon 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 and Mrs Franklin for their astonishing 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 and 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. Last year our attendance figure was above 96%, which is higher than national figures but lower than pre covid. Covid restrictions meant children were not attending even when they felt well. Our high attendance 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! I will share some updates with you in this letter, including...Christmas. Sshh...

Best wishes,
Mrs Moss



The mud kitchen is good fun and learning to share is a developing skill!



Our School Councillors were voted onto the School Council recently. Congratulations.



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 enrichment 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 Enrichment Club staff for running such fantastic clubs for the children.

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'. This week we are considering 'Working Together' and people who help to make our communities better, from fire fighters to police, teachers to medical staff. We read Michael Rosen's poem, 'These are the hands'. 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. By the end of the week, we will hopefully help them consider their own behaviours and responsibilities.

PARENT CONSULTATIONS & OPEN EVENING

It was lovely to open up school for open evening and to see how excited the children were to take you around school. Many thanks for taking such an interest in school. Parent Consultations will take place in a few weeks when you will be able to talk with the teachers about the children's learning.



AFTERNOON CLUBS

Now that Red Class children are full time in school and enjoying all of the benefits, they are welcome to go home at 1.40pm or stay for afternoon enrichment clubs. The afternoon clubs provide a more relaxed opportunity to explore different areas of our broader curriculum but all of the national curriculum is taught during the sessions before 1.40pm. During Reception, they experience clubs as a class but once they are in Year 1, they are mixed with other friends from other classes.

In music lessons, children learn to sing, listen and appraise, perform and compose. Blue Class children are using the chime sets to perform in their lesson.

...post COVID help...

Research shows that the impact of COVID will be with us for several years and a recent resurgence in cases is not helping!

Our summer term results were pleasing, although writing still remains a challenge for some children and we are focusing on writing this year in order to reach the school's pre covid standards.

We would really appreciate your support with the children's learning and development, and offer some suggestions below:

-Please make sure that the children have sufficient rest time, away from school and evening/ weekend activities;

-Help them to have plenty of sleep, with regular early nights and time away from screens and devices for at least an hour (ideally two hours) before bed time;

-Help the children to become resilient and independent. In the words of Maria Montessori, 'Avoid helping children with anything that they can do for themselves';

-Read school books with them at least four times a week;

-For Year 2, 3 and 4 children, learn by heart the Times Tables for their year group and

-Enjoy bedtime stories together, even as they move into Key Stage 2 (Years 3 and 4).

With your continued support, we look forward to working with you all over the coming months.

Ho ho ho...Christmas celebrations

Festive Film

Our usual Christmas Productions will take place in the school hall. We will provide two tickets per child for set performances due to restricted space. We will also film the children separately and then create a whole school film (the ideal Christmas gift for family we may suggest...)

Panto Season

Our panto is booked and party games will take place on the same day.

Christmas Lunch

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

Christmas Storynight and Gift Fair

The children will be invited to our annual Christmas Storynight and visit from Father Christmas on December 4th and we are holding a Christmas Gift Fair for families to stay to with refreshments whilst the children are enjoying Storynight. If you know anyone who would like to host a stall, please let us know.

Christmas Gifts

Ordering a 2023 calendar and Christmas DVD will be part of our festive treats.

Please support Tea & Toast and PFTA events as the children all benefit from additional funds raised.

Whether we are reading, writing, counting or playing, we are very busy and learn new things every day. It is great being at school.



FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, A FOCUS ON OUR SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN WAS 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 national lockdown, we are talking about growth mindset with the children to support their full time return to school.

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!