

NEWSLETTER

for Blackwell First School

Blackwell First School,
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B60 1BN
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Dear Families,

We all hope that the children have enjoyed a good break. At the start of our second half term and as a school we wish to thank you all for your support in helping the children settle in so well to this school year and for supporting the PFTA with their fund raising events. The 'Letter B' themed scarecrow festival before half term was a wonderful example of the special community spirit at Blackwell and it is lovely to see how proud the children are of their school.

One of the most rewarding aspects of working in a school for the staff, is seeing how happy the children are and how well they are learning new skills. Thank you all for your support and for your attendance at Parent Consultation meetings before half term. It was good to see virtually 100% attendance. Thank you.

On a previous newsletter we shared many events that will take place in the run up to Christmas and will be sharing a poster of these events to help you plan for the coming weeks and also prioritise possible spending. There will be options such as Christmas cards and a Christmas storynight. Our annual theatre trip is the main event, which we know will benefit the children hugely and is an important experience for them. You can pay for this in instalments if you contact the school office.

This half term is always one of the busiest in school as the children learn about 'Remembrance Day' and their 'STORIES' project and also Christmas arrives before too long. During 'Stories', the children will delve into reading. The start of the topic begins with a 'Dilemma'. 'Dilemma based Learning' is a style of learning that engages the children in teamwork and problem solving whilst learning the knowledge required in different subjects as well as applying previous learning. The children all have set class texts to read and will consider what and how to plan for the Big Blackwell Book Read. This encompasses ethical dilemmas and twists and turns along the way, that help children realise that decisions are not always black and white.

Christmas festivities begin in December and learning is focussed around the Nativity story. Nursery (Blue Team) and Red Class will prepare songs to share with you on the day and you will be able to watch a short tableaux that Red Class will produce of the Nativity. Nursery (Red Team) will share some Christmas activities in the Nursery cabin. Purple and Green Classes will perform the Nativity story whilst the older classes will perform 'The Snowman', our own version of the famous story. Through our concerts, we develop the children's cultural awareness, including music, dance and literature. All of the concerts will be professionally filmed and available to stream over Christmas.

Developing learning behaviours and attitudes is a significant area of our work here at school through our work on values and key competencies. (Respectful and Responsible citizens, Competent and Confident learners and Aspirational individuals). Nationally, there is concern regarding children's mental well being and emotional resilience. Hopefully, our walk up Snowdon has helped the children see that the adults in school also need to show resilience! Our main focus is to develop **children's independence**. Our focus on Growth Mindset supports this and the children may well come home and talk to you about learning from mistakes, being resilient, working hard, facing a challenge or trying something new. As a staff, we have received training in **emotion coaching** to support children's varied emotional needs. The key messages, that may be useful for you as parents to know, are that distraction and hiding emotions is not always a healthy approach. Expressing the correct emotion to the children with an explanation is helpful to them in developing their understanding of the emotions they experience. When the children themselves are displaying an emotion, it helps when you verbalise the emotion, 'I can see that you are angry and I understand why, but it is important that when you are angry that you.....' Many thanks to our Educational Psychologist, Dr Anita Soni for her support in school.

As you can imagine, friendships are the main area requiring emotional support. Bullying is not tolerated and we react swiftly when any bullying starts to be displayed. Most friendship issues, however, need time and patience from adults to support children in resolving issues themselves. It is important to help children identify strategies for solving their own issues, as adults will not always be around to help. Finally, we continue our work on trying to undo the work of advertising and social pressures with regard to **gender stereotyping**. It is interesting to talk to the children and realise how many of them have fixed ideas about the roles of men/women. Our work in Collective Worship and lessons is supporting this as we share examples of famous men and women from all areas of scientific and creative fields. Finally, our third value associated with our vision is **aspirational individuals** and this is about opening children's eyes through the experiences we provide so that they have ambition and a desire to become good individuals who contribute to our community and society.

Best wishes,
Mrs A Moss

Dressing up as a book character day- 5th December. Please don't go to any trouble! With things you have at home, the children can be creative! Jeans and a shirt for Roald Dahl's Charlie etc...

Book Fair – w/b 24th November every day after school. Come along and buy some books and enjoy a snack from Tea and Toast.

Red Class Family Learning meeting- Mrs James is running this in the hall on Wednesday 5th November (adults only), please come along.

Children in Need Day The children may bring donations for Children in Need on Friday 14th November and wear badges, headbands, spots or colourful socks! Alternatively you can donate online [Fundraising Hub - BBC Children in Need](#)

SCHOOL SPORT and THE ARTS

- Wake and Shake - our half termly competition showed excellent co-operation and effort. Well done Red Class for being the first champions of the year.
- Afternoon enrichment clubs provide the children with the opportunity to explore and apply their art skills to a wider range of artworks. The children really enjoy this close link between the curriculum and their clubs. Thank you Miss Kuriger and club leaders for excellent opportunities for all of the children.
- Sporting events have started to take place for this academic year with Blue Class kicking off the year with their Cross Country event.

Developing mental maths

At Parent Consultation meetings, mental maths targets for Reception to Year 4 were shared with families so that you are able to support your child/ren to practise these skills at home. The curriculum is taught at school, but, for most children, they need to spend time practising their learning for them to have instant recall. If you are able to spare time to support them, this will make them able to apply their facts more quickly in class. Targets are shared with you to help support them at home. Numbers that total any numbers within 10 and then 20 are key for Years 1 and 2 and Times Tables are essential for Years 3 and 4. Thank you for your support.

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Developing mastery

Our curriculum development work centres on mastery. The essence of this is that children should master the curriculum at whatever level that they are working, without being pushed onto new content before they are secure in the current level. In practice, this means teachers need to ask searching, open ended questions, set problems and puzzles for children to solve and set tasks that enable children to apply their learning in different subject areas. When you look through the children's books, you see examples of this. In maths, we are using concrete resources such as the abacus or counting beads and blocks at all levels to engage children in explaining their maths clearly, showing that they have genuinely understood the concepts that they are learning. Explanation of learning is a key way of assessing children's mastery of their learning.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Here at Blackwell, we use the daily act of worship to support children's development as tolerant, kind and understanding individuals. Each week, there is a theme and these times often include information about famous people, places, artists or scientists in order to broaden the children's horizons. We base all of our worship on the 'UN Convention - Rights of the Child' and the children are increasingly able to understand their own place in society and their responsibility as they mature in school. This month our themes include: Co-operation; Our Wonderful World; Trust and Democracy. As global citizens it is important that we make a difference to their views of the world.

Spoken English- helping at home

In order to develop children as writers, they need to be good speakers and to have a varied vocabulary and good sentence structure. As teachers and families, we are the models they learn from. Here are some 'Top Tips' for supporting spoken English:

- Encourage children to look at you as you speak to them, as they learn a lot from non verbal communication, such as facial expressions, gestures etc;
- Use and also explain new words to the children to build the bank of vocabulary they use;
- Speak in full sentences with them to help them hear the grammatical structures of language;
- Correct children's developing speech and grammar as it will not necessarily develop over time unless it is corrected. Correct it by repeating the sentence correctly. Common errors include: **We was** which should be **We were**/ incorrect use of **th** and **f**, children often say fink instead of think and need to learn to stick out their tongues for th/ and **past tense for irregular verbs** used incorrectly, such as caught instead of caught.

The more the children hear you talk, and talk back themselves, the more their language will develop.

HELPING WITH READING at HOME

Following parent consultation meetings before half term, we have become aware that the children know the language that we use to help them learn to read, but that this is not always familiar to families. We have shared some below to help you.

Children in Red, Green and Purple Classes will continue to be issued with a book that matches the book that they read in school. This is an important book for them to access as it is a familiar book that has been read in school and helps them to practise their application of phonics. They will also bring home a matched phonics book that is unfamiliar but that they can use their phonic knowledge to read. Finally, they have access to a library book each week to share with you. For younger children, you may need to read this to them.

Once the children become fluent readers, they will move on to levelled books of their own choosing.

Language the children may use with you:

'Grapheme' – letter or letters to represent a sound

'Digraph/ trigraph' – 'two letters one sound' / 'three letters one sound' (It can help to point to the digraph for them, e.g. oa in boat)

'Soundtalk and blend' – this is when they say sounds and blend them.

For multi syllabic words – 'let's chunk', e.g. holiday, chunk into hol-i-day.

Developing children's cultural awareness Children who have broad experiences such as visiting museums, art galleries, the theatre and concerts as well as a knowledge of historical events, art and musical history and discussion about national events and the news will support children's cultural awareness which helps them access the content of the national curriculum as they are able to make links between their out of school experiences and the curriculum. This is why we, as a school, plan educational visits to museums, art galleries and theatre trips. These are memorable and important experiences and visits will take place later in the year, including a theatre visit next month and visit to a place of worship in the spring term.

Bits and bobs...

Poppy appeal – This year, we are selling some poppies in aid of Remembrance Day fundraising. The children can purchase poppies before November 11th in school. Please encourage them to bring in their donations and buy them from Blackwell High Street. They will be available during the day and after school. We suggest a minimum donation of £1.00 and £2.00 for larger homemade poppies.

Early Years Meeting for Red Class families (adults only)

Mrs James is running a meeting for **Reception parents on 5.11.25 at 6-7pm**. She will explain early approaches to reading, writing and maths as well as the philosophy behind outdoor learning and Forest School. This will support you in helping them at home and make a great start to school. We hope that you can come along to the school hall.

PFTA – Thank you to the PFTA for their support as always. The autumn term events have started well and have been supported by many of you. The PFTA is funding both resources and subsidising trips. They will be funding half of the cost of each child's trips. This is amazing. Thank you.