



Jess has been working on her art skills when painting a troll inspired by her 'Dilemma' day which introduced the new topic 'Music to our Ears' and the story of Peer Gynt.

Sophie and Charlotte learning with Mrs Webb on the television.



Leo's letter writing in flour kept his attention judging by this photograph. Kuba is working hard on his art here.



Maddie has entered 'HMS Lockdown School'.



NEWSLETTER

for Blackwell First School

...developing the whole child...

Dear Families,

January 2021

What a start to 2021! Between setting up Home Learning for everyone at home to managing the In School Learning, it has been a busy week for us all. We have been delighted with the children's approach to their own learning at home which is a reflection of your support of them and we do know how hard this is to manage. This is why the approach is flexible enabling you to set a daily routine if that suits your own work patterns or 'block' learning into fewer days as and when you have more time available. If you are unable to complete all of the ParentApp work, please focus on the Reading, Writing and Maths to keep the children's basic skills on track.

It is so important that the children read both their phonic linked reading books (Red and Green classes) and 'real' 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 stuck for 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. We are currently organising an approach to support you with access to more reading books during lockdown.

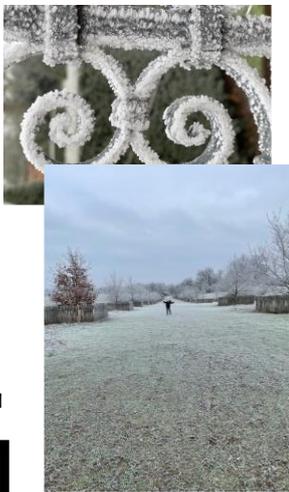
The challenges of the National Curriculum are present in each year group and we work hard to continue to make learning meaningful for the children through the use of topics and exciting projects to end topic work. We are really looking forward to Green and Blue Classes family assemblies later this half term, albeit remote assemblies! These are ways for the children to demonstrate their learning to you all.

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 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. Thank you as always for your support.



After our January assembly on Zoom, Evie went out to spot frosty things! A giant snowman appeared somewhere and Summer spotted footprints in the snow too.



Elliott has been playing bingo in French. It looks like colours or numbers featured in his learning today.



Ollie held a birthday party for his favourite Porche, making hats, board games and cards. Good fun!

Local Authority and Partnership Annual Review

As a school designated as 'Outstanding' in 2011, we do not currently receive inspections from Ofsted. Therefore, we commission external reviews annually. Our annual review was due this half term, carried out by our external partners in Bromsgrove Learning Network and an inspector from Worcestershire County Council.

We are meeting with our reviewers this Thursday and formulating a plan for how to review the school during this time. It will likely be through remote scrutiny of paperwork, our website, responses to the parent questionnaire and some films of the learning as well as interviews with teachers. The parent questionnaire has been sent home and we value your contributions and look forward to sharing those with the reviewers. 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.

SCHOOL SPORT/ HEALTH AND THE ARTS

Sport- All Sporting Fixtures have unfortunately been cancelled due to COVID-19 but the All Active Academy continues to provide resources which we will include in our ParentApp planning as well as activities and ideas that are COVID-19 friendly for the children in school.

Arts – We have postponed our Rainbow Project cross school event due to Lockdown but will reschedule this for when all children return to site. Instead, we will initiate Rainbow Project – part 2 and look forward to sharing this with you soon.

Sainsbury's SCHOOL GAMES



Elizabeth working hard with a helper!
Emily and Cassie have enjoyed their learning at home.



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. At this time, with over half of the children at home, we are reliant more than ever on this teamwork. 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', this includes during the day when children are at home during lockdown. Smaller chunks of work (about 15-30 minutes) may be more effective than long stretches;
- Use the homework sheet/ ParentApp home learning 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).

For children who find learning at home tricky, speak to your child's class teacher to find out ideas to engage them.

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 – for all staff to ensure consistency of provision;
- Elklan language training – for key staff to share good practice as part of a training day in January;
- Reasoning in maths – for most staff to share good practice and
- Remote Learning – supporting all staff in developing strong provision.

This ensures that the children have the best possible teaching, whether learning from home or school.

Hot lunches

Mrs Barker's fabulous homemade lunches are enjoyed by 75% of the school during non COVID times. 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. During this time, when we have significantly less children in school, encouraging more children to choose hot lunches will help to support the kitchen to remain viable. Thank you.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP Whether the children are accessing assembly on Zoom or daily in school, the themes remain the same. Our themes for the next few weeks are **Honesty, Sustainability, 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.

Please remember that we are here to support you all, whether you are working as a key worker and your children are in school or working from home and managing the challenge of home learning. We are a telephone call or email away. Although the teachers will call you, you do not need to wait for that call each week if something pressing crops up.

Best wishes to you all,
Mrs Moss