



Yellow Class Santa Lucia Procession as part of the Festival of Light.

NEWSLETTER for Blackwell First School

...developing the whole child...

January 2022

Dear Families,

Christmas 2021- we thought you may enjoy some photos...



Yellow Class Happy Elves dancing.



Purple Class Snowflakes being filmed for the Christmas Film.



Mrs Barker, Mrs Miles and Miss Shepherd cooked a super Christmas Lunch for everyone. It was a little tricky to eat with Rudolf hats in the way!

As we start 2022, we wish you all a Happy New Year.

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



There were stories, biscuits, games, gifts and Father Christmas to enjoy.



Panto and Party Day was good fun on the last day of term.



Happy New Year everyone. Roll on 2022! At the start of 2021, we were hoping for a year without COVID disruption but that was certainly not the case. Whatever this year may bring, we will be here to support your child and you through this time. The end of last term was a highlight of the autumn term, with super productions of 'Christmas around the World' and 'Nativity'. The children performed so well. Thank you on behalf of the staff and myself for 'attending' the productions, piano and violin concerts and for kind Christmas gifts, cards and words we received.

We start this Spring term with an exciting 'Circus' topic, including art and Science as focus subjects in addition to the inspirational texts that the children will read. A WRITING COMPETITION will be the focus for the children's learning over the coming weeks and there will be prizes to motivate everyone from Nursery to Year 4. 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 said goodbye to Ms Cain at the end of term and welcome Miss Hine and wish her a happy start to her time at BFS. We wish Ms Cain luck in her next venture.

The Spring term is an important term for your child. The children have settled in 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 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: work on developing children's communication and language skills, including developing vocabulary; phonics for Early Years and Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2); problem solving in maths using a method called bar modelling and reading comprehension by supporting verbal reasoning. We have introduced 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. In the event of further disruption to school, we will continue to offer this intervention as a priority.

As well as Parent Consultation 'meetings' this term, 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 2022, Mrs A Moss.

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 rated 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 2022. Thank you.



SCHOOL SPORT/ HEALTH AND THE ARTS

Mrs Barker, Mrs Miles and Miss Shepherd are preparing our lunches to start off 2021 as a healthy year for us all. Please see the details below regarding healthy snacks.

Following on from art projects with Mark Riley, he will be working with the School Council and classes across the school (funded by the PFTA) to bring the front of the school 'to life' and to develop our 'Happy and Healthy' store on our High Street.

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. 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 IN THE EVENT OF COVID-19 DISRUPTION.

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 2022

Unless further guidance is issued, we expect everyone back on January 5th 2022 (4th is a training day) unless children are isolating due to a positive LFD or PCR test for COVID.

Before returning to school, please:

- Complete a LFD test the night before or morning of school (under 5s optional);
- Keep children away from school with **any** symptoms and
- Send children in warm clothes due to ventilation requirements.

We will:

- Ventilate;
- Handwash regularly;
- Clean equipment and areas more regularly;
- Adults wear masks in communal areas when moving around and
- Continue to operate in modified bubbles.

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, significant progress was made towards the teaching of reading and the development of communication teaching as well as reasoning in Maths. Staff, alongside other Bromsgrove schools received training from Anthony Reddy, a national maths consultant. The training day in January is due to focus on subtraction and strategies for supporting children learn most effectively.

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 'catch up' 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 safeguarding alongside trauma, well being and mental health first aid training with staff and governors during the last term has ensured that we have the latest training to support the children. This is particularly useful during this global pandemic.

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 a National Leader in Education 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.

Development: – COVID-19

In light of rising COVID-19 figures nationally, we have prepared ourselves for the various scenarios that may unfold over the coming weeks. In the event of a further period of school closure, we would need to send home resource packs but we are hopeful that we will remain open to all and will prepare packs for you only if needed.

We would send home letters outlining how 'Home Learning' would work and in many ways we have kept the structure similar to last year but with some additions of reading sessions and phonics for the younger children as well as daily 'Registration sessions' and a waiting room with teachers. The weekly phonecalls will operate to ensure everyone is safe and well. For when school is open for everyone, but there are bubble closures, the teachers will operate a similar system to full closure. The most common 'Home Learning' last term was when individual children were self isolating and you have packs at home already for that eventuality. These packs are also on the Parentapp. We will send them to you via the app or email if you need them this term. Unless a child is ill, we will expect children to access this learning in order to maintain a routine, support their mental wellbeing and enable them to continue with their learning.

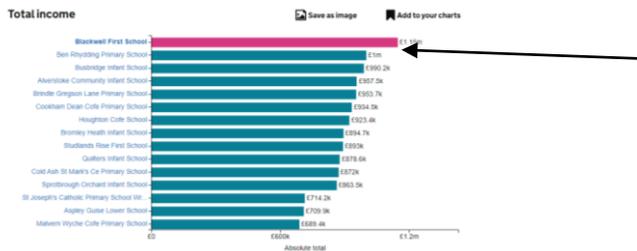
Rest assured, we will work with you whatever happens with schools nationally and support you with any government approach.

PFTA support

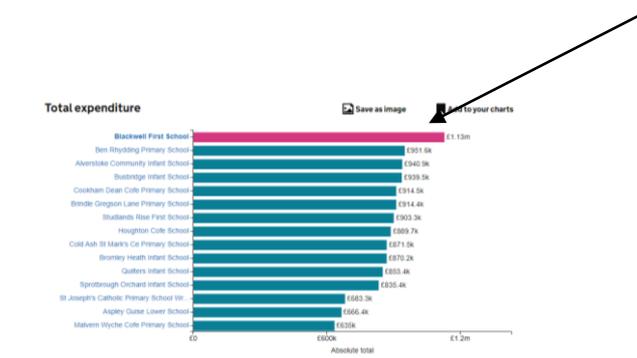
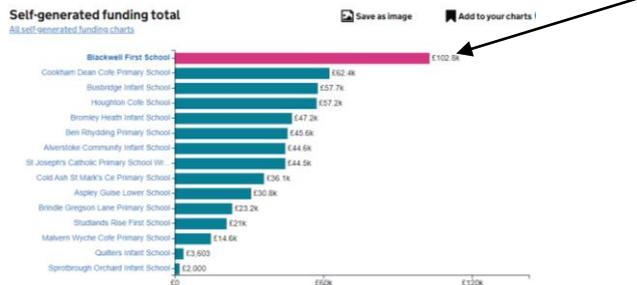
Congratulations to the PFTA and thank you to you all for raising over £2,000 at the Storynight and various other lovely events last year. Thank you for continuing to support the work of the school through fundraising. Thank you to Sally Teare, Claire Richards, Becky Myatt, Alison Taylor, Carrie Whitehouse and the whole PFTA team. The funding raised this year will support the purchase of new books for our new reading scheme as well as supporting some School Council front 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 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 esafety and safety) and Honesty. The children will consider these themes using art.

We will also consider sporting events for 2021, such as the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham as well as Arts events, including our local Worcester based 'Voices and Visions' and the Queen's Jubilee.

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? 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. 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 COVID-19 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.

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 30p 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.