

NEWSLETTER

for Blackwell First School



Older and younger children sharing books as part of our Book Celebration Day 2024.

Blackwell First School,
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B60 1BN
December 24

Dear Families,

Thank you all for your support this term. From informal chats on the gate and in 'Tea and Toast' to parent meetings with teachers to discuss the children's learning, we work together as a team to ensure that all children are making good progress.

A few weeks ago, Mrs James led a Parent Meeting for Red Class parents to help families develop an understanding of how we teach children basic reading, writing and maths skills. It is useful to know not only what is being taught but also how we teach it and then you are more able to support the children at home. Little and often with practise at home is best. Working with us to help the children make more progress is very helpful. This is how you can support your child:

- **Hear your child read as much as possible** and help the children to point to words themselves and blend letter sounds together as well as recognise the sight words they are learning in the Little Wandle reading books matched to their phonic learning (Red, Green and Purple Classes) and the Reading for Pleasure books to share (all classes from Red Class onwards);
- **Read your child bedtime stories** to help develop their language and also explain vocabulary to them;
- **Speak in sentences** and encourage your children to do as well. At this age they will be using incorrect grammar as part of their development. It is a good idea for you to repeat their sentences modelling the correct way to speak so that they don't get into bad habits. Children at this age often add -ed to the end of verbs for past tense for verbs that don't need them, e.g. 'We runned down the road.' Repeat it correctly saying, 'You ran down the road.' (but don't make them repeat the words, just model it);
- In Maths, it is important that mummies help with maths as much as daddies (and the opposite is true in reading) as otherwise we send out messages that reading is for girls and maths for boys which causes problems for children over time;
- Help children to count both forwards and **backwards** in ones, and from any number, e.g. 3,4,5,6,7 etc (Red and Green Classes);
- Help children to **develop a real understanding of the numbers to 10**, showing you how to make 5 using 4+1, 3+2, 5+0 etc. (using their fingers or counters). It is important that children use models and images to help them understand their maths all the way through to the end of Year 4;
- **Year 2 onwards learn multiplication tables by heart**, use the language of multiply, e.g. $6 \times 5 = 6$ multiplied by 5 (next year in Year 4 there will be a national multiplication test made up almost entirely of 6,7,8,9,11,12 tables with 6 seconds to answer each calculation. Please practise!)
- **Play board games like 'Snakes and Ladders'** to help develop their understanding of place value (the value of two digit numbers) and
- When talking about two digit numbers, make sure that you clarify that 56 is made up of the digits 5 and 6, but also explain that the 5 represents 5 tens or 50.

Thank you all so much for working to help the children learn well alongside us. We are grateful for your support and will continue to send home information about how to help your children learn.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP - We have been focusing on our United Nations Universal Values themes for Collective Worship. Helping the children learn how to behave in order to show good manners, respect and tolerance is part of this work. As part of work on safety, we have supported the children on understanding bullying and how to address it. As we move towards Christmas, we have considered 'Advent - a time for waiting and preparing' and encourage the children to develop patience.

Reading at Blackwell- Reading is key to ensuring that the children can access all learning and so we are working hard to ensure that the children develop strong reading skills. We do this by teaching reading in English lessons, ensuring that the children read everyday as a class or in groups. Children also read three times each week until they are fluent, when they begin to develop their ability to read publicly (performance reading). The children are also expected to read in every lesson throughout the day in order to apply their skills to other subjects. Children also receive work on learning key words, developing their phonic understanding and reading a wide range of text types (non-fiction, stories and poetry). We encourage the children to read at home as much as possible, both with you, on their own and also to listen to you reading them stories as this helps broaden their vocabulary and develop their comprehension skills of texts that are too complex for them to read themselves. Please see the link to our Little Wandle Phonic Programme for additional information to help parents in Nursery, Red and Green Classes.

<https://www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/resources/for-parents/>

esafety

Please remember to keep the children safe online by monitoring what they access on line and avoiding them using devices out of your eyesight. Social media sites should not be accessed by children of first school age.



SCHOOL SPORT - Through our work with the All Active Academy we have been fortunate to access Change for Life clubs and remote or internal competitive events for all year groups. The Government strategy to increase the hours children spend being physically active has been embraced by these clubs, events and our enrichment clubs.

ARTS - Mrs Cutler, our music specialist teacher, has been training staff over the last 4 years to use the Kodaly method to teach music and particularly singing. This supports the children's ability to pitch more accurately when they sing and forms the foundations of a good understanding of how musical notation works. At Christmas, you will notice that the younger children in Nursery and Red Class will be using Kodaly songs as part of the Nativity Play.

SPELLING - For many children, spelling can be the barrier to reaching a good level of writing. Children's ability to spell accurately has appeared to decline and research is limited on why this is. One theory is that as children are required to memorise less (because there is instant access to information through technology) they are finding memorising increasingly challenging. Thinking back to our childhoods, many of us knew many people's phone numbers, whereas now they are stored in our phones rather than our brains! To help at home, please:
-practise spelling key words from lists sent home during Parent meetings and
-play with shapes, mnemonics, looking and covering up.

Dates for Autumn term/ Spring term

4.12.24 Red Class theatre trip
5.12.24 Green and Purple Classes theatre trip- late return
10.12.24 Yellow and Blue Classes theatre trip- late return
12.12.24 Nursery- Christmas Singing 9.30am
13.12.24 Red Class – Christmas Singing 9.30am
16.12.24 Green Class Nativity 9.30am
17.12.24 Purple Class Nativity 9.30am
18.12.24 Yellow Class Christmas Play 9.30am
19.12.24 Blue Class Christmas Play 9.30am
20.12.24 Whole School panto and party- children in Christmas clothes (sensible shoes and coats please)
TERM ENDS - Friday 20th December - Last day of term for children

Christmas Productions- These will take place in the hall and due to restricted room, we ask that no more than two adults per child attend as we do not have the space to accommodate more adults. A filmed version will be available for everyone to enjoy at home. Many thanks.

6.1.25 School opens for Spring term
13.1.25 PFTA meeting on zoom 7.30pm
29.1.25 RAGS to RICHES- save and bring in 'loved clothing'
3.2.25 Blue Class visit to Hindu temple and Yellow Class visit to Mosque- details to follow
10.2.25 Green Class visit to Synagogue (Blue Class optional)- details to follow
13.2.25 Change the rules day
Half term- 17th- 21st February 2025

Requesting leave in term time

The DfE and WCC policy is that family holidays should not be taken in school term time as it disrupts a child's learning, therefore we are unable to authorise **any** holiday absence (except for under 5s). Pupils are not normally granted leave of absence except in exceptional circumstances in line with DfE guidance. These unauthorised absences may be subject to a holiday penalty notice fine by WCC. A copy of the guidance is available from the school office or it may be accessed through WCC's website.

Please also submit holiday forms several weeks in advance to avoid calls from the office if the absence has not yet been logged as holiday.



The children are always learning in school. **High expectations for everyone!** Here they are engaged in various activities.

- Saturday in school preparing for Christmas
- Book Celebration Day
- Violin concert
- A snowy day. Is Mrs James having too much fun?

Every moment is a learning moment here at BFS.



End of term

Our 'Festive Season' has started in school. This is a special time and Christmas is taught in the context of RE alongside other festivals celebrated by some of the world's major religions.

The highlight of the school season will be the Nativity and Christmas film, which you will be able to view with your families at home via an access code. The children will also make calendars and Christmas cards for you and always look forward to bringing them home for you to admire.

Christmas lunch day, theatre trips (part funded by the PFTA) the PANTO will end the season in school before you all celebrate at home over the holidays.

We look forward to celebrating this important time with you all and making it a special time.