

NEWSLETTER

for Blackwell First School



Blackwell First School,
St. Catherine's Rd.,
Blackwell,
Near Bromsgrove,
Worcestershire.
B60 1BN
September 2020

Yeah- our classes are back together again.

Dear Families,

The sandpit is a popular place to play in Nursery and Red Class.



Exploring the gully is fun when you're 3, or even 4...



A caterpillar of Nursery children winding their way towards the sand...

We are all very pleased with how well the children are beginning to settle into the new school year. Red Class children are starting to learn 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 Hampton, Mrs Flynn and Mrs Dyson 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, Mrs Franklin, Miss Bailey and Miss Checkley for their amazing 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 until March 2020, was above 97%, which is high. This 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! During the COVID-19 pandemic, we don't expect that holidays will be a particular issue, but know that self isolation times will occur and we have been informed that this will not impact on the children's attendance figures. If they are ill, they will be recorded as such but for self isolation without COVID-19, they will not be recorded as ill.

I will share some updates with you in this letter, regarding self isolation learning, parent consultation appointments, an Arts project to bring the school together as a community and even...Christmas. Sshh...
Best wishes,
Mrs Moss



We are busy with playdough and construction in Red Class...



...sometimes we have to do good listening and learn new sounds and numbers too.



We are good at listening!

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 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 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 children's 'rights' and alongside that 'their responsibilities'. 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 behaviour and responsibilities.

PARENT CONSULTATIONS

Telephone consultations will take place during the week beginning October 12th and letters have been sent out for you to sign up for a time slot. We will aim to give everyone their required time slot or close to it and ask that you all have your telephones switched on and with a ringtone that you can hear.



REMOTE LEARNING

A letter was sent out on the ParentApp last week outlining Blackwell's approach to remote learning during this academic year. This includes our approach to full closure, bubble closure, self isolation of individuals and teachers. We will be sending home our 'Home Learning' pack for self isolation this week. Please keep it safe and only use it when children are absent due to COVID-19 self isolation. Thank you.

How is the rest of the school getting on with their learning?

...We are the rainbow children, staying together when the world was apart...

As part of our Arts work we are planning a 'Rainbow' project. This is designed to:

- support collaboration in school and unite the school community;
- enable children to participate in shared events using art, dance and music and
- celebrate special times at home and school.

All children from Nursery to Year 4 will learn a dance to a sunshine/ weather/ rainbow themed song and teachers will share with them why we are using the symbol of the rainbow. It reminds us of this historic time and also gives us hope for the future. The children will unite to watch each dance using Zoom.

Through Meadow Arts, Mark Riley, our artist in residence, has been funded to complete a project with us and each class from Year 1 to Year 4 will spend a day working with Mark on a piece of art for the entrance area. Again, the theme of a rainbow will lead the children's thinking and the School Council will meet Mark next week via Zoom to discuss their thoughts.

Finally, Mrs Cutler, one of our excellent music teachers, will be writing us a song using the starting point of *...We are the rainbow children, staying together when the world was apart...* She will meet the children via Zoom and they will share their thoughts and hopes and she will create a unique Blackwell song, which the children will then learn.

During this challenging time, we want to bring happiness and joy to everyone and hope to share the artwork, song and dances with you later this autumn.

Ho ho ho...Christmas celebrations

Who knows what December will look like, but we are making some tentative plans in case they can happen. This is all subject to change.

Festive Film

Our usual Christmas Productions will need to be organised differently as in school we cannot rehearse or perform by mixing bubbles. Instead, we will film the children separately and then create a whole school film (the ideal Christmas gift for family I may suggest...)

Panto Season

Our panto is booked but unlikely to happen on site so we will plan a day of 'virtual panto' and party games within bubbles.

Christmas Lunch

We are able to enjoy Christmas lunch courtesy of Mrs Barker and Mr Wilson so that is an enjoyable treat for everyone.

Christmas Fair

How do we organise a Christmas Fair with social distancing? Things will obviously need to be different this year and so we are likely to carry out a 'Father Christmas' visit (booked in advance) in the School Room throughout December, including only three families on site at a time. This experience will include a visit to a Christmas stall and a game or two whilst waiting to visit Father Christmas, a visit and photograph with Father Christmas and refreshments to take away.

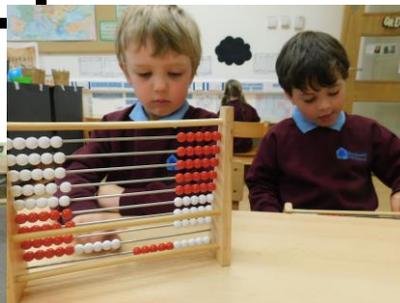
Christmas Gifts

Ordering a 2021 calendar and Christmas DVD will be part of our festive treats.

Storynight

A night in Christmas pyjamas is planned for those who enjoy a Christmas story by candlelight.

We are keeping everything crossed that we can share some seasonal joy with you all during December.



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



LAST YEAR, 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!