



January 2012

Dear Families,

Happy New Year to you all. I hope you had a good Christmas. Thanks for all your support last term and thank you on behalf of myself and the staff for kind Christmas gifts we received. Having had a school trip on our first day back to see the BFG at Derby theatre has inspired the children with their new topic. The children were a credit to the school and you as families and their behaviour was exemplary.

The Spring term is an important term for your child. They have settled in their classes and their teachers know them and how they learn. Teachers are well placed to move them forward in their learning.

This term the whole school topic is 'Roald Dahl' and the Classes will work towards projects as usual. All classes will work on their skills as authors and will create their own storybooks. The projects help the children develop their subject learning, such as art skills, storywriting and ICT skills whilst also developing their life skills, such as teamworking, independence and communication. It is vital that we work together to ensure your child has the best start possible to their learning. Attached is a parent questionnaire for you to complete. Please see below for further details. We appreciate you completing this as it helps us to develop our practice.

New Year

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:

Develop outdoor education - All teachers are now trained Forest School leaders and teaching assistants have received training to support Forest School. A second Forest School site has been created on the large field to enable the overused first site a chance to rest. Areas around school have been developed to allow opportunities for high quality play at play times.

Develop talk and independence - All teachers and teaching assistants have received training in this area. Children are now developing 'learning partners' and the skills to support each other as learners. The expectations have been raised with regard to independence across the school.

Refurbish toilet areas and create a wet room - Completed.

Raise achievement across the school - Challenging targets have been set for all children and specific areas such as applying calculations to problem solving in maths and writing across the curriculum have been a focus. Monitoring of progress shows good and outstanding progress.

Further develop leadership of all subject areas - Staff members are evaluating the quality of teaching and learning of their own subject areas and creating action plans to further support learning.

Develop a more creative curriculum - Training has been received on developing children as thinkers and learners. All teachers have been trained in Philosophy for Children and are accredited practitioners.

Develop Community Cohesion (children's understanding, tolerance and appreciation of different aspects of society) - A link with a school in Halesowen has been forged and we plan to work with them on Dance and Forest School to help children recognise differences within the wider UK community.

We work to constantly ensure the children receive high quality learning experiences that ensure they behave and learn very well.

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. Thank you for your support.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

In the event of very bad weather or severe conditions making it dangerous for staff to travel, the school may have to be closed. We will endeavour to remain open if possible. Please check the school website www.blackwellfirstschool.com for latest advice.

MATERNITY COVER

Arrangements have been made to cover Mrs Webb when she leaves for maternity leave on 30th March 2012.

Miss Evans, an experienced teacher, will work with Mrs Webb for three days a week this term to get to know the children and will then assume classteacher responsibility from the start of the Summer term.

I am sure she will meet you all over the next few weeks.

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 Teams) 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!

Blackwell First School was last inspected in January 2011 and is unlikely to be inspected during this academic year. We were graded as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted and continue to work hard to ensure that we do our best for all the children in terms of academic progress, behaviour, safety, life skills and working in collaboration.

From January 2012, there have been changes to the Ofsted Inspection process, making it increasingly challenging to the graded as good or outstanding. We will, as always, strive to do our best for the children and not work purely towards the inspection process. This will ultimately be best for the children, the school and hopefully an inspection outcome!

The new Ofsted Framework consists of only four areas of judgement: Behaviour and Safety; Teaching and Learning; Achievement and Leadership. Most of the numerous areas of judgement from the previous framework are included as part of the four new headings.

Whilst we are unlikely to be inspected in the near future, we continue to develop the school and your feedback is useful to help us prioritise our work. Please complete the Feedback Questionnaire by FRIDAY 20TH JANUARY.

Mrs A Moss (Head teacher)

CLUBS

Most of our clubs are run by school staff and enrich the curriculum that we offer at Blackwell. They will help children to develop new skills, excel in areas of talent and develop confidence in areas they find a challenge. All funds raised through the delivery of clubs are spent on the clubs themselves or on classroom resources.

We offer a venue for some external providers to run clubs. They have their own insurance and have had CRBs (Criminal Record Bureau) checked by school. The administration of these clubs is run by the providers themselves.

Please note that the school gate will remain locked during clubs, for the safety of the children, and children will be brought to the school gate at the end of the club to be dismissed. Thank you.

MATHS WORKSHOPS

On January 16th 2012 we will run two Maths workshops. The first one will be aimed at parents of children in KS1 (Years 1 and 2) and the second will be aimed at KS2 parents (Years 3 and 4).

Session 1- KS1 - 4.30-5.15

Session 2 - KS2 - 5.30-6.15

These sessions will give a brief introduction to how calculations are taught in school, offer practical ideas for how to help at home and give you the opportunity to have a go and ask questions.

The workshops will cover progression through the years for addition and subtraction.

Depending on time, multiplication and division may be covered. If necessary, an additional workshop can be provided to help with this.

Hope to see you there!