

NEWSLETTER for Blackwell First School

...developing the whole child...

Blue Class children read 'Five Little Men' about the last gnomes of Warwickshire and created gnome related packing for their baguettes. Look at the skills they learned.

February 2023

Dear Families,

Building a Business was a super topic and the children enjoyed using their skills and knowledge to set up their class businesses.

Here are some photographs from Green Class Salad Bar preparations and sorting those aprons was a tricky start...

What a great start we have had to 2023 with our Building a Business topic! The children have used their DT skills, Music skills and English skills to set up a 'Tasty Treats' business. They have also learned about food banks in the context of our current financial crisis and profits from the businesses will be donated to the Basement Project and New Starts in Bromsgrove and some school councillors will visit a local supermarket to see how much food they can buy to donate using funds raised.

It is so important that the children read both their phonic linked reading books (Red and Green classes using the ebooks) and 'real' books (phonic linked) and that you share their library 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 short of 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.

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 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 extra curricular 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.

The teachers are really looking forward to welcoming you into school later this half term to enjoy sharing the children's work books with you as part of parent consultation meetings.

Thank you as always for your support.

Best wishes,
Mrs Moss



Green Class set up a salad bar and taste tested vegetables, learned new skills for preparing the food and finally sold their produce.



Local Authority and Partnership Annual Review

As a school designated as 'Outstanding' in 2011, we have not received inspections from Ofsted since then, but are expecting one in the near future. During the past ten years, we have commissioned external reviews annually. Our annual review took place partly in the autumn and also next week, carried out by our external partners in Bromsgrove Learning Network and separately by an inspector from Worcestershire County Council. Some activity took place on site and lessons were visited, staff interviewed, children talked to and children's books scrutinised. The external reviewers were pleased with their observations and have agreed with the school's self evaluation and focus priorities. The parent questionnaire has been sent home and we value your contributions. 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. Many thanks for your support.

SCHOOL SPORT/ HEALTH AND THE ARTS

Sport- All Sporting Fixtures at other schools have been set for this year and we continue to develop sport in PE lessons, to offer yoga in afternoon clubs and to have our Sport's Club as part of extra curricular clubs and Archery. We will be offering a football club later this year after requests from a few families.

Arts – We are excited to work with Mark Riley on developing the back of school with some whole school art work. They will represent the school and the community that is at its heart.



Reading support at home

The children in Red and Green Classes learn to read using Little Wandle phonics. Purple Class upwards also use the strategies from the programme to support reading with the older children. There is a short video below that explains how to help with reading at home. This includes why the children bring home a phonic matched book as well as a 'Reading for Pleasure' book. Many thanks for supporting your child's reading.

[Click here](#)

Visits to Places of Worship

Monday started with a visit by Year 3 to Birmingham's Grand Central Mosque as part of Year 3's work on Islam. The children had a wonderful visit and the tour guide commented on the children's excellent behaviour. The other classes will be visiting places of worship for the religion that they are studying during the coming weeks. Thank you for supporting these visits and enabling the children to have these additional experiences.

Hot lunches Mrs Barker, Mrs Miles and Miss Shepherd prepare freshly cooked homemade lunches which are enjoyed by 75% of the school, including most staff. 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. Thank you.

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. 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';
- Use the homework sheet 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).

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/ Phonics – for all staff to ensure consistency of provision;
- Mental Maths fluency– for most staff to share good practice and
- Writing Curriculum.

New staff always have a detailed plan of induction CPD to ensure that they are quickly up to speed.

This ensures that the children have the best possible teaching with highly skilled staff.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP Our themes for the next two weeks are **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. We will consider works of art and stories that support our understanding of these complex themes.

Please remember that we are here to support you all. We are a telephone call or email away.

Best wishes to you all,
Mrs Moss