

Inside Our Classrooms

On Friday 12th November some members of the Local Board visited Blackthorns to conduct Learning Walks. This was a really positive and engaging morning and we would like to share some of the observations from our report noted during our visit:

- It was helpful to see how the school's values, class charter (produced annually by each class), behaviour framework and information around the Zones of Regulation were displayed in an age appropriate way in each class and to hear how they all work together to provide a coherent framework for pupils and staff.
- We also saw how the children moved between classrooms and play/going to assembly. The overall atmosphere was one of happiness, vibrancy and ease with their environment.
- The immersive learning environment which has been created to support pupil's learning journey is really engaging and positive.
- Classrooms are used to create a learning environment from the decoration of outside wall and door to reflect the learning theme, to the creative use of the walls within to share the learning process as well as celebrating children's achievements.
- Engagement in lessons is high with children being keen to answer questions and share their thoughts
- Children showed real confidence when speaking to us and answering questions.
- It is evident that children's ideas and suggestions are not only listened to but also implemented

We spoke to pupils and heard that:

- There was universal comfort, and in some cases delight, at being able to return to school following lockdown, though several confessed to being anxious beforehand.
- All pupils voiced positive views of attending school, and the concept of not attending for reasons other than illness was alien.
- Covid had been unsettling for the children and they spoke of how it had impacted them. However pupils did not express any concerns about having fallen behind in schooling, and talked more around the emotional impact of returning to school. They all spoke about using the "Zones of Regulation" and this was clearly providing a common way of expressing and understanding state of mind to all the children we spoke to. In discussions with Year 6 it was good to see how their use of core values and behaviours had become embedded and something that they can internally draw upon. Sense of self understanding and self regulation. The positives of this approach were very evident to see.
- All children we spoke to expressed how safe and happy they felt at Blackthorns. It was amazing to see how able even the youngest children were to articulate and understand their emotions. Through the well embedded zones of regulation they were aware of the tools available to them to self regulate and had a good appreciation of what worked well for them individually. They also expressed how it helped them to understand how their classmates were feeling and also how helpful they found it in being able to express to teachers where they were emotionally at any point.
- We heard about a pupil initiative which has been rolled out across the school, a worry box. This allowed pupils to express their concerns anonymously. These were then read by the class teacher who would take the appropriate action. All the pupils were comfortable that any anxieties or troubles they had would be adequately dealt with.
- All pupils were positive about the school experience and expressed real pride in attending Blackthorns.

The overall atmosphere was incredibly positive. Children were relaxed, confident and took so much pleasure in sharing their experiences with us. The school ethos was live and evident across the school with all children being clear on the core values and the behaviours expected of them but in a way that was personal and relevant to them as individuals. This was backed up by the clear displays of values, classroom charters, wellbeing information and zones of regulation in each classroom visited. The pride and sense of belonging to their school community from both pupils and staff was awe-inspiring. We look forward to visiting again next term. Julie Keylock [Chair of Local Board]

School Events

On Wednesday 24th November we opened the doors for a new style **Open Evening** for prospective parents. Earlier in the academic year, when we were discussing how we might offer tours yet minimise Covid risks to pupils and staff, we decided to take a lead from our secondary colleagues and trial an evening event, led by Year 6 pupils to tour our visitors around the school visiting classrooms and talking to staff, Local Board and FOBS. It was a hugely successful evening. Feedback was entirely positive, and we are very proud of our Year 6 pupils and how eloquently and positively they spoke about their experience of school life at Blackthorns. Thank you to all who stayed late and made this evening such a special event.

This week has been truly joyous to see the hall filled with parents, tinsel, Kings, Camels, Angels, Stars, Sheep and Shepherds, Mary and Joseph and their Neighbours from Nazareth, and of course not forgetting Judges, Hosts and Floor managers. The children in EYFS and KS1 performed their nativity "**Lights, Camels, Action 2-The Sequin**" five times this week! A dress rehearsal to Warriors, Trailblazers and the Hive and a first performance to Thinkers Parents on Monday, Nativity 2 to Inventors parents on Tuesday, Nativity 3 to Explorers parents on Wednesday and so no-one missed out, a final show to Ground-breakers and Innovators in the afternoon. I think the children are now hoarse with singing and flung out with all the dancing! Sometimes Covid has forced us to make changes that upon reflection are improvements. Offering an extra performance meant parents got a better view and each class got their opportunity to shine...and we all got the extra treat of another show. Well done to all, and thank you to the whole community for your support.

Head Teacher's Award

Well done to the following children, who have received a Head Teacher's Award and have their work featured on the "Wonderwall" in my office: All of EYFS/KS1 for their Nativity performance, **William** and **Eleanor** in Explorers, **William** in Thinkers, **Ottillie**, **Oscar W**, **Flora** in Inventors, **Josiah** in The Hive and Trailblazers.

Sporting Events

We have had lots of sporting success since the last newsletter! Our netball team had two games in the Haywards Heath mini league - one against a very well-drilled Harlands side in which we worked hard to defend and even managed to score a goal and one game against Holy Trinity where we built on our defensive efforts in the first game to keep them to 0 and scored 13!

Our girls football team continued this success with a friendly against Warden Park Primary in which we won 13-1 where everyone got time on pitch and played in many different positions! Player of the match went to Immi in Year 6 who started off in goal making some great saves before heading upfront and scoring 3.

Finally, our Cross Country team went to Warden Park Secondary School on a cold Saturday in December and took on the 1.2km course! Everyone gave it their all and pushed themselves to reach the finish despite some muddy conditions. Well done to everyone that took part and some children also qualified to represent Mid Sussex at the Sussex Cross Country final (top 15 children in each gender and each year group): Zachary, Emily S, Ella, Johnny, Gabriella, Aliona, Charlotte, Amelie and Maisie.

We have one netball match coming up during the final week! Also, there is lots of hard work behind the scenes to build a great timetable of extra-curricular clubs which will come out to you in the new year!

Last Day Of Term Arrangements

We have had to make some amendments to our original plans for Friday 17th December:

- Thinkers [Rec] Inventors [1] and explorers [2] arrive at school as normal. We will open the gate at 08:40 on this day.
- Please can KS2 children [Warriors [3], Ground-Breakers [4], Innovators [5] and Trailblazers [6] be dropped at the Tiger building next to All Saints Church, Lindfield High Street from **08:45am** and by **09:10 am**. The service will start at **09:30am**.
- There will be a ticket for **one parent per family** to enable us to comply with measures in place at Church. Please book your ticket via : <https://allsaintslindfield.churchsuite.com/events/f9jviyx3> or telephone the Church Office on 01444 482405
- As numbers are limited we shall also be recording the performance of Glad Tidings to share with the school community. Permission to record has been sent via Parentmail.
- Following the Service we would be grateful for any parents willing to support the return walk back to school.
- FOBS will be providing Christmas Party lunch for all children in school and so children will not need to bring packed lunches on that day.
- The Raffle will be drawn at 11:00am, and prize winners will be announced via parentmail, prior to the end of the school day.
- Parents are invited to collection of Raffle prizes and for Mulled Wine on the KS1 playground from 2:30pm.
- Although it is nationally Christmas Jumper day today, at Blackthorns we like to bring that extra sparkle to that final day and so children are invited to come to school in Non School Uniform and wearing their Christmas Jumper on Friday 17th December

I just want to thank you all for the incredible support you have shown me personally, the staff team and the whole school over this Autumn term. We all wish you a very merry and safe Christmastime, and a restful break, and will look forward to a busy and action packed Spring Term. Term starts for children on Wednesday 5th January 2022 and we will kick off with our Birthday celebrations, final information to follow soon.

Many thanks

Sarah Neller

Dates for your diary:

14th December: Aladdin Pantomime KS1 am/KS2 pm

15th December: Chartwells Christmas lunch

17th Dec: Last Day of Term—break up for Christmas

17th December:

09:20 KS2 Christmas Service at All Saints Church, Lindfield

Christmas Jumper Day

14:30 pm Mulled Wine and Raffle on the playground

20th—31st December: Christmas Holiday

3rd January: Bank Holiday Monday [Academy Closed]

4th January INSET [Academy closed]

5th –7th January 50th Birthday celebrations [details to follow]

21st-25th February: Half term

28th February INSET day [Academy closed]

8th April: Last day of Spring term

25th April: Summer term begins

27th May: INSET day

30th May– 3rd June: Half Term

20th July Last Day Of Summer Term

21st July INSET Day [Academy closed]

22nd July— Summer holiday: academy closed

Fundraising

Over the course of the term we have held a number of Fundraising events.

- Our Harvest '**Just One Tree**' event raised £212– so that's 212 trees planted
- **Children In Need** dress up day raised £221.85
- **Royal Legion Poppy Appeal** we raised £168.79
- And the **Rockinghorse Appeal**, nominated by our School Council pupils for our Christmas collection has raised £179.65 so far.
- FOBS Festive Fun day has been a huge success today– children have had a lovely visit to the stalls and activities and have enjoyed spending their festive funds! A huge thank you to all the volunteers who have supported the event today and to all of you for all your contributions.

Uniform plea

If anyone is having a sort out over the Christmas Holidays our second hand uniform stocks are in need of socks, tights and joggers. Thank You.