



Blundeston CEVC Primary School



A Place to Flourish

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10)

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School Newsletter - Monday 04th December 2023

Christmas has arrived

The elves were clearly very busy on the eve of December. The children arrived on Friday morning to find the classrooms decked with festive delight.

Carol Concert

We have a busy Christmas schedule to look forward to over the next two and a half weeks. It is a programme of events that has changed slightly from previous years. Change can sometimes elicit feelings of uncertainty and I have picked up on some discontent from parents, particularly around the Carol Concert.

There were several reasons behind moving the Carol Concert to the playground. Firstly, if we were still holding the event in the church, we simply wouldn't all be able to fit in at the same time. Plus, when making the decision a few weeks ago, this part of England was the worst affected COVID hotspot in the whole of the UK. Being crammed inside a church not large enough to accommodate everybody seemed impractical, especially given the fact I didn't want to spoil people's Christmases with potentially being ill on top. Therefore, using the church, would have meant holding several performances for each class and some of our children in school not being involved at all. Being outside also minimises the risk of transmission of colds, flu, COVID etc.

On top of this, I am always mindful of not wanting to cut into curriculum time. It is absolutely essential our children receive the broad and balanced curriculum we offer so having to come out of class to perform in multiple concerts goes against this.

However, most importantly in my thinking, I wanted the Carol Concert to bring the whole school community together. Rather than being content with being in our separate classes, it appealed to me to bring everybody together to celebrate Christmas. It is a special time of year, so why not celebrate it as a whole school family.

Admittedly, we are at the risk of the weather postponing our celebrations, rain in particular being the hardest to overcome, should it be torrential. Therefore, we will look to the forecast with great care in the build up to the event and try to rearrange, if the need arises. However, talk of it being too cold to stand outside are wide of the mark. The cold weather doesn't prevent the children going outside at several points during the school day and many families stood outside in the cold for hours on end to watch fireworks just a few weeks ago.

People have mentioned standing at the Carol Concert as an issue. There is no need for our older school family and friends to worry as we will be taking out benches and chairs for them to sit on. To overcome the cold, I have spoken to the PFA, who will be serving up hot drinks and possibly mulled wine.

If we dress appropriately and keep our bodies fuelled with hot drinks, I am sure the children's positivity and enthusiasm to sing Christmas Carols will warm our hearts and bring festive cheer. How lovely it will be to see smiles from everybody in attendance.

(now fingers crossed the rain stays away ☺)

Christmas Cards

Mindful of the environmental impact, it has been policy not to send Christmas cards in school. I think this is a sensible policy to keep. If you can afford to, giving a pound or two to a worthwhile charity is as nice a message to give to the children.

YR and KS1 Christmas Plays

I am really looking forward to seeing the Christmas plays this year. YR will be performing this week and KS1 have their performances next week. I have dropped in to KS1 rehearsals a couple of times and been blown away by their singing. I hope they haven't peaked too soon, such was the level they were at! I am sure everything is in hand. ☺

The importance of taking part in a play with your friends and classmates should never be underestimated. The range of positives the children can take from performing are incredible. That is why we encourage the children to speak, act, dance and sing in order to develop their confidence and be proud of the boost it gives them and their achievements.

Y5 Trip

Y5 will be going to Benjamin Britten Academy on Friday 15th December to see their Christmas performance. Everybody going is really looking forward to it.

Y3 Time and Tide Visit

The Y3s were buzzing when they returned last Friday from their school trip. They visited the Time and tide museum to link in work about the Stone Age. It sounds like the actors who guided the children around the museum were excellent and really brought to life the history they went to learn about.

Christmas Biscuits

A Christmas biscuit decorating treat has had to be postponed but we are hopeful that it will still happen before we break up. No doubt you will get to hear all about it through Class Dojo when/if it takes place.

Christmas Lunch/ Christmas Jumpers

We look forward to seeing all the Christmas jumpers on the day of the Christmas lunch, 13th December. Remember, if you have any Christmas jumpers that are too small for your children now, please consider donating them to the school/PFA. We will then make them available for parents to buy.

Reminder when dropping off/collecting from clubs

Please use the pedestrian gate (not the car park gate) when dropping off/collecting from clubs. We really don't want an accident to happen, when it can be so easily avoided. Thank you.

Open The Book

Our Open The Book team will be coming in to school on Tuesday 19th to share their version of The Christmas Story. We always welcome our friends from the church, who come in and share stories from the Bible. The children enjoy the performances and sometimes a lucky few will be chosen to help out with the acting.

Disco

On the final Monday of term, it will be a Christmas fest, with the PTA Bazaar in the morning and disco in the afternoon.

Testing and tracking progress

You may have noticed that the children in KS2 have not had any formal tests this term. We have changed the testing to the start of each new term. There are a few reasons for doing this. Testing part way through the term cuts into the curriculum timetabling I am so keen for the children to have consistently in place. It also means that some topics had to be crammed in an attempt to help children to access the tests. By holding the tests in the week we get back after Christmas, the whole of the autumn term curriculum has been taught.

Teaching to the test is not a helpful indicator of the children's true abilities. When we are testing, we really want to see how much information the children have retained in their long-term memory. Therefore, when better to check how much of the autumn term learning they have remembered than after the Christmas break.

This is why you will constantly hear me stating how important it is to keep practising throughout holiday times. It is statistically proven that the children who practise little and often, whether that is reading, practising spelling or times tables will do better on tests than those that do not do anything over an extended holiday period and come back at a huge disadvantaged compared to those that have. Just five minutes a day could mean a massive difference in outcomes – that is the same as an advert break during a show you may be watching together!

Metacognition and Self-Regulation

To help with improving children's ability to know more and remember more, in the Spring term Mrs Ward and myself will be rolling out training to teachers around Metacognition and Self-Regulation. This is an evidence-based research initiative that can make as much as an additional seven months progress to learners over the course of a school year.

It is an approach to teaching to support pupils to think about their own learning more explicitly, often by teaching them specific strategies for planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning. It has three essential components:

- * cognition – the mental process involved in knowing, understanding, and learning
- * metacognition – often described as 'learning to learn'
- * motivation – willingness to engage our metacognitive and cognitive skills

I am hopeful this will help our children enormously as we become more proficient in teaching the children these skills.

New Face

After Christmas, Miss Moore's class will have an additional adult in the form of trainee teacher, Miss Visinheski. This is her second placement on the road to becoming a fully fledged teacher and I know Miss Moore will offer great support to her. Having trainee teachers in school is a really positive experience. Miss Moore's class will effectively have two teachers in the room at the same time. Miss Visinheski will also bring to school, the latest training ideas straight from those at the top, steering education practice. Miss Visinheski is visiting the class this Thursday on 7th December.

Safeguarding Audit

As well as all of the usual Christmas end of term fun, the school has the pleasure of a safeguarding audit to look forward to. Suffolk county Council have selected us as one of their schools to conduct spot checks on the state of safeguarding across the county. I welcome the audit. What better way than to showcase the systems we have in place that help us keep your children safe. The children know it is my number one job so having external validation will be incredibly useful. I expect them to find good systems in place and if they do pick up on things we can make even better, then we will do so with immediate effect.

Christmas Schedule

Thursday 5 th December	YR Christmas Play 9:15 am start (PTA raffle + refreshments)
Thursday 7 th December	YR Christmas Play 2:30 pm start (PTA raffle + refreshments)
Tuesday 12 th December	KS1 Christmas Play 2:00 pm start (PTA raffle + refreshments)
Wednesday 13 th Dec	Christmas Lunch & Christmas Jumper Day
Thursday 14 th December	KS1 Christmas Play 9:15 am start (PTA raffle + refreshments)
Thursday 14 th December	KS2 Christmas Carols in the playground 2:30 pm - weather permitting (PTA raffle + refreshments)
Friday 15 th December	Y5 Trip to Benjamin Britten High School to watch their Christmas performance in the afternoon
Friday 15th December	PTA Xmas Movie Night Postponed
Monday 18 th December	PTA led Christmas Bazaar in School
Monday 18 th December	Christmas Disco
Wednesday 3 rd January	Staff INSET Day
Thursday 4 th January	Children return to school
Friday 12 th January	MSHT Parent Workshop on Behaviour 1:30 – 3:20
Monday 15 th January	Miss Visinheski starts in Miss Moore's Class
Thursday 25 th January	Y5 School Trip to Time and Tide Museum – Viking Day
Mon 19 th – Fri 23 rd Feb	Half-Term

PTA Help

If you are able to spare an hour or so to help with PTA events, please speak to Mrs Rachel Law or any of the other PTA members. Help can come in all shapes and forms and I know they are desperate for new members to ease the workload of the current core group of parents. Their work has an amazing impact across the school so please get involved if you are able. Thank you to the brilliant work of the parents who put together the hampers, stemming from the non-uniform day. They look absolutely fantastic and are very much appreciated.

School Lunches

Reminder that the price of school meals will be increasing to £2.50 from January.

Best wishes,

Mr Edwards