



A Place to Flourish

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

Blundeston CEVC Primary School

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Newsletter 01
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Welcome Back

I hope you have all had an enjoyable summer and have been making the most of the beautiful weather this week. While the sun has been shining, the staff have been working extremely hard. Everything about the past three training days has shown me the desire and willingness of all the staff to develop and improve on the great grounding Miss Laflin established. All parents can rest assured that we will be working tirelessly to take the school forward to even greater heights.

Now, it is time to welcome back the children and I couldn't be more excited about the opportunity I have been given to be a part of their learning journey. I want the children to flourish and fulfil their potential. To enable that to happen I held an assembly with all the school, setting out our expectations of the children as learners. In the assembly, I emphasised the need for respect at all levels - it is one of the school's values and incredibly important to achieve, should we wish to reach our ambitious targets.

The children were so well behaved throughout, which is an excellent sign of things to come. I shared with the children ways in which we can show respect to members of staff, each other and themselves. I hope this will encourage the children to display excellent attitudes to their learning, giving their best at all times. I know each class has completed their own follow up work to this assembly, thinking about class rules and expectations of the year ahead.

Parental Engagement

Of course, for the children to achieve the best possible outcomes, we need parents on board too. In order for this to happen, I want to make it clear that an 'Open Door' policy will be in place. Wherever possible, we really want to encourage face to face contact between staff and parents.

Obviously, the best time to do this is at the end of the day, when staff do not have to think about getting ready to teach. However, for small issues which might affect a child's learning or behaviour through the day, a quick message is always appreciated first thing in the morning, before school starts. It gives staff the flexibility to make reasonable adjustments to a child's learning that day.

If you require longer to discuss your concerns or issues, then please arrange a meeting, either direct with the teacher or via the school office.

Home-School Agreement

Following on from our theme of respect and wanting the best from each section of school, I will be sending out a home-school agreement next week. This will form a statement of intent from school, parents and children.

We will be talking through the home-school agreement with the children before they take it home. We want them to take ownership of their actions to help their school experience be a positive one.

I am hopeful that you will read and discuss the home-school agreement with your children at home, too. It sets out clear expectations of what everybody's responsibilities are. If you believe that these match what the school is trying to achieve, please sign this agreement to show your best intentions to support the school and your children.

Thank you.

Class Curriculum Letters/Half-Termly Topic Information

To ensure parents feel they are in the best possible position to support their children, I have asked for each class to share the learning that will be covered at the start of each half-term. This information can also be viewed on the long-term curriculum maps on the school website.

Homework

Homework is one of those areas where schools can never please all the people, all the time. I know from experience that some parents like lots of homework, some parents would prefer there was no homework at all and everybody else fits somewhere in between!

My own view is that homework forms an important part of a child's learning. I don't think asking your child to find fifteen minutes a day to complete a combination of reading and Times Table Rock Stars (TTRS), or some topic work is unrealistic.

Studies show that children committing to and completing fifteen minutes of homework a day can add months or even years of progress onto their learning within a year. It also helps children to become more independent and definitely readies them for high school, where the jump in expectations of what a child should complete is huge. Those children that disengage with homework in primary school, get a huge shock when moving into Y7!

Class Dojo

I am very keen to support staff well-being and in discussions with teachers this week, the messaging on Class Dojo has been flagged as a concern. It appears that some teachers have been receiving messages late into the evening or throughout the school day to relay information. This is not what it was designed to do.

When teachers are in class, they are responsible for the children in their care and do not have time to check devices for messages on the off chance a parent has informed us that, for example, their child can walk home on that day. These kinds of messages should be telephoned through to the school office.

There is also the issue of messages being potentially misconstrued. When the sender and receiver read the messages in a conversation, it leaves it open to interpretation. Worst case scenario is that it causes a breakdown in communication altogether. This is the last thing I want to see.

As a result, I have asked the teachers to limit when they check Class Dojo to between the end of the school day until 6 o'clock in the evening. This is an ample time slot in which to send your child's teacher a message. Any messages sent outside of these times will be blocked and will not reach the teacher.

However, as mentioned earlier in the newsletter, *if you need to speak to your child's teacher, catch them before or after school or arrange a meeting to discuss more serious concerns.* This eliminates the issue of misinterpreting messages and gives you peace of mind that the school is listening to your concerns and acting on them. Class Dojo will still be used to send out information and share pictures of children's learning.

Attendance

Every child has a right to an efficient and suitable full-time education and it is a parent's legal duty to ensure this happens. Where parents have chosen to register their child at a school, they must ensure their child attends school regularly.

It is well known that missing school for any reason can cause a child to fall behind in their learning. Missing school not only damages a pupil's learning, but can disrupt routines and can make children vulnerable to crime.

Sometimes children also find it difficult to settle back into school after a break.

In the longer term, evidence shows that reduced levels of attendance are likely to affect the progress of any child, whatever their needs or ability and can result in lower levels of qualifications being achieved.

By ensuring your child attends school regularly, this will help develop crucial life skills, resilience, and a strong work ethic that will benefit throughout their lives.

If your child is having difficulties attending school, then it is important that you as their parent or carer speak to us as soon as possible. This is especially important if your child has any health conditions that are affecting their attendance.

The school and Miss Laflin have had a very strict policy on attendance in recent years. If your child goes on holiday in term time or takes leave of absence without prior permission from the school, the absences will be marked in the school register as an unauthorised absence and may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued.

The Local Authority strongly encourages parents to take holidays or leave of absence for other reasons during the school holidays, rather than during term time. Schools are closed for 13 weeks a year so it should not normally be necessary for children to miss school for these reasons.

Lateness will also infer consequences. If your child attends school after the register is closed, they will receive an unauthorised late mark for that session, which is considered an unauthorised absence.

The school's attendance data suggests that it was having the desired effect to encourage better school attendance. Therefore, I see no reason to change this approach.

Each school in Suffolk has an allocated Education Welfare Officer (EWO). You can request the contact details of the Education Welfare Officer from us, or alternatively email schoolattendance@suffolk.gov.uk stating Blundeston CoEVC Primary School so the email can be forwarded to the correct EWO.

Parking

I have yet to work at a school where parking is not an issue. It has been brought to my attention that Blundeston is no different and that there were problems with parking last term. Please be considerate to the people living close to the school and do not block driveways when you drop off or collect your children.

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC)

You may have seen recent media coverage regarding Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) and its use in educational settings. RAAC is a lightweight form of concrete; because it is weaker than regular concrete, concerns have been raised about its long-term durability. Department for Education (DfE) has recently changed its guidance to education settings on the management of RAAC to take a more precautionary approach and as a result, areas in affected spaces will be vacated.

We wanted to inform you that we are not affected by this decision as we do not have RAAC in any of our buildings and therefore they will continue to function as normal.

Getting to Know the School

As you can appreciate, there is a lot for myself and Mrs Ward to get our heads around in a very short space of time. It is an unusual position, where both the head and deputy head teachers are new to the school. However, we have been delighted with the welcome we have received so far and are really looking forwards to making Blundeston flourish.

Over the coming weeks, we are really looking forward to seeing and getting to know many of you at the start and end of the day, as you drop off and collect the children. Please allow us some time to get to know all your names - there are rather a lot of you to remember!

Best wishes

Mr Edwards