

Headteacher's Report – March 2019

In this issue I have tried to cover any recent developments in school as well as to respond to some of the questions or issues raised by parents throughout the term.

Staffing

Catriona Pitt, our new Business Manager, has settled in to school life very easily and has already become a familiar smiling face to the children, as well as putting some valuable new structures in place. One of Catriona's responsibilities will be producing the Charlbury Primary News; her first copy was sent home yesterday so you can read more about her!

Other recent staffing changes have including Mrs Moss moving to Year 2 as their teaching assistant, and Ms Herrington moving to Year 1 to gain further teaching experience.

We are looking forward to welcoming three students next term in Foundation Stage, Year 4 and Year 6. Those students will make themselves known to the parents by writing a short biography at the beginning of their teaching practice. This will be sent out via email.

Results of Parent Survey

During Parents' Evening on 18th March, an informal survey was carried out on the topic of whether parents feel it is ok for children to bring in treats to share on their birthdays. This topic was chosen as the issue has been raised by a few parents and the governors, and school felt it was something that was best considered by collecting parents' views. In all, 94 parents voted, which is a comfortable number on which to base a conclusion. The results were that 72 parents felt this was ok, while 22 felt it was not ok. Behind the numbers were some useful comments that have been passed onto the school, and fed back today to parent reps in the Parent Council meeting. Worth mentioning is the fact that teachers do not believe that children feel pressured to participate in this entirely voluntary practice, and that in the lower year groups, very few children actually do this. The practical conclusion of this is that a clear majority of parents feel it is ok to carry on as before, i.e. some children will bring in treats to share on their birthdays, some won't. Thank you very much to all parents who participated in the vote and who took the time to explain their views.

Year 4 Brain Week

Mrs Davids, Year 4 Teacher writes " To start off Brain Week in Year 4, we had a visit on the Monday from a Neuroscientist from Oxford University, Professor Holly Bridge. She showed some videos explaining how MRI scans can help understand which part of our brain controls which function, so we could see how pain affected the brain, etc. Then she helped us make brains out of Plasticine, showing us the main parts of the brain. Afterwards, she set us a challenge and left us with some packs of 'Brain Snap' - the challenge was for both adults and children in the class to practice all week and see whether adults or children won the Brain Snap challenge at the end of the week. The children won!

We then worked for the rest of the week on the brain. In science we did brain experiments; for example, the Stroop test to find out how our brains prioritise input. We watched various videos to find out about neuroplasticity - the ability of the brain to learn - and applied it to growth mind-set thinking. We realised that you can grow your own brain, basically. In art, we produced pencil drawings of 'What your brain means to you'. For homework, one option was to produce a model in any media the child chose of the brain. We pleasingly had models made of many materials including: bread, modelling clay, sweets, cake (we all had some!), fabric. We used computing time to research questions about the brain; the children

had a wealth of questions they wanted answers to and this was a particularly successful use of computing time. They then had to take notes and reformulate the information into leaflet form; these leaflets were printed out and shared with parents at the end of the week.

I took pictures of the models to show Professor Bridge as well as telling her what a success our brain week had been and she was delighted, of course. Additionally, a parent contacted her independently to thank her for inspiring the children. Overall, this was a very successful passage of learning for the children and the children are still referring to neuroplasticity to help them when they are learning new things."

ParentPay

Please can you check your account and make sure that any outstanding amounts are paid for as soon as possible.

New Menu

A new menu has been sent home with your child today. Next term, the cost of a meal remains at £2.30.

CSA

I would like to thank the committee members of the CSA for all their hard work organising events and raising lots of money for school funds. It is very much appreciated in these financially challenging times. This term the CSA have raised money from various events including a 'Rags to Riches' clothes collection, a Valentine's Disco and a Bingo Evening. If anyone would like to help organise events or contribute new ideas, then please give your contact details to the school office.

Charlbury Primary School Governors

Finally, over to our Chair of Governors, Kaye Leggett:

"This term the governors have been focusing on how the school delivers the whole curriculum in all its depth and breadth to our children. This is a longer term project with the aim of ensuring that what the school teaches is as far ranging as possible and uses as many opportunities as are presented to us. And by teaching we also mean 'experiencing' and 'taking part in', so the review is not being confined to the classroom or to normal school hours.

We see this as being fundamental to 'Developing the Whole Child' which is so important to us. Your input will be sought and your views will be considered alongside those of the teachers and governors.

The latter part of this term has had a less exciting but no less important focus, i.e. making sure we have a sustainable budget for the next three years. The small class numbers currently in Year 1 and Reception has had an impact on our budget. The amount of funding we receive annually is linked to pupil numbers, so robust pupil numbers mean increased funding for the school. If you know of any children who might wish to join our school, please do let Mrs Holt know, or encourage parents to get in touch – we currently have room in Foundation Stage, Year 1 and Year 4. We have also seen a reduction in the number of children receiving the Pupil Premium grant. This may be due to changes to the benefit rules and universal credit. If you are currently receiving state benefit, we may be able to claim extra funding for your child, which is directly used to their benefit in school. If you think your child/children may be entitled to this funding, please speak in confidence to our new Business Manager Catriona Pitt and she will be happy to discuss this further with you. We want to ensure that every child in school is supported as much as is possible."

Wishing you all a very happy time over the Easter holidays.

Jane Holt
Headteacher