

News from Mr Edwards-Grundy

In what has been an extraordinary year, the past term has been one of the most challenging. Lockdown during the winter months, when it is hard to get out and about and days are often dark, has often felt difficult and has stretched our resources to their limit.

In [Collective Worship](#) this morning I reflected on the importance of being kind to ourselves. It is an important principle at any time, but never more so than at this point.

This past term has seen many of you needing to give to the very limit of your resources. You have been holding down your jobs, running your homes and seeking to support your children with their learning. It has been a herculean effort.

Half-term will I hope bring some form of respite to you all, a chance for a slightly slower pace, a time to switch off your screens and perhaps spend more time doing the things that bring you joy.

I would encourage you to read our top ten tips for surviving lockdown, which we sent out this morning but are also attached to this newsletter. I would encourage you to try one or two things that will help you be kind to yourself and replenish your resources for the weeks ahead.

As children across the school reflected this week, being kind can change everything, not just for others, but for yourself too – give it a try!



Top Doodlers!

Mr Noble's class have finished the term as they started it, 'Top Doodlers!' Well done, they have been on top all term – can you catch them?

From the Chair of Governors

As governors, we support and act as a critical friend to The Blake School, and just like the school, we have had to adapt and change how we do things during the Covid-19 pandemic. Just like many of you, we now use Microsoft Teams to meet virtually and it is a measure of the commitment of the governors that we have been able to continue with our regular monthly meetings.

In line with the school's development priorities we are currently focussed on supporting the school and its staff as they manage the impact of the pandemic and the inevitable changes to local and national lockdown rules.

We have also been supporting the school as it has navigated the challenging task of providing remote learning, whilst also keeping the doors open to children who are vulnerable and those children whose parents are key workers. At our meeting earlier this week we discussed the results of the recent parent survey on remote learning. We take all such surveys very seriously, as they are an important way that we can hold the senior leaders of the school to account.

Several of us have children at the school and so we are not reliant solely on information provided by the school, but also have our own first-hand experience.

We will be supporting and helping the school return to whatever degree of normality is permissible as and when the current lockdown rules start to be relaxed.

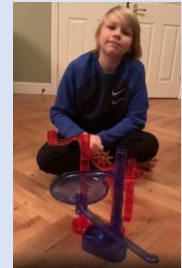
If at any time you wish to contact the governors, you can do so by emailing us on governors@blake.oxon.sch.uk

Dr Philip Fowler

Loving, learning
and flourishing in
community.

News from around the school

Year 6 have been very busy this term. When we asked them to share their work with us, we were shown all sorts of different work, from literacy to artwork, reflections on our Values to science. Year 6 children, whether at home or at school, have produced some really impressive work. This afternoon, the office team particularly enjoyed taking delivery of the life size model of the digestive system!



Hansel and Gretel were horrific

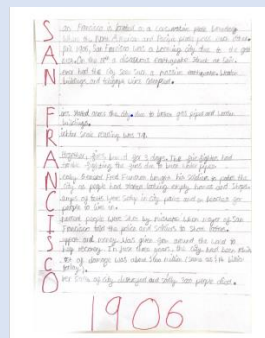
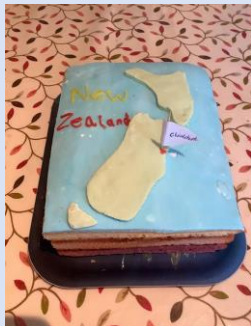
I'm sure you've heard the story of Hansel and Gretel but at least the one that Hansel and Gretel told. But do you know the real story? Well, it all started when outside my house I could hear a munching and a crunching. I peered out of my bedroom window (yes, my house is made of sweets, delicious but impractical) and saw two children energetically chewing my wall. Inside I was seething but as I am a kind lady, I let them into my house. They were sweet but greedy.

The next day when people start to think I'm a witch. No sooner had the twins shifted off, I spotted the Big Bad Wolf outside! He snuffed at Hansel then scampered off into the forest. I knew that he would return the next night and eat Hansel, so I bundled him into the safest part of the house - the cellar - and locked the door. Don't worry about Gretel, wolves don't like the taste of girls very much. (That does make me wonder why the Big Bad Wolf ate Little Red Riding Hood though. Maybe she was just being annoying. What big eyes, what big teeth etc.)

The wolf returned every night so I kept Hansel in the safe place. They seemed to be frightened of me and when I tried to feed them, they thought I was trying to turn them up to eat them! They eventually decided to pretend to be thin so I wouldn't have them for dinner (remember, my eyesight was poor.) I made them hundreds of meals and their favourite was scrambled eggs (no offence, Flumpy, Dump).

Then came that fateful day when I was stoking the fire. As I leant over, Gretel pushed me and I fell. I was so hot and I felt a hot pit like up my back. I kept out of the chimney. I wrote this down (and, literally, I got quite a few hugs. I ended up working for a princess who had long, long hair which I had to comb every day. Apparently, she's called Rapunzel and she pushed her mother out of a tower. What is it with goddesses?)

We loved this example of the children writing a fairy story from the viewpoint of the villains – how different the stories sound...



Remote learning survey

We had an amazing response to our remote learning survey and as a result, across the school, we have made a number of changes to the provision for your children.

Staff teams reflected on the feedback provided by families in their year group and have since adapted and amended their provision to better meet the needs of their children.

We have continued to receive an enormous amount of positive feedback which has been wonderful – every week your comments are shared with the staff team.

Half-term childcare

Oxford Active, who usually provide our wrap around provision, are running their usual holiday camps over the half-term break.

You can find out more about the camps, which this half-term are for key worker families only, and how to book via their [website](#).



Parentalk

Why not take advantage of the winter lockdown nights to grow as a parent? St Mary's Cogges is running the Parentalk parenting course on Tuesday evenings from Tuesday 23rd February to Tuesday 30th March between 7.30 and 9.30pm.

The course is aimed at parents with primary school aged children. Each evening will provide an opportunity for reflection on some of the challenges of parenting as well as celebrating the things that are going well.

Join members of St Mary's for evenings of fun, with some thought-provoking input and opportunities to share with others in order that everyone learns how to be a better parent.

Sign up for the course [here](#).

School Health Team

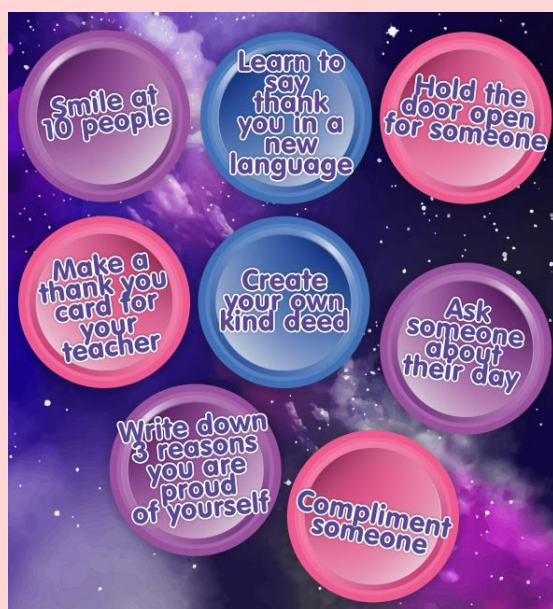
The information from the school health team that is attached to this newsletter is full of great ideas.

Looking at their ideas for [lunch menus](#), all for under £15 a week, ended up making us all rather hungry – we are definitely going to try some of them out over the half term break. There are also some great ideas for [healthy snacks](#) for children that look delicious.

You can also find information about how to keep your children's teeth healthy, including how to make brushing teeth fun! We had lots of ideas about songs that we could brush along to!

If you want to speak to any of the school health team you can call them on 01993 901295, or you can look at their [website](#).

Kindness game



Back to school...

After the half-term break, the school will remain open only for the children of Key Workers and those who are vulnerable. These children will be back in school on Monday 22nd February.

Remote learning packs are available in school and can be picked up anytime from 8.30am on Monday 22nd February.

Please enjoy this coming week away from screens!

YogaBugs

[YogaBugs](#) has released some relaxation activities for children and their parents over half-term. The activities are designed to help everyone slow down and to promote mindfulness.

Spending time with your children completing the relaxation session is a great way to be kind to yourself as well as having family time.

We wish you a merry Christmas?

The Christmas term ended rather abruptly for the Reception (Early Years) team and without any opportunity for the usual celebrations. So, after school today, the staff took time out to have their Christmas party!

The staff have assured us that they have plans to celebrate Christmas *again* when all the children can be back in school together!