

# Head Teacher's Newsletter



@MrGarley

Irthlingborough Junior School

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2019

## New Year's Resolution

It has been a really positive start to the spring term. The children have come back with a great sense of purpose and there is a real sense of positivity amongst our staff as they start their new topic units.

One of the areas of development we recognize from our autumn term assessments is spelling. Children need to improve their spelling and spell accurately and independently to be able to be judged at meeting age related expectations in their writing. We have introduced the Headstart spelling scheme which we know has had an impact on improving spellings in other schools. I'm excited by it because I think it will not only improve the provision for spellings but also raise the profile through a positive celebration of children's achievements.

The scheme breaks spelling rules and patterns down into 40 word lists that are explored over four week periods. There are games and activities for children to complete with one homework activity built in which will come home each week.

There are tests to be completed each week for that week's ten words and at the end of the 4-week period is a test for all 40 words. So every four weeks we will have a day dedicated to spellings raising the profile and importance of accurate spellings for our children.

Get ready for certificates for the best spellers and the most improved!

## Positive Behaviour

Restorative Justice is a system for managing behaviour that the infant school have been using for some time. The central belief behind the system is that children need to see a clear conclusion to behaviour issues that they have been involved in – closing the loop. There are 4 key questions that enable staff and children to get to the bottom of incidents that have occurred on the playground:

1. What happened?
2. How did the incident affect you?
3. How did it make you feel?
4. What do you think the consequences should be?

Asking children why they engaged in the behaviour is discouraged as it's the one question that children find too difficult to answer.

Mrs Marshall and I spent an hour on Monday training our Midday Supervisors in the key techniques for restorative justice and the importance of positive body language and tone of voice.

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On Monday and Tuesday this week, Mrs Meekings and I are leading assemblies with the children so they understand how the system works.

When we get this embedded as the practice for dealing with behaviour, it will have a huge impact on children's ability to reflect on their behaviour and thereby strengthening the culture of our school.

## **School Values**

There are two fascinating developments happening in school at the moment to strengthen our values and culture. In assembly last week we introduced the '5 Bs' of learning that encourage children to be independent learners in their lessons:

1. Brain - children are encouraged to make connections with what they know already and their prior learning.
2. Board – children reflect on the teaching and the information on the board or use the information the teacher has placed on the working wall.
3. Book – children use their books to review their past learning. Can they make connections with what they have already learned to the challenge they face in the lesson?
4. Buddy – what do the people on their table know about the objective? What methods are they using? What are they doing to meet the lesson objective?
5. Boss – if steps 1, 2, 3 and 4 can't move the forward and they're still stuck, then ask the boss. Put your hand up and ask the teacher.

Being stuck should be looked as a positive. When children are stuck it means that new learning will take place in that session but it also means that children have the opportunity to be independent learners.

If you remember from my last newsletter, Mrs Meekings and I visited Higham Junior school to look at a range of developments that has given them a really strong learning culture. One of the ideas that we really liked were the roles of Values Ambassadors that the school had created for the older children. We've asked our Year 6 children to apply for the role and we will be introducing them after February half term. Values ambassadors will be there as a support to staff during the school day (including lunchtimes) to promote positive values showing kindness, care and support for other children. We're really excited about this development and empowering children to promote the school values in an official role.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'NPG' followed by a stylized flourish.

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## **Supporting Others**

I might be biased but I think our children are pretty special. I was approached by three children from Year 6 this week who wanted to do something for children less fortunate than them. We talked through all the groups they could support and the things they could do to support them. Aliya, Amy and Mason finally decided on the Irthlingborough Food Bank for the reason that it supports vulnerable families in our town.

The children have written a letter which went out on Friday because the initial part of the project is to raise money to do a grocery shop for the food bank. We did consider asking you to donate foodstuff but the children wanted to find out what sorts of food the foodbank wanted donating and do the shopping themselves.

On Friday the children are organising a cupcake and cookie sale so we need you to donate either or both please. We also need children to bring in money to buy cupcakes or cookies at playtime. We would really appreciate your support so the children can get their project off the ground.

## **Autumn Data and Attendance**

We had assessments in reading and maths at the end of the autumn term. We were really encouraged by the results. We have a definite strength in maths that is consistent across the school and the standards in reading and writing were encouraging in all year groups.

At the start of this term we meet with each individual teacher (Mrs Meekings, Miss Johnson and I) to talk about their class' attainment and their progress. We measure progress from two points: end of year two data from the infant school and the end of the previous year. It is important that we build on the achievements of children at the end of year two because that has a direct impact on our progress measures when they leave year 6.

The autumn term data gives us a clear picture of how well groups of children are performing. We are especially interested in how our pupil premium children perform and there are always interesting differences to look out for with boys and girls. This term we have given each year group a 6-week project to improve the outcomes of girls in maths. This doesn't involve special groups of children being withdrawn for interventions during afternoon sessions. We have asked teams to actively research and monitor how girls' work in maths and then make modifications to plans and delivery of sessions to enable girls to achieve their full potential.

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Improving the attendance of all children is something that will have a direct impact on our learning outcomes for children. We are starting our ten-week attendance project for children across all year groups and we know that it is important to celebrate the attendance of all children who hit the 96% attendance mark. At the end of the autumn term we had a prize draw for the lower school and upper school for a free bowling session. This term we've got two Kindles to give away for any child that makes the 96% attendance measure who are lucky enough to have their names drawn out of the hat at the end of term.

Please remember the importance of contacting the school if your child is poorly and is going to miss a session. This should be done for every day they are absent.

## **Sporting Success**

Mr. Mair accompanied our children who qualified for the county cross-country championships last weekend. Congratulations to Chloe and Sebastian who both managed to finish in the top ten and have qualified for the national event which is being held in Loughborough.

## **Staffing**

We were sad to say farewell to Mrs Price last week who has been working as a learning mentor in school. She is leaving to start her own therapy business and I am sure you will join me in wishing her good luck with her new venture.

On Wednesday we are interviewing for her replacement. It is a strong field of candidates and we will let you know the name of the new learning mentor when they are appointed.

In case the news hasn't reached you, it's congratulations to Mrs Preshaw who is expecting her first child. She will be starting her maternity leave at Easter. We will inform you of who will be teaching 4CP when we have appointed the replacement.