



Birches First School

Believe, Grow, Succeed

December 2020



Dear parents,

This term has certainly been one like no other! The children quickly adapted to the 'new normals' when they returned in September and have made the term the very best it could possibly be! Whilst the world around them has been a little bit crazy they have focused on their learning and had lots of fun along the way. The children truly are a credit to our school and we feel very lucky to be able to spend our days with them. Below we have chosen some of the highlights of our term – from our perspective as Class Teachers and from the children's perspectives.

We are so proud of the children and how they have come on in confidence this term with maths. We have used concrete resources (objects to physically 'make' the number) to explore concepts before moving onto pictures then written methods. This has certainly helped and the children have been able to apply their skills in lots of ways and solve problems. We have been working on our reasoning skills – for example, being able to explain WHY an answer is correct/incorrect and we will continue to practise these next term. We also had lots of fun learning about and exploring Roman Numerals. This can be a tricky topic but the children quickly developed an understanding of how the letters were used and combined to represent different numbers. In Maths next term we will be continuing to work on solving two step problems as a class.

During Science, Year 4 have been learning about 'States of Matter' where they have been sorting and describing solids, liquids and gases. Lots of new scientific vocabulary has been learnt such as particles, condensation and evaporation. We have carried out many scientific investigations, some of which involved chocolate which the children really enjoyed! The children now know about the water cycle and how it works.

Year 4 have been once again focusing on how to keep themselves safe online during computing sessions. We have learnt about scam websites, malware, identity theft, phishing, plagiarism and copyright.

RE lessons have focused on exploring religious stories about the environment, identifying their impact. We linked this to our Harvest donations to the Well and how this had made a difference to people in our local community. We have also started to look at different ceremonies and how special moments are marked.

Our learning in PSHE has been based on 'Me and my School' looking at our participation in Birches decision making. We looked at this in relation to democratic structures such as parliament and voting. We have explored individual liberty and the rule of law as our focus on British values, using our 'Picture News' resources to help us.

Year 4 are well on the way to having a 'growth mindset' with weekly lessons based on how to achieve this through discussion, affirmations and fun!

Our main unit of work in English has been on Fairy Tales, in particular the story of Cinderella. The children have developed their descriptive skills and used them to write character and setting descriptions. We are working hard to make sure they are developing new skills whilst also securing basic skills such as punctuation, spelling and use of conjunctions ('joining words'). Next term we will be challenging the children to improve their stamina for writing and begin to write more at length. We have enjoyed reading several books this term during lessons, whole class reading and story time. The Witches was a big hit and we learnt a lot about the Eiffel Tower when reading a fact file during Whole Class Reading. We are currently reading *Friend or Foe* – a story by Michael Morpurgo about two boys who were evacuated during World War Two.

The children seem to have really enjoyed our world War Two topic. They have been full of questions each week as we explored different aspects of life during the war. During our blackout lesson they had fun role playing as children, teachers and ARP wardens. Our Sparkle Day was lots of fun – the children looked fabulous in their costumes and we even ended up under the tables when the air raid sirens went off! We used our creative skills to make silhouette art of the Battle of Britain following a video stimulus we watched. We also used a trailer for the film 'Dunkirk' as part of our discussions around the significant events that happened there and how different sources help to build our understanding of the past. It has been interesting listening to eye witness accounts and hearing some of the broadcasts of the time. We were disappointed not to be able to go on our trip to the RAF Museum Cosford but really enjoyed a 'live stream' workshop from the museum during which we learnt all about Christmas in Wartime.

During the later weeks of the term we have enjoyed our Art and DT units of work. In Art we were developing our formal skills. Many of the children hadn't heard of using charcoal before so it was really interesting to see them exploring something new. They explored different mark making techniques and ways of expressing ideas and words using abstract marks rather than actual drawings – this was harder than we thought! Our unit went on to develop skills of pattern and printing. In pairs, every child made their own playdough which they then used to create printing tiles with natural and man-made objects.

We enjoyed a fantastic afternoon during Dyslexia awareness week when the children were presented with a set of STEM challenges. Tasks ranged from building a coin bridge to a boat, the tallest tower and balancing a penny on a floating apple or an orange (it's harder than it looks as the children found out!) One challenge required the children to really work as a team – they had to stack plastic cups into a pyramid – without touching the cups themselves! They were given paper clips, elastic bands and string to use, It was a tough one but of course, our wonderful Year 4s rose to the challenge!

There has been much to enjoy this term and we look forward to lots more exciting and fun experiences with the class during the next two terms – before they prepare themselves for the move up to middle school! In the meantime though, we wish all of our children, parents and families and very Merry Christmas and hope 2021 is a happy and healthy year for all.

Best wishes,

Mrs Cain and Mrs Ferretti.

See below to find out what the children have enjoyed this term. You could also visit our Class News page on the school website to see photos of all the fun and learning! <http://www.birches.staffs.sch.uk/year-4-class-news/>

Information about next term's learning will be uploaded to the website at the start of the Spring term <http://www.birches.staffs.sch.uk/year-four-curriculum/> and our new Homework Grid will be available here <http://www.birches.staffs.sch.uk/year-4-homework/>

What the children have to say about this term...

I loved learning about WW2!

In Science, we put chocolate in our mouths to see how long it would take to turn from a solid to a liquid.

My favourite thing was writing about the Tomb of the Emerald Snake.

In Maths I was especially excited to learn about negative numbers.

We made some stamps and created mathematical patterns.

In the morning we do the register in French with Mrs Cain. We have learnt how to say 'hello' and how to say our names. I can also count to ten!

This term we created pictures with charcoal. It was very interesting because I thought you couldn't draw with charcoal!

We have learnt about emotions and feelings. My favourite part was doing the inside out activity because I learnt about the purpose of each emotion.

Maths has been about place value, adding and subtracting – now I can do these!

We used a thermometer to measure temperature.

I really liked doing the story of Cinderella in English. I liked doing character descriptions.

We created black out silhouettes and Anderson Shelters. My favourite thing for topic was sparkle day. We pretended to be in an air raid and got under the tables!

My favourite part in Maths was Roman Numerals because we learnt how to write them from 1-1000!

Science was about freezing, melting and states of matter.

Science has been about learning new interesting things.

We have learnt loads in Maths – my favourite was Roman numerals. We learnt that bigger numbers don't always have more letters. Some of our morning tasks have been based on them.

For the 'Blackout art' we could smudge the crayon – it was awesome!

Every week on a Friday we have a times table test. It is good when you finish the suspense is high to see if you pass or not!

We tested how long it took for different types of chocolate to melt.

I enjoyed using a thermometer and the chocolate experiments were amazing, we even got to eat some!

For WW2 we have done all sorts of things. Acting, showcases, art and lots more. It has been really fun!

Charcoal can create different effects. The best part was experimenting with it.

We made playdough for printing in Art, it was super fun!