

## Head's Welcome Message



It is a privilege to be the Head of Balsall Common Primary School, part of Central Schools Trust. It is widely considered to be one of the best primary schools in the region. Children who attend this school are supported in becoming well-balanced and independent youngsters, who thrive on challenge, and are thoroughly engaged with their learning. The result is socially well adjusted, high attaining young people, who go on to make the very best of their potential.

Their journey begins in nursery where, 'Children get an excellent start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make outstanding progress in all areas of their early development' (OFSTED 2014). This continues throughout the school with an exciting, stimulating and cohesive curriculum that supports learners' engagement founded on CORNERSTONES - a resource which enables us to fulfil every curriculum requirement in the most creative and innovative way. We do not focus on test outcomes; we focus on a rich curriculum that inspires and motivates children, providing an excellent grounding for their future.

The school works in close partnership with Pathways, the on-site, private day care setting, this setting provides before and after school care for children in Nursery and Reception classes. The school provides its own Before and After school provision from 7.30 am until school starts, and then from the end of the afternoon until 6.00pm, for children from Year 1 upwards. This is called Dragons. It is hugely popular and provides care during holidays as well as during term time.

The school received an Outstanding inspection judgement in February 2014, writing that, 'The school's accurate data show that most pupils make rapid and sustained progress as they move through the school in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining the nationally expected levels for their age is high.'

Few schools can boast the level of provision to be found here at Balsall Common Primary School. From its state of the art ICT Suite, through to its own indoor swimming pool, Balsall Common sets the pace, constantly looking for new and imaginative ways to improve further. Relationships with business partners, local and national, extend learning opportunities and enrich experiences.

Meanwhile, the staff of the school work hard and enthusiastically, in close partnership with very supportive parents, and are the core strength of the school, with the governing body being well informed, with a consistent and supportive approach to all school matters.

All in all, this is a school that performs extremely well, that has a long and proven track record of providing the very best opportunities for the children and the families that attend, and a school that I am extremely proud to lead.

We all look forward to welcoming you into the school, and to a long and fruitful partnership.

## Balsall Common Primary School Curriculum

The curriculum at Balsall Common Primary School Academy is ambitious, rich, challenging and relevant to its pupils. It has been graded by Ofsted as 'outstanding' three times, and HMI included our curriculum in their review of outstanding schools in 2007. The curriculum has continued to be graded as 'outstanding' because we are relentless in our drive for continued improvement. We do not 'sit on our laurels' because we are an outstanding school. Our curriculum intent is designed to give all learners, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. We aim to provide an exciting and stimulating curriculum that is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment. Our mission is to motivate everyone and enable every learner to enjoy and achieve.

We place a large emphasis on the love of reading and reading for pleasure, as it is a skill that allows access to all areas of learning. Reading is taught through a systematic delivery of synthetic phonics using Little Wandle. This starts as soon as the children enter Reception. From Reception to Year 6, children take part in both guided and individual reading with the class teacher. We use the best quality texts to support not only their reading development but also their writing.

We ensure that our children are taught the fundamental and crucial skills of Reading, Writing, Maths and Science. We provide challenging and engaging activities that take account of prior learning to ensure depth and progression. The needs of all learners are taken into account. Where it naturally occurs, cross-curricular links are made in Maths, English and Science, as well as through the thematic teaching of other subjects. Computing, French Language, Swimming and Games are taught by specialist teachers in fortnightly sessions from Reception to Year 6; French is taught from Year 2 onwards. The school pool is also used by '*the swim school*', *tss*, for private lessons, and is very popular with parents.

Our timetable plans for regular retrieval of previous learning to ensure that knowledge is remembered and that schemas are created to ensure children apply their knowledge in different contexts and become knowledgeable citizens.

All children in Year 1 to Year 6 receive weekly PE lessons in gym, games or dance, with children in Reception receiving fortnightly lessons alongside swimming. Our sports teams are very successful and are coached by staff members who have passion and talent in their sport. As a result, we have enjoyed great success at competitions locally, with our swim team making the national ESSA finals regularly.

Our curriculum is knowledge rich and focuses on an approach underpinned by our knowledge of how children learn best. This means we have a highly engaging curriculum, which inspires interest and encourages deep learning so that children retain all that they have learned. This involves planned trips, experiences and guest visitors to the school, ensuring that children have a really well-rounded understanding of the subjects they learn. We encourage them to speak confidently about their learning and support this curriculum with a strong program of opportunities for personal development; this underpins all they do. Throughout the school year, we have many trips and residential visits, which help to develop social skills and independence.

Home learning opportunities are engaging and further deepen the partnership between home and school.

Year 6 take part in an Enterprise Week, which gives the children the opportunity to experience life in the working world. They encounter the experience of 'pitching for investment to local business' in order to set up a company. They then sell products in order to be the most successful entrepreneurs; all profits from the enterprise week are used to fund their end of year 'Fun Day'.

We believe in the approach of 'learning to learn', espoused by Guy Claxton - Building Learning Power. Through the ethos of the school and our curriculum children are encouraged to develop learning capacities which will help them to become resilient, independent and confident, life-long learners and are equipped with the knowledge and skills for future learning and employment.

We offer an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities which has included sporting activities, such as football, cricket, swimming, rugby, netball, rounders, athletics and dance, including tap. We also offer choir, drama, Lego building, IT, cookery, science, art, chess, cross stitch and homework.

We believe our extended curriculum contributes to the development of a pupil's sense of identity through knowledge and understanding of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural heritages of Britain's diverse society and of the local, national, European, Commonwealth and global dimensions of their lives. Children's knowledge and understanding of different faiths and cultures is explored during lessons and encourages a real tolerance of others. We provide learning opportunities that recognise and celebrate their uniqueness, develop their full potential, and allow them to fulfil their aspirations both in and outside of school. As a result, children have a good appreciation of radicalisation and are being prepared to meet the challenges of living in modern Britain and of becoming successful citizens of the future.

## **RE**

At Balsall Common Primary Academy we approach this subject with an enquiry based, detailed scheme of work for teaching Religious Education and is in-line with Solihull MBC Agreed Syllabus. It is a very comprehensive resource which supports Ofsted and SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) outcomes, SMSC, British Values, Anti-radicalisation, Critical thinking and Growth Mindset, as well as Personal Development. It teaches the 6 principal religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism.

### **Aim of the RE Curriculum**

- \* Appreciate the distinctive nature of religion within human experience (including visits to places of worship each year) and develop a personal sense of meaning in life.
- \* Appreciate the way in which religious beliefs shape life and how these beliefs contribute to personal morality and social responsibility.
- \* Develop a knowledge and understanding of the other principal religions found in the United Kingdom and their associated ways of living.
- \* Have respect for all people and their right to hold, or not to hold, religious beliefs.
- \* Develop and articulate their personal beliefs, ideas, values and experiences, whilst respecting the right of others to differ.



## **Attendance**

Good attendance at school is part of the key to successfully achieving your full potential. Many of our children achieve 100% through the year and are celebrated on our wall of fame in the school hall! We monitor attendance closely and use an APP called 'Studybugs' for parents to report any illness. This way we can advise and quickly support families if there are any challenges to attendance beyond the usual, very infrequent absence due to an illness.

## **Reception Good Level of Development (GLD)**

The proportion of children in our school who reach a Good Level of Development (GLD) has been above the national average for many years. This means that children are really well prepared to begin the more formal learning that takes place in Key Stage 1 and beyond. For the few children who do not meet this threshold, we have a clear path to support them to be able to catch up rapidly.

## **Year 1 Phonics Screening**

The proportion of children who reach the expected level in the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check has been above the national average for many years. Last year our children achieved the second highest pass rate in the whole of Solihull. The teaching of phonics is further enhanced by many other opportunities to develop a love of reading so that as they grow up, children learn to engage with a wide range of texts from all kinds of genres.

## **Year 6 Statutory Tests**

The curriculum in KS2 is broad and balanced. It has not been 'narrowed' to meet the needs of the test at the end of Year 6. We focus on developing the children holistically rather than just academically. We ensure that children are confident, resilient and ready to play their part in society as they move on to their next stage in education.

## **Year 6 Statutory Tests**

## Values

At Balsall Common Primary School Academy we are passionate about the learning of every child. Children only get one opportunity to go through their learning journey and we strive for excellence in everything that we do, in order that children are well prepared for the next steps in their development when they leave at the end of Year 6. The school provides a caring, stimulating and purposeful environment in which each child may enjoy their work and find satisfaction in it, develop positive attitudes, acquire a sense of achievement and develop self-confidence and self-discipline.

Our school values underpin all that we do. At Balsall Common Primary School Academy we have 5 core values:

### TRUST

We take responsibility to be reliable, trustworthy and honest. We are committed to always trying our best and act with integrity.

We are authentic and open in the way we communicate developing positive and productive relationships with others around us. We listen, observe and learn from others, striving to understand different ideas, perspectives and experiences.

We promote and uphold professional standards, taking pride and care in our own work, and our environment.

We self-regulate our emotions and respect others when they share an opinion.

### RESPECT

We treat everyone in our community and beyond with respect and kindness. We understand each other's differences and our different roles and show empathy and compassion to those around us.

We are friendly and helpful to others, demonstrating a positive attitude and even if we disagree, we listen to each other and show patience. We are self-aware and understand how our behaviour and emotions impact on others.

We think about how actions can affect the environment and have consideration for ourselves and others.

## **INITIATIVE**

We show a positive approach to how we can shape the world and ask thoughtful questions to take responsibility. If we see a problem we try to fix it, never just walking by.

We look for opportunities to build independence, try new things and proactively support ourselves and others.

We create a supportive environment so people can thrive. We nurture talent and invest in the development of others.

## **COMMUNITY**

We embrace and value difference and diversity - whether from a person's race, gender, other characteristics, background or experience.

We champion inclusion and diversity recognising the value it brings, challenging non-inclusive practices and behaviours.

We proactively seek and integrate a diverse range of people and perspectives, building a diverse team.

We charitably contribute to our community with humility and generosity to make a positive difference.

## **RISK**

We have the self-confidence to stand up for what's right, and be ready to take on new challenges.

We encourage ourselves and others to learn from mistakes, and are innovative and resourceful even things are out of our comfort zone.

We continuously learn and are reflective and honest about our own contribution, seeking opportunities to develop our skills.

We manage our reactions to situations professionally and calmly and encourage an appropriate level of risk-taking, to improve ways of working and create positive change.

Working in close collaboration with our families, and keeping the children at the heart of all we do, we work diligently each day to enable the children to grow into well-rounded, articulate and confident individuals who are equipped to make a positive impact on the world that they are growing up into.

## Safeguarding and the Use of the Internet

All staff are trained regularly with regard to keeping children and themselves safe.

The school has an Acceptable Use Policy regarding the use of the internet, which must be adhered to.

Children these days have access to a wide range of technology. They often have their own I-phones and I-pads. This provides them with almost unlimited access to websites and to social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and Microsoft Messenger.

We believe that children should be coached into how to use this technology responsibly so that they can make the best use possible of the information and communication networks which exist whilst keeping themselves safe. A critical area for us is the responsible use of social networking sites. Children under the age of 13 should not have a Facebook account. Any social networking sites used by the children must be supervised by the responsible adults and, in turn, be used responsibly by the adults themselves in order to provide effective role models.

The school has a zero tolerance to the misuse of social media in particular, and is proactive in regard to addressing issues if they arise. In this way we believe that we can support children in becoming responsible technology users and ensure that adults are always presenting themselves as positive role models.

*Though we allow parents to take photographs of their children's performances throughout the year, we expect that these photographs will not be uploaded onto any social networking site if they contain images of other peoples' children and that, actually, it is good practice not to upload photographs of their own children either.*

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We always enjoy meeting prospective parents, so please do make an appointment to come and enjoy a guided tour of the school and see the children at work first hand.

Contact the school office to make an appointment.

Mark Mitchell

