



DOWNHAM PREPARATORY SCHOOL AND MONTESSORI NURSERY

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Newsletter to Prep School and Nursery Parents - 14 April 2021

Dear Parents

Welcome back to school! There is a lot happening this term and we will be sending you regular updates.

Easter Raffle & Egg Hunt

The raffle will be drawn this Friday. There is still time to purchase tickets, £1 a strip. Please put the money in a named envelope, in the office post-box.

The children will take part in the Egg Hunt on Friday. This will be done in the individual class "Bubbles".

Reception Class Sports Lesson

This will now take place on Friday mornings, first lesson. Please send your child to school wearing their sports kit.

Parents Evenings

We will send parents a new invitation via Teams for Parents Evenings. Your appointment will be the same day of the week, and time, as previously arranged. If this is not suitable for you, please contact Mrs Law in the office, and we will arrange a different time.

Covid up-date – Lateral Flow tests.

If you are over 18 you can order, free of charge, a pack of Lateral Flow test kits. It is recommended that all adults test themselves twice a week.

Secondary school pupils are already being tested and Lateral Flow tests are not recommended for use by primary school aged children.

The Government website also has information on the use of Lateral Flow and PCR tests.

<https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

Lessons

Before the Pandemic we had altered our teaching time-table to include 6 shorter lessons a day. We then had to change this to 5 longer lessons a day to be able to comply with guidelines on keeping 'Bubbles' separate and allowing additional time for hand washing and applying sanitising gel between lessons.

In September we will be able (Covid permitting) to return to 6 lessons a day. We will then be able to hold a whole school Assembly, have separate music and drama lessons, use the IT suite again and put Spanish and swimming back on to the timetable.

This term, starting the week beginning Monday 26th April, classes 1, 2, 3 & 4 will have 30 minutes of Spanish during their Study Skills lesson, in preparation for lessons to resume in September.

Years 5 and 6 will continue with French, but they are using their Study Skills lessons to prepare them for exams that they will take next school year.

After-School Care

If the weather is suitable, the children may be playing outside when you come to collect them.

Nursery pupils will be in their own garden and Primary children in their outdoor play areas.

If you ring on the doorbell and there is no answer, please collect your children from the outdoor play areas.

Maths Mastery

We are using the White Rose Maths curriculum that was written to deliver the 2019 OFSTED Framework for teaching Maths in Primary Schools.

Key Stage 1 & 2 tests and assessments are now based on the acquisition of these skills.

Maths is now taught very differently from how it was before and some parents have asked if we could explain the principles and ideas behind Maths Mastery.

The following are quotes from the teachers' guide that we hope will help you understand the concept behind the new curriculum.

What does it mean to *master* mathematics?

A mathematical concept or skill has been mastered when a pupil can represent it in multiple ways, has the mathematical language to communicate related ideas, and can independently apply the concept to new problems in unfamiliar situations.

Mastery is a journey and long-term goal, achieved through exploration, clarification, practice and application over time. At each stage of learning, pupils should be able to demonstrate a deep, conceptual understanding of the topic and be able to build on this over time.

This is not about just being able to memorise key facts and procedures, which tends to lead to superficial understanding that can easily be forgotten. Pupils should be able to select which mathematical approach is most effective in different scenarios.

Fluency, reasoning and problem solving

Problem solving

Mathematical problem solving is at the heart of our approach. Pupils are encouraged to identify, understand and apply relevant mathematical principles and make connections between different ideas. This builds the skills needed to tackle new problems, rather than simply repeating routines without a secure understanding.

Mathematical concepts are explored in a variety of representations and problem-solving contexts to give pupils a richer and deeper learning experience. Pupils combine different concepts to solve complex problems, and apply knowledge to real-life situations.

Reasoning

The way pupils speak and write about mathematics transforms their learning. Mastery approaches use a carefully sequenced, structured approach to introduce and reinforce mathematical vocabulary. Pupils explain the mathematics in full sentences. They should be able to say not just what the answer is, but how they know it's right. This is key to building mathematical language and reasoning skills.

Fluency

Pupils should be able to recall and apply mathematical knowledge both rapidly and accurately. However, it is important to stress that fluency often gets confused for just memorisation – it is far more than this. As well as fluency of facts and procedures, pupils should be able to move confidently between contexts and representations, recognise relationships and make connections in mathematics. This should help pupils develop a deep conceptual understanding of the subject. Frequent, carefully designed, intelligent practice will help them to achieve a high level of fluency.

Number at the heart

Secure the fundamentals

A large proportion of time is spent reinforcing number to build competency and fluency. Number is usually at the heart of any primary mastery scheme of learning, with more time devoted to this than other areas of mathematics.

It is important that pupils secure these key foundations of maths before being introduced to more difficult concepts.

This increased focus on number will allow pupils to explore the concepts in more detail and secure a deeper understanding. Key number skills are fed through the rest of the scheme so that students become increasingly fluent.

When the curriculum was first introduced, Mrs Lillie, who is Head of Maths at the school, attended a course on Maths Mastery and she has provided guidance and resources to the other teachers in the Maths department.

In online lessons during Lockdown, we used the 10-15 minute White Rose online Maths Mastery presentation, which provides a visual introduction to each lesson. During this introduction, the teacher pauses the recording to ask questions and expand the topic. During the rest of the lesson, the teacher differentiates the topic to ensure that all pupils can access it at a level that is appropriate to their individual abilities. The higher level is very challenging, but there are levels to suit all abilities, including children who find maths very difficult.

The Maths department have found that the visual presentation works very well and helps the children complete the work set in class.

We will therefore carry on using the White Rose resources in some of our Maths lessons.

Uniform

Although it is sunny, it is still very cold and we have to leave the classroom windows open, in line with the Government guidelines for ventilation.

We would therefore suggest that the children continue to wear winter uniform until the weather improves.

Proud pupil

During Lockdown, Emelda in Class 2 had let her hair grow long. On Monday, she had it cut off and has kindly donated her hair to the Little Princess Trust. The Little Princess Trust provides free real hair wigs to children and young people who have lost their own hair through cancer treatment or other conditions.

Well done Emelda we are very proud of you.



Diary Dates

Parents Evenings via Teams: Week commencing Monday 19th April.

Open Day: Saturday 15th May – 10 -12 noon.

We cannot show parents around the classrooms when pupils are in school. However, we have been showing them around after 4pm or on a Saturday. If you know of someone who would be interested in visiting the school, but cannot come on Open Day, please tell them to phone the office and we will make an alternative arrangement.

Sports Day Practice (Y1 upwards): Wednesday 23rd June, pm.

Sports Day (Y1 upwards): Friday 25th June, pm.

Nursery & Reception Sports: Tuesday 29th June pm.

As different venues open up, we are hoping to be able to resume school trips this term. We also have plans for more events in school (Covid regulations permitting) and we will be confirming these as soon as we know that it is permissible to do so.

Watch this space!