



From: The Chair of Governors of the Bowes Cotherstone Federation

16th July 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2021

Introduction

As we approach the end of another academic year next Tuesday, we can reflect that this past year has been the most momentous in living history. COVID-19 has transformed our country and a significant part of the world. However there are considerable signs of hope; the vaccine programme has and continues to be hugely successful and the Government is moving towards Stage 4 of the roadmap for restriction easing on Monday after a period of 16 months.

Our schools of Bowes Hutchinson's CofE Aided and Cotherstone Primary came together under a single Governing Body to form the Bowes Cotherstone Foundation (BCF) on 11th January this year. I have previously detailed the rationale behind this important step. Suffice to say that our vision for the BCF remains two distinct schools, each with their own unique character working together to ensure the best possible outcomes for all our pupils.

School Activities

Notwithstanding the fact that both schools remained open for the majority of this period, some children missed up to 109 days of school. Fortunately our teaching and support staff provided access for a considerable amount of home learning including:

- Google Classroom for setting learning with hyperlinks to lessons and feedback
- Oak Academy
- White Rose Maths
- Daily assemblies and lesson orientation via MS Teams
- Phonics lessons and guided reading
- Storytime in the afternoon
- Music lessons via an LA link
- Teaching in class up to 50% of pupils; also providing paper packs because of some poor internet connectivity across our dale
- Courtesy calls via MS Teams and telephone for any problems with learning and troubleshooting of IT problems
- Small group work for SEND

This superb effort was acknowledged in writing by the Chief Inspector of OFSTED.

However, since all our children returned to full time education on 8th March 2021, they have received a full curriculum-based programme of learning and the following gives a flavour of some of the highlights at both schools.

Cotherstone

The children enjoyed World Book Day with some of their favourite characters including Robin Hood, Dobby from Harry Potter, Charlie from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Polly and Lyra. Stories in shoeboxes were particularly appreciated. Class 2 learned about Flotsam as part of their environmental studies.

Class 2 drew insects, initially in pencil and then added colour. Moving onto making insect sculptures which were super scary (in a nice way).

Mars Day was commemorated with a Zoom meeting with Astronaut Tim Peake and the children learned about the Mars vehicle Perseverance. Russian came to Cotherstone through a Durham University student who taught them some key words.

Class 1 through a grant from DCC obtained some “sensory” plants and EYFS learned about minibeasts.

Under the ‘Scholars into Schools’ education project the children met a Durham University Taiwanese student and learned about their diverse culture.

The innovative and progressive school council interviewed me and asked a range of brilliant questions. I was also asked “How do I eat a KitKat?” Fantastic stuff.

Class 1 considered different animal habitats in Science including African animals, whilst Class 2 read Fantastic Mr Fox! in literacy. EYFS made Ronnie the Robot, who is a great recycling asset. Class 2 have been focussing on the River Nile as part of their Geography studies. They have made River Nile models including a Shaduf, which has taught them about water and irrigation.

Class 3 have been working on a Kindness Quilt which will be displayed in the Bowes Museum. They have also made some splendid Mayan Masks. Years 5 and 6 have also been able to resume swimming from mid June.

Class 1 have been following the progress of their caterpillars through to chrysalis stage and recently they have released the adult butterflies.

EYFS had a fun week making a bus outside at school and going to the seaside!

The enforced cancellation of the football tournaments as a result of COVID infections at others schools led to Cotherstone staging their own tournament of 10 teams along the lines of EURO 2020.

Bowes

World Book day saw the making of kites, bookmarks and masks. Comic Relief was a great success with a range of activities including cake stall, football obstacle and mini archery.

Class 3 also featured Mars exploration after the link with Tim Peake and made some brilliant space buggies.

The polytunnel is really coming into its own and Class 1 started growing beans. They have also harvested radish and lettuce. They also created a flower bed in the Secret

Garden to add to their produce. Elsewhere on the school field Class 2 mapped the field in readiness for orienteering.

Inside the school the children welcomed the Historical Timeline which adorns three walls and covers the period from Ancient Egypt to the present day. Packed with local facts and dates it is a great learning experience.

The children took on the Captain Sir Tom Moore challenge to see how far they could run in 100 seconds and then studied the results.

Class 3 studied the mystery of missing pirate treasure in pirate themed work. Class 1 took “a Trip to the Moon” having watched “The Man on the Moon” when Neil Armstrong took his initial steps on the moon.

Class 3 were taken on an entertaining walk around Bowes learning about the history and geography of the area, the historic buildings were fascinating to learn about.

Mental Health Awareness Week led the children to walk barefoot as a sensory experience.

The Bowes Birds with Nest Box Cam was a great way to view the birds safely without disturbing them.

Class 2 had a Space Day and made pin hole cameras to view the solar eclipse safely. Class 1 made shelters during Refugee Week and Class 2 explored parallel and perpendicular lines in the bark area.

Class 3, recently under Forest Schools, carried out Bushcraft and an overnight Camp out on the school field. The weather was superb and the tents were luxurious. A thoroughly enjoyable experience for the children.

Sports Day on 13 July was a great success.

Teaching and Support Staff

None of the above would be possible without the staff at both schools. They have ensured through their industry, commitment and professionalism that the children have received the quality of teaching and learning that we have come to expect of our small outstanding rural schools.

It should be remembered that whilst we naturally have been concerned for our families over the past 16 months, the teaching and support staff have what I have described previously as the double whammy. They not only have families potentially at risk at home but also they ensure that as far as practicable the children within their care whilst at school receive the best education and care and attention to minimise any risk to their health. Their commitment has been unstinting throughout and they should be commended for their approach.

Friends of the Schools

The Friends of Bowes and Cotherstone Schools (FOBS and FOCS) have once again through their fundraising and commitment to the schools raised money to support educational excellence.

At Cotherstone they supplied DT tools and equipment, a CD player and Julia Donaldson story CD's and caterpillars for Class 1. They supplied medals, sweets and treats for the activity days and paid for the coach and day out for our Y5/6 children as well as the Bridgebuiding event. Bowes continued to kit out the Outdoor Classroom, bought rugs for the hall, Easter egg prizes and educational games for the

classrooms as well as a donation towards the Activity Days, refreshments, Picnic afternoon, and Sports Day.

Bowes are providing some Trim Trail equipment over the Summer holidays for the school and will be funding enhancements to the bark area and the Secret Garden in due course.

Bowes Cotherstone Federation (BCF)

The BCF is now well established. We have appointed the members of the Governing Body and their pen pictures and photographs will be on the websites very soon. We have met twice as a full Governing Body and have also met twice for each Sub Committee (Children's Curriculum and Community, Finance and Foundation Governors).

The Governing Body looks strategically across both schools and shares resources and expertise to work to maintain standards of teaching and learning and leadership.

Put simply we are Growing Together, Learning Together.

Future School Plans

Both schools have plans in place to continue to develop and improve facilities. Cotherstone are preparing to welcome pre-school pupils on site from September and have enhancements to their Community Garden in place. Bowes will be starting work on the improved toilet facilities thus future proofing the school for future numbers.

Transitioning Pupils to Secondary School

I am pleased to report that both schools will be able to enjoy a Leaver's service as we wish our Year 6 pupils well on their continuing educational journey. Bowes will visit St Giles' Church on Tuesday morning and in the afternoon Cotherstone will hold their service in school. Sadly parents and carers are unable to attend in line with the COVID restrictions, but the events will be videoed.

It just remains for me, on behalf of the Bowes Cotherstone Federation Governing Body, to wish you and your families well over the summer period.

We look forward to welcoming you back after the holidays.

Stay safe.

Peter Nicholls

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