

Newsletter 12th January 2024

A Wintry Welcome

Firstly, I would like to wish a very happy New Year to everyone in the wider Berrywood community. We hope this brings much joy and good fortune. The weather initially welcomed us back to school with a deluge of rain, and now we have an icy chill from the north-east. Once wrapped up appropriately though, the children have at least been able to enjoy getting outside in the winter sunshine.

We have some new families starting Berrywood, and so a very special and warm welcome to them. Our new members of staff: Mrs Webb and Mrs Hooper new recruits to our support staff team, as well as Mrs Adams have all made flying starts to their Berrywood careers. Mrs Adams as Deputy Headteacher has of course made herself known to a good number of you on the courtyard. She is especially keen to engage with you on the subject of reading at Berrywood, so please do scan one of her, *soon to be famous*, QR codes when she approaches! We wish all our newcomers well in their many endeavours.

This year, our school within a garden ethos promises to bring us even greater colour and variety than ever, especially once the warmer spring weather kicks in. We have begun work on a new sensory garden outside the Art Studio for our Key Stage 1 Market Days children to enjoy. Additionally, we have secured a grant to develop the 'Courtyard Café' idea outside of the Teaching Kitchen. These are exciting projects that will continue to add depth and value in many ways across our curriculum. We look forward to sharing these with parents and children as they come to fruition.

We are fortunate in schools to be blessed with two starts to the year. My own resolutions include vowing to sustain a tidier and more welcoming office... In terms of long-established goals, I'd like to take the opportunity of the new term to repeat to all parents the two things *you can do* that really make a positive difference to your child's education. Number one, is having **good school attendance**, which really means being in the region of 95% or above. Secondly, is establish **daily home reading routines**. We do know and understand that these are not always easy, but they are hugely beneficial and worth every ounce of your commitment.

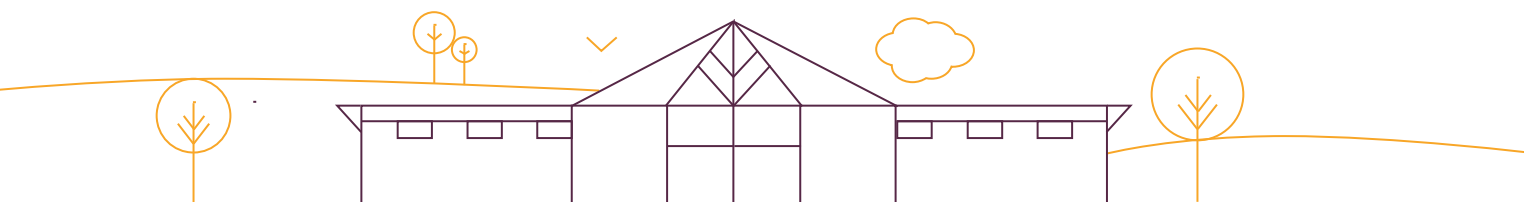
Berrywood TV - Budding Artist Program

On Monday next week, we launch our latest Berrywood TV program *Budding Artists*. The Production & Editorial Team (PETS) children have been working hard to create some really excellent content, and are rightfully proud of what they have produced. Please do take the time to click on the YouTube link that is sent to you, and maybe watch this with your children at home. The show will also be screened for all the children in the assemblies, and we know that this will be a very enjoyable watch.

Also on the art related theme, with the start of the new term, freshly created art work is about to be hung in our gallery, where it will proudly stay until Easter. If your child's work has been selected, then they will soon receive a *Budding Artist* certificate in an assembly.

Sporting Achievements Outside of School

Please be sure to keep information about your child's sporting achievements coming in to: office@berrywoodprimary.co.uk so that we can celebrate these in assemblies. Many of you helpfully include a photo with a brief description of what has been achieved. These don't have to be championship or medal winning accomplishments. In fact, some of the nicest stories about the children are when the achievements are relatively modest or small step goals. This in and of itself sends very powerful and important messages to all the children about the personalised nature of achievement for individuals.



BSA Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting takes place on **Wednesday 17th January between 6.30 – 7.30 pm** in the school Hall. Every year I make the point that all parents are automatically members of BSA by virtue of being a Berrywood parent.

We desperately need more parents taking an interest in the BSA, and possibly helping out practically with the running and organising of events. Our current committee mainly consists of school staff, which is not ideal. You do not have to be a committee member to be an active part of the BSA, and we will never ask people to take on more than they can comfortably agree to. Surely, in a school our size, there are enough willing hands to make the workload a little lighter.

So if you do have something to offer, or say, then please come along to the AGM and the forum where it matters most. Hopefully we will see a healthy number of parents on Wednesday evening next week!

Applying for School Places

If your child is four years of age or will turn four before the 1st September 2024, they can start school in September 2024. It is important that you apply for a school place online by midnight on Monday 15th January 2024. Obviously, we very much hope you make Berrywood your number one choice! Please pass this on to any non-Berrywood families you may know for whom this deadline is relevant.

Can you Help with our Chickens?

We are looking to expand our group of volunteer helpers who come to the school at week-ends and through some of the school holidays to feed our chickens. We have an amazing parent, Nicola Smith, who helps to co-ordinate this for us and she has let us know that numbers have recently dwindled. If you can help, either contact us at the school office (office@berrywoodprimary.co.uk) and we can pass your details onto Nicola, or you can join the 'Berrywood Chooks' group on Facebook. Thank you in anticipation of any help you can offer.

Universal Free School Meals – Year R 1 & 2 Parents

Our Spring term school Census is on Thursday 18th January. We really need the support of parents in Year R, 1 and 2... Please, if at all possible, can your child **order a school meal next Thursday?**

As mentioned on our Newsletter in the Autumn term, universal 'free' school meals are far from free and not fully subsidised by the government. They were free when the government first introduced the initiative many years ago but as the cost of school meals have increased, the funding to schools has not, resulting in substantial costs from our main school budget. The impact can be lessened, if a high number of infant aged children have a meal on Census day. Historically we also change the menu for the Census day to our most popular choice of the week, this means that next week, Thursday's menu, including jacket potatoes and puddings, will be offered on Friday and options listed for Friday, offered on Thursday. Please note this means that the popular 'Fish and Chips' day will be Thursday next week!

Many thanks in advance for your support.

Best wishes

Chris Reilly