

Newsletter 26th April 2024

Contrasting Pictures

On Tuesday this week, we had our annual visit from the Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service (HIAS). This was a very positive experience, with many significant strengths identified. Perhaps most importantly, they saw excellent learning behaviours being demonstrated by the children in all the classes they visited across the school. They praised the productive and caring relationships that members of staff form with the children too. Our Market Days provision and initiatives to improve phonics and early reading also came in for praise. It was certainly an occasion to be proud of the hard work and commitment that goes into making Berrywood a successful school for its children and families.

There are of course though many challenges currently playing out in education, and some of these have also been less positively felt in very recent times here at Berrywood. For example, it was very sad and sobering to have to address issues of discriminatory attitudes and behaviour by Berrywood pupils this week. Particularly when seeing the deep impact this has on the victims and their families. Although we are rightly proud of the school's ethos and curriculum which wholeheartedly promotes and encourages respect and diversity, we genuinely need the active vigilance and support of parents and families in reinforcing these vital messages at home.

Quite often it is the case that children repeat intolerant phrases and ideas that are picked up from various social media platforms. Alarming, a study released earlier this week suggested that a quarter of UK 5-7 year olds now have smartphones. On this theme, I cannot express enough the importance of careful and regular monitoring of children's online activity. We recently had to support some families whose children had got themselves into a very dangerous situation indeed. Thankfully this ended safely and with valuable lessons learnt.

I apologise for raising what are sensitive and difficult issues in a newsletter. In doing so, I am simply trying to convey how precarious the pathways in our modern world can be for young people to navigate. As a school, we will continue to strive to empower our children with the awareness and skills to manage their own conduct respectfully and safely.

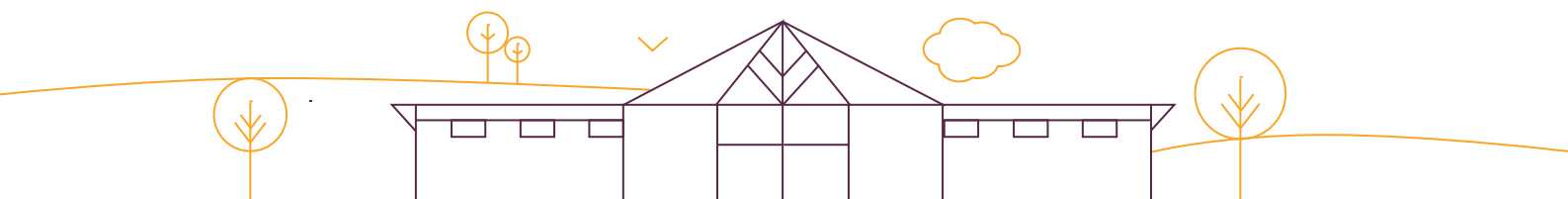
Farewell and Welcome

At the end of next week, we will be saying a very sad farewell to the wonderful Mrs Jane Simmons, who has loyally served as an Administrative Assistant at Berrywood for the past 22 years. Jane is apparently off to explore life a little more fully with, as yet, unplanned and defined adventures... the mind truly boggles! More seriously of course, I would like to thank Jane for flawless professionalism in this role. On a personal level, I would like to thank her for her dry humour and timely insights, many of which will stay with me as treasured memories of a great colleague. The whole school workforce absolutely loves Jane, and she will be greatly missed.

Joining our team to replace Jane will be Janine New (not a typo). Parents can now expect a different, but hopefully equally as eloquent, voice when being gently reminded of dinner money oversights or missing trip payments. We wish Janine well in her role and welcome her on board.

Reading Book Vending Machine

It has arrived and been unveiled, with the first of our children (who've fulfilled the home reading expectations) randomly selected to slot their tokens for a book of their choice. This fun and engaging approach to boosting reading in the home is really taking off, and certainly got the children very excited today!



We have had lovely feedback from parents on the courtyard and via Dojo, telling us how these incentives have really helped to encourage their child to want to read more at home. Thank you so much to all parents for their support with this, and long may it continue.

In addition, next week we also have our phonics workshops taking place on Thursday 2nd May at 9am and 5:30pm. These are predominantly for parents of Early Years and Year 1 pupils (the year groups which have started the Essential Letters and Sounds phonics programme) but all parents and carers are welcome to come along and see how we teach early reading skills. There will be an opportunity to hear ways to support your child's early reading development at home. If you are planning on attending, please inform the school office who can put you on the event register.

BSA Quiz Night & Upcoming Events

Thank you to those of you who came along to have some fun and support this event. Obviously a massive thank you to Catherine Goodall and Laura Tull for all their organising work, and to Mrs Glanville and Mrs Fryer for compiling the questions. I understand it was a very enjoyable occasion, and one that we are likely to repeat next year!

Tickets for the upcoming school discos will go on sale on Friday 3rd May next week. A link will be emailed to you for this purpose. Please do note that we have to limit numbers to meet safety requirements. No admission will be granted without a ticket, and tickets cannot be purchased on the day of the disco. Please ensure you book your tickets soon after you receive the link in order to avoid disappointment.

Our School Within a Garden Summer Fayre takes place on Saturday 22nd June. Please do save this date! The themes will be very closely matched to last year's, which include lots of children's activities and performances, as well as food, food, food!