

Headteacher's Newsletter No.7

27/11/13

Houses

We received many suggestions from children for the names of our four houses but school council narrowed the list down to a short list of options for everyone to choose from in a secret ballot. There was a clear winner with some children from every class choosing it. The result of that ballot means that our four houses will be called (with house colours):



We will divide the children up into houses for next term and endeavour to run our first inter-house competitions towards the end of each half term during the spring. We will also hold elections within each house to choose house captains from amongst the year 6 children.

Learning How To Learn

One of the ways we think we can help children achieve more is by helping them understand more about learning and themselves as learners. We are also beginning to use the language of learning to open their eyes to the possibilities of all they can achieve. I have been doing this as I have been introducing chess lessons to classes 3 and 4 and all members of the teaching staff are beginning to shape their lessons so as to build children's learning power.

In my chess lessons I have started to introduce the idea to the children that their brains are a bit like the body's muscles and that just as we can increase muscle power through exercises such as using weights, so we can also increase brain power through exercising our brains in different ways. This is not just wishful thinking, studies have been carried out which show that intelligence can actually increase as brains are worked!

So, I have talked to the children about resilience, specifically, not giving up when we find things are difficult. Hence a child may find it hard to learn to play chess, but if instead of thinking "I'm not clever enough - there's no point in trying", they think "this is good brain exercise - if I keep going I will succeed in learning" then they are far more likely to achieve.

Another example: we have started learning chess by playing varieties of a short game with pawns called “Capture the Flag”. This gives the opportunity in a simplified setting of thinking through different moves. I have talked to the children about using their imagination to “see” what might happen if they move a certain piece in a particular way. What might their opponent do? By doing this they begin to plan and develop strategies for playing.

Perseverance and using imagination are just two of a whole range of mind attitudes that we will seek to develop in children to help them become better learners, not just in chess but in everything they learn.

Harvest Challenge and Save The Children

A representative of Save The Children was with us earlier this week who talked to the children about the kinds of things the money we raised would buy including tents, high nutrition food packs and books. We were able to present a cheque for £1200 and received a certificate in return.



We will be taking part in another Save The Children event on December 13th: Wear a Silly Christmas Jumper. For a £1 donation children will be able to wear to school a Christmas jumper. This doesn't have to be a high quality item - why not use an old jumper and decorate it appropriately!

School Governors

In the recent parent survey, one of the issues that arose was that many parents were unsure as to the role and responsibilities of governors. Being a governor means carrying a lot of responsibility and giving up time, not just for meetings but in order to prepare for meetings and to work on different aspects of the school's life. It is a commitment being made which ultimately benefits all the children in the school.

Governors are responsible, with the head teacher providing the main influence, for setting the aims and objectives of the school and setting policies and targets to achieve those aims and objectives.

The head teacher is responsible for the running of the school on a daily basis, for working out plans, managing the appointment of staff, managing spending - and more - whilst the governors hold the head teacher to account and give their support in all kinds of ways, for example, by using their expertise in a particular field (finance, employment law etc.) to help guide policy.

Governors have to agree such matters as improvement plans, the curriculum, spending and school policies. They are responsible for working with the head teacher and staff to bring about the best possible outcomes for the children at the school. Perhaps their key role is in ensuring that the right person is appointed to be the school's head teacher.

The London Schools Gold Club

On Friday, Miss Barrick represented Eastcote at the Mayor of London's Education Conference, during which she was presented with a certificate of our membership of the London Schools Gold Club. According to the website...

The London Schools Gold Club is an annual scheme set up to recognise those schools that have managed to improve the aspirations and attainment of pupils - despite many facing poverty and disadvantage. Examples include showing how children eligible for free school meals or with previous low attainment can aspire to and do reach excellence in London. All eligible schools have proven their ability to achieve through their published performance data.

Eastcote was one of only three primary schools in the London Borough of Bexley invited to be a part of this club and it bears testimony to the excellent work that has been carried on in the school over the last few years.

Christmas Fair

It was good to see so many people at the Christmas fair organised by PACE on Saturday. It looked to be a hugely successful event and I would like to thank all those who gave up their time and worked so hard to make it so. Particular thanks to Mrs Topliffe, who has only recently taken over as chair of PACE, for organising the event so well.

PE lessons in the cold!

As the weather has turned rather chilly, we are suggesting that it may make outdoor sessions more comfortable, if the children had track bottoms and a warm top to wear. Please feel free to provide your child with these if you wish.

Living With a Labrador



This is Thor with his best friend Foxy.

Three things he makes very clear to me:

1. No matter how old and disgusting a bone is, there is no possibility that I will give it up.
2. My play time only finishes when I've had enough.
3. I can bark loudly - no, really loudly. Let me prove it to you... I don't care if it is three in the morning.