



THE BATT C.E. SCHOOL

THE BATT CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL
Corn Street, Witney, Oxon, OX28 6DY



Executive Headteacher:
Debbie Secull

Telephone: 01993 702392
office@thebattschool.org.uk
www.thebattschool.org.uk

Dear Parents and Carers

Executive Headteacher's Bulletin November 2022

Welcome to Autumn Term 2. As we move through this term and approach Christmas there will be many opportunities when we'll be welcoming parents into school where I hope to be able to catch up with you in person. In the meantime, I'd like to give you some insight into our current development priorities in school.

Communication

The volume and clarity of communication coming out to parents last year was a clear concern expressed in parental survey results in the summer term. We are working hard in school to streamline communications - hopefully meaning that families are not feeling bombarded by multiple or contradictory communications - and ensuring parents are clear on who to contact to best help them when they have a query or concern.

You may find this summary helpful in reaching the right person:

Nature of concern	Initial Point of contact	Contact Details
Reporting Absence Queries around payments (lunches, school trips etc) Arrangements (clubs, school events etc)	School Office Mrs Jayne Chandler Mrs Lucy Jones	Tel: 01993 702392 Email: office@thebattschool.org.uk
Concerns about children's learning, homework, behaviour, daily occurrences etc	Class teachers	Usually available on the playground at the beginning or end of the day or contactable via the school office (see above)
Specific concerns around children's learning or support for children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)	Mrs Tracy Holme Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo)	Email: tholme@thebattschool.org.uk
Nurture or family support	Mrs Sharon Cooper Home School Link Worker and Nurture Lead	Email: scooper@thebattschool.org.uk
Wider issues (or those already raised with class teachers or the office, where you require further support). Please note these will be escalated to Executive Headteacher as appropriate	Mrs Katy Harding-Jones Head of School (responsible for day to day running of school)	Contact via School Office Tel: 01993 702392 Email: office@thebattschool.org.uk
Concerns you feel need to be shared with or addressed by Executive Headteacher	Ms Deborah Secull Executive Headteacher	Contact via School Business Manager codriscoll@thebattschool.org.uk
If you have any concerns around finance, including trip payments and Free School Meals (FSM)	Mrs Catherine O'Driscoll School Business Manager	Email: codriscoll@thebattschool.org.uk





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I am also aware that some parents have been frustrated by internal communication structures which have meant that information about children shared by parents has not been communicated effectively across the staff team, leading to unnecessary repeated contacts over a single issue and we are also working to resolve these problems.

Curriculum

Much of the development work of the teaching team is focused on developing the wider curriculum. Children at The Batt are taught a broad and balanced curriculum (that is one that takes in all the primary subjects rather than focusing on just core English and maths learning) and have access to wider learning opportunities such as school trips, workshops, sporting participation and musical activities.

However, the government's focus in recent years is that curriculum learning in all subjects should be coherently planned and logically sequenced and advisors and inspectors in school are keen to see how subjects are led, that teachers have good subject knowledge and that children make progress in these subjects by learning and retaining more subject specific skills, vocabulary and knowledge over time.

We have therefore been working to ensure, as we rebuild after covid and the recent turmoil in school, that the curriculum at The Batt is ambitious; demonstrates clear progression in developing children's skills and knowledge; and we are currently reviewing topics taught to ensure that National Curriculum learning in all subjects is fully mapped across school.

In addition to this work, we are also planning on how we can make sure that infant learning programmes are consistent across The Batt and St Mary's Schools so as to support the learning of those children that transition in Year 3.

Attendance & Punctuality

Unsurprisingly, school attendance rates have dipped nationally during the last two years and at The Batt overall attendance last year stood at 92%. More worryingly persistent absence (where children miss more than 10% of school sessions) was at 21%, well above the national average. We are committed to improving overall attendance rates and especially the number of children who are persistently absent (miss 10% or more of school sessions).

In support of this we are closely monitoring absence and will keep in touch with families where we think we can offer more support to ensure children are attending school. Please refer to my [previous letter](#) for more information on how frequent absence and lateness can impact on children's outcomes.

Our targets this year are that overall attendance will be at least 96% and persistent absence rates will be reduced to below 10%.

The School Day

At The Batt School the start and end of the day are currently slightly staggered, which I believe is a hang-over from covid arrangements.

For infants the compulsory school day starts at 8.55am (though classroom doors open at 8.45am) and ends at 3.05pm. For juniors the compulsory school day starts at 8.50am and ends at 3.10pm

We expect all children to arrive in time for the start of the school day. Children arriving after this are marked as late in the register and any arrivals after 9.15am (when registers officially close) are required to be recorded as an unauthorised absence.





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These timings mean that infants are in school for 30 hours and 50 minutes in a typical week and Juniors 31 hours and 40 minutes. We are aware that this is below the government expectation that all children are in school for 32.5 hours which comes into force in September 2023 and are currently working with St Mary's school, and will consult with parents later, to make changes to the school day to ensure that we meet this expectation by the beginning of the next academic year and that start times are consistent.

We will welcome your thoughts when we open this consultation in the Spring Term.

Site Maintenance

The eagle-eyed among you will have noticed that the boarded window and the older windows to the front of the school building have still not been replaced. This is of great frustration to me as work has been anticipated for a year now and contractors were booked to complete the replacement at October half-term.

This work was delayed again due to issues with custom made frames not being ready and given the nature of the work and the compact nature of the school site - I fear we will have to wait for the work to be completed in a future holiday period.

Nevertheless we are moving forwards to develop a plan with ODST to address some of the refurbishment which is evidently necessary within school, particularly involving the KS1 outdoor area, internal flooring and general decoration, some of which is looking very tired, and we hope to see improvements in these areas over the year.

School Budgets

Several parents have asked about the school budget after much media coverage of the impact to schools of increased energy cost and potentially unfunded teacher and support staff pay awards. I have to be honest and say that budgets at both The Batt and St Mary's are of concern - as they are in schools up and down the country. Currently there is still some uncertainty around pay awards and whether or not there will be further cuts to education - so for the time being we are awaiting confirmation of what funding will actually look like. However, we are of course seeking to be prudent when making decisions about resourcing.

We certainly hope that budgetary caution won't impact negatively on the educational offer for children, but in reality, we will need to consider carefully when we choose to invest in new resources, run school visits etc. Parents can of course help by making voluntary contributions towards payments for school trips and visits whenever possible and we may need to consider whether or not to run trips if the school is having make up a large shortfall.

We do also, of course, very much appreciate the additional contributions we receive from the fund-raising efforts of The Batt School Association.

The Batt & St Mary's Infant's School Partnership

The partnership between The Batt and St Mary's continues to grow, with several staff now working across both sites and joint training sessions and our inaugural joint local governors meeting having taken place.

For me, the two schools working in partnership can only strengthen the educational offer of both schools as we share expertise, improve transition, and make more efficient use of resources. Over the first term staff have come together to discuss and make plans for curriculum development and we are now building joint leadership of phonics, English and maths learning. Ultimately we hope to reach an alignment in the infant curriculum at both schools which will ensure all children can build on consistent prior learning as they move to Year 3 and that we can potentially share extracurricular opportunities such as workshops.





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This term staff teams are joining forces in considering improvements to provision for vulnerable learners as we share training from the Mulberry Bush School Outreach Team and learning gained from St Mary's association with the Eynsham School Early Intervention Hub.

Staff Changes

We're very sad to be losing Mrs Newby at the end of this term. She has worked at the Batt since qualifying in 2015 and I know she will find it very difficult to say goodbye. However, I know she'll relish the opportunities offered at the Faringdon Learning Trust (along with a much shorter commute). I know that staff and parents will join me in thanking her for her commitment to The Batt over the last seven years and wishing her all the best as she continues to develop her teaching career.

Looking forwards, I'm delighted that Mr Whittaker is able to step up to 5 days a week to work with Merlins and we are currently working on a plan to replace the two day's he currently works with Foxes in Year 4. We will be in contact with parents again as soon as this is finalised.

Hot Chocolate Meetings

I am always seeking opportunities to learn from the wonderful children we have at both The Batt and St Mary's Infants and so I have decided to invite children who receive a Golden Certificate at The Batt or a certificate at St Mary's in Friday's celebration assemblies to share a hot chocolate with me during the following week. I'm hoping that this will feel like a further celebration for them, while allowing me a chance to get to know more children individually and learn from their views and opinions about school.

Residential Visits

Several parents mentioned in last Year's parent survey that the residential visits recently offered to Year 6 were shorter than had been the case in the past. I am interested in reviewing the residential visit offer at The Batt and hope to consult with staff, children and parents on this over the coming term.

Residential visits always have to balance cost to parents and the school (in terms of staffing) and obviously also rely on the good will and commitment of staff. However, they do provide a genuine opportunity for children to develop wider skills of resilience and perseverance, teamwork and leadership as well as enjoying the outdoors and making memories. Parents often recall their own childhood residential visit experience when talking to me about the opportunities available to their children. They are also an obvious element of an ambitious curriculum offer.

I will send out a questionnaire to parents with children in KS2 later this term - but should any of you have feelings with regards to the current or future residential offers that you wish to share then please do let me know via the school office.

I look forward to getting to know more of you this term.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Secull
Executive Headteacher
The Batt CE Primary School

