



# Weekly Newsletter

08 July 2022

## Welcome

Many thanks to everyone who came to the Summer Fair last Saturday – the event was a huge success, raising over £4,000 for the school and with over 1000 people attending. Many thanks to the *Friends of Birch Hill* committee who spent months, and many late nights, planning and organising the Fair and then days setting it up – all of this on a voluntary basis. This is especially remarkable as much of the planning was done virtually and while coming out of the pandemic. I was disappointed not to be there on the day, but I had a family celebration in Scotland.

The committee are always looking for volunteers to either join the committee and/or to help organise events. Please contact [friendsbirchhill@gmail.com](mailto:friendsbirchhill@gmail.com) if you have any spare time.

I would also like to thank all of the staff who, again, gave up their free time to attend a school event. The whole school team have worked incredibly hard over the year, at times in extremely challenging circumstances, and at personal cost to themselves and their families. Over the year, staff have worked late evenings and weekends, taken children on residential, organised, rehearsed and attended performances and plays, taken children on various day trips, sporting events and even a trip to the O2 London. The staff have also worked very hard over the last few weeks on class lists and transitions, ensuring that children are happy with their new class for September.

The team do this, not be to praised or thanked, but out of a commitment to give our children (your children) an engaging, and memorable education.

The whole school community is amazing – open, supportive and welcoming. This can be seen, especially when we welcome new families to our community – and was especially evident in the warm welcome we have offered to those families joining us from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

This year has been incredibly difficult for everyone – both in and out of school. The pandemic has had a huge impact on staff – the vast majority having caught Covid themselves, their families have had Covid and some more than once! Some days, staff absence has been so high we have literally just about opened the school gates. We are seeing highly experienced and committed staff leave the profession due to their own workload, wellbeing and or the rise in the cost of living. As staff leave, it is extremely difficult to recruit and find the right candidates – and this staff shortage just adds more pressure. On top of this, the increasing demand on Special Educational Needs and Mental Health, coupled with the lack of services from the Local Authority and other agencies (particularly health) has put a huge strain on the quality of education we have been able to offer our children.

I fully appreciate we don't always get things right, (and at times communication could be better). I am always happy to receive feedback and reflect on how we can improve the offer for the better of our children. If parents would like to give us feedback, I would appreciate this is done in a spirit of openness and 'togetherness'. Social media posts are not meaningful ways to give us feedback.

I want to thank everyone who supports our children – from the support staff, teachers, volunteers, Friends and governors, for all of their continued hard work and support.

*Michael Dillon*  
Headteacher

## Year 1 Topic



Last week in Year 1 we have been creating Great Fire of London art work.

The children created some beautifully coloured backgrounds to place their houses on-to.

## Year 4 Oakwood Residential

For three days and two nights last week, 50 pupils from Year 4 went on a residential at Oakwood Youth Challenge. We knew it would be fun but what an adventure we had! Some of the children felt nervous about being away from home and about the challenges that lay ahead.

Over our time there, every child grew in confidence within themselves, their independence and faced each challenge with amazing courage. As well as seeing each child give their best to each task, they encouraged and supported each other, building their friendships, social skills and abilities in working as a team. They faced climbing walls, abseiling, mountain boarding, fire building, archery and bouldering amongst other activities.

The children represented the school fantastically with the activity coaches and cook commenting on how polite and well behaved the children were. All of them loved the food and were fantastic at clearing up. There was a lot of excitement about having sleep overs with their friends and they all took responsibility for making their beds and packing at the end of our trip.

The Year 4 team are so proud of all they achieved and the amazing courage they displayed.

## Year 2 Topic: Where would you live?



In Year 2, we have been learning about hot and cold places. Children have been using their newly acquired knowledge of the equator to locate hot and cold countries on a globe and on a world map. We have since looked at human and physical features of our local environment. In the coming weeks, we will be comparing human and physical features of the United Kingdom with human and physical features of Australia. Our upcoming trip to Odds Farm Park will give the children the opportunity to look at the origins of different animals and discuss where in the world specific animals live and can live.





## Children's Achievements



Yasmin in Year 4 has achieved her 3rd belt in Martial Arts.

She is now Yellow Belt Senior!

Well done Yasmin!

## Hot Weather Alert

Please ensure your child brings a water bottle and wears a sunhat to school next week, as temperatures are going to get extremely high. We



would also suggest applying sun cream to your child in the morning. They can bring sun cream in to school, but they have to apply it themselves.

At lunchtimes we will provide extra shade for the children by putting gazebos up and we will limit the amount of time that they are outside.

Heat exhaustion is not usually serious if you can cool down within 30 minutes. But if it turns into heatstroke, it needs to be treated as an emergency. For advice on heat stroke and heat exhaustion visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heat-exhaustion-heatstroke/>

## Dates for the Diary

Year 2 Odd's Farm Trip	Tuesday 12th July
Year 5 Cricket Festival	Tuesday 12th July
Year 6 Performance	Tuesday 12th July - 6.00pm, Thursday 14th July - 9.30am & 6.00pm
End of Year Reports out	Friday 15th July
Year 6 Leavers' Disco/Festival Party	Wednesday 20th July - 6.00-8.00pm
Year 6 Leavers Assembly	Friday 22nd July - 2pm
<b>End of Term</b>	<b>Friday 22nd July</b>
<b>INSET DAYS</b>	<b>Thursday 1st &amp; Friday 2nd September</b>
<b>START OF TERM</b>	<b>Monday 5th September</b>

### Letters/Attachments coming home this week:

- Reading FC Holiday Flyer
- Summer Reading Challenge- e-Newsletter
- Library Fiona Barker Flyer

- Gems Bear Cubs 2022
- GEMS WOLF PACK 2022