

## News from Mr Edwards-Grundy

Hasn't it been wonderful to see the sunshine today?

As the end of remote learning draws near, bulbs begin to bloom, the days lengthen and hopes of the easing of lockdown build, there feel lots of good reasons to have a spring in our step!

More than anything else, this week I want to say well done. I know that for many of you this lockdown has seen enormous challenges and stretched you to your limits. In this last week of remote learning, do take time to reflect on all that you have achieved, juggling your work commitments with taking care of your family through the many difficulties of this season and protecting your own mental health and wellbeing. We are not there yet, the pandemic is still with us, but the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday and the ongoing reduction in Covid-19 cases gives us all cause to hope, to start to look ahead to a different season.

As a staff team we are very much looking forward to welcoming your children back into school. Whilst it has been wonderful to see and talk to your children remotely, we are longing to see them in the flesh and to have classes back together again.

As I shared in my letter earlier this week, our priorities for the rest of this term will be two-fold, supporting your children as they settle back into school, providing opportunities for them to process lockdown and adjust to being back with their peers, alongside addressing any gaps in learning and helping them all with their next steps.

As we enter the season of Lent, we are reflecting in Collective Worship about throwing off the things that can hold us back from being the people God made us to be. It is my prayer that as we go through Lent and we begin to see restrictions eased, that we will be able to take time to reflect on what makes each of us flourish, turning away from the things that hold us back and focussing on all that is good. For me, taking time to pray during Lent is an important discipline, enabling me to re-focus on what is important in my life and my relationship with God. As the end of lockdown approaches, please take extra time this Lent for the things that are important to you.

## Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust

Six years ago on Monday, following much discussion and consultation, The Blake School joined the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust.

The six years have been more varied than we could have imagined in our wildest dreams!

We asked people who were involved in the original conversion decision, or who worked at the school both before and after conversion, for their thoughts on joining the Multi-Academy Trust.

*"We joined ODSST because they shared our vision for the future of The Blake: a Church school, drawing on Christian principles to serve the local community. Six years on, I am continually thankful for that decision: as part of the ODSST 'family' we are in turn part of a wider community made up of a network of individual schools sharing our aspiration that all ODSST children may flourish and have 'life to the full'."* Elizabeth Knowles, former Chair of Governors and current governor.

*"Throughout my time as a governor, ODSST has been supportive but not intrusive; a bit like a large and friendly family who are there when you need them, but don't come into your room without knocking!"* Phil Fowler, current Chair of Governors.

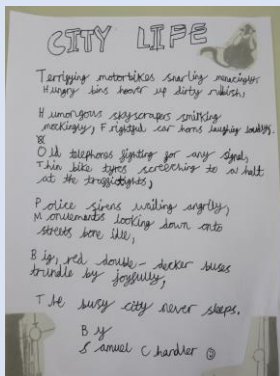
*"ODSST continues to be a valuable voice from outside the school to help us reflect on our practice and to offer us challenge. We work hand in hand to ensure the very best outcomes for children not only at The Blake, but across the Trust."* Tim Edwards-Grundy, Headteacher

*"Being part of ODSST is like being part of a family, there is always someone to support us. I especially like that they have people at the very heart of everything they do."* Fiona Hayes, Governor and Class Teacher.

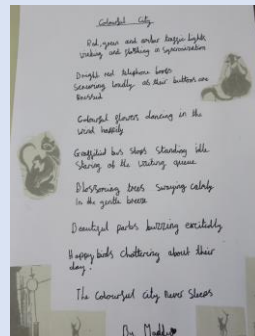
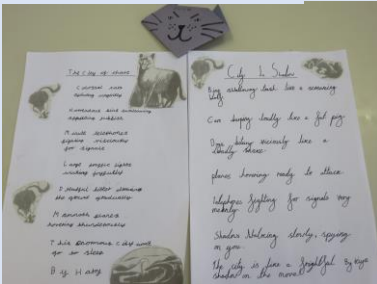


## News from around the school

Year 5 is a riot of colour at the moment. Over recent weeks they have been learning all about Mexico, which means that everywhere you look there are vibrant colours. Children at home and at school have made Nachos, sombreros, and done some weaving. As well as all their Mexican themed work, in RE children have been thinking about people whose faith inspired them to make a difference.



We were really impressed by the writing that the children have been doing about Varjak Paw – we love the cat faces too!



## World Book Day – 4<sup>th</sup> March

This year, World Book Day is on 4<sup>th</sup> March. In normal circumstances, across the week in which World Book Day falls, we organise a programme of activities to celebrate reading. However, as children are not all in school, we will celebrate reading during Children's Book Week, which falls during May.

Nonetheless, we know that many children enjoy dressing up as their favourite book character on World Book Day and so if children (at home and in school) would like to do this on 4<sup>th</sup> March, they are very welcome to do so.

Whether dressing up or not, enjoy reading this week! Class teachers will be suggesting some activities that your children may wish to join in with, or you may want to take a look at the ideas that are being [promoted online](#).

Every day next week at 10.30am there is an opportunity to [Share a Story Live](#) – why not tune in?

### Back to school...

We are delighted that all children will be able to be back in school from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March. We will continue to have staggered drop off and collection times and to operate a one-way system around the school site. We continue to require any adults on the school site to wear a face mask.

All children will be required to wear school uniform from 8<sup>th</sup> March, we have some bargain uniform offers which we will be sharing with you.

Please look out for final details regarding the return to school, which will be circulated next week.

### Forget-me-not

We know that in recent months many of our families have experienced bereavement and loss.

Grief Encounter, a leading UK Bereavement Charity, provides free professional bereavement services, including a national helpline for those experiencing grief.

In order to raise money to support their work they are encouraging people to take part in a forget-me-not walk. Registration costs £5 for which participants will receive a baseball cap or a dog bandana.

To find out more about the work of the charity or how you can support the walk, please do go to their [webpage](#).

### School Health Team

The information from the school health team that is attached to this newsletter is full of great ideas about how to get a good sleep.

We would encourage you to look at the information on the websites they suggest including the [NHS](#), [the sleep council](#) and [the sleep foundation](#). If lockdown has seen some of your bedtime routines slide, this week, prior to getting back into the routine of school, would be a good time to re-establish them!

The newsletter also contains details about Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, which you may find helpful, especially at this time.

If you would like to get in touch with Anita Pitcher, our school health nurse, you can do so on 01865 901295 or email [witney.schoolnurses@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:witney.schoolnurses@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

### 100-club

This week the February draw for the 100-club took place in the presence of an independent witness.

Ticket number 55, belonging to Lorraine Cavaliere was drawn, so she is the lucky winner this month.

We continue to be so grateful to The Friends for doing what they can to continue to raise money for us and who are beginning to dare to look forward to future face to face events...

### Child Mental Health

The news that we will be able to welcome all children back into school is the best news we have had for a very long time! We know however that for some children thinking about the return to school will make them feel anxious. It has been a long time since they have been in school.

You may find some of the activities suggested by [Bridge the Gap](#) helpful in supporting your child over the coming weeks.

Your child's class teacher will also be very happy to answer any questions you or your child may have.

### Stay safe online

This week we have been made aware of an App that is causing concern, called Omegle, It is a free online chat website with the strapline 'Talk to Strangers'.

Please can we encourage you talk to your children regularly about the Apps they are using and how to stay safe online?

Please take time to listen to your children talking about their online activity and how they are spending their time whilst using a laptop, tablet or phone.