

Curriculum News

January 2014



Farsley Farfield
Primary School
We Can We Will

A New Year and we are 'Going for Goals'!

Welcome back to school; I hope that you had an excellent break and that everyone is recharged and raring to go!

This is my favourite term: the time of the year when we get intense, uninterrupted learning across the school. I am looking forward to lesson observations in every class over the next six weeks and this follows impressive book scrutiny last half term. What particularly stood out from the children's work was pride and reflective self assessment. The quality of teacher feedback was high, and most children were highly engaged in their own learning and that of their peers (see also **Learning from Feedback** inside).

Over the next few weeks, the school's assemblies and 'Circle Times' will be broadly around the theme of 'Going for Goals'. We shall consider what our general and more specific targets might be, how we can work towards them and how we might show the resilience needed to overcome difficulties.

Peter Harris, Head teacher



The children are working hard to be 'The best they can be' and 'Great learners'



Staffing Changes

With regret, we have agreed to allow **Mrs Singleton** to take on a secondment as an Assistant Headteacher for two terms in a school in South Leeds. As a result, some staffing arrangements have been adjusted and now **Mrs Stephenson** will teach in **4SK** for two days, as well as her commitment to three days in **4SG**.

1D will now have **Ms Howells** teaching the class on a Wednesday morning rather than **Mrs Kroon**, and **Ms Howells** will also do some specialist music teaching in **3CW** and **6W**. Ms Howells is already well known to many children as the 'Farm teacher' and new recorder teacher, but she is also a music specialist and former headteacher with experience across the whole of the primary age range. Not a bad replacement...



Ms Howells

Mrs Tracy Wilson, North administrator, left in November and she has been replaced permanently by **Diane Walton** - well known to many as Faye and Laura's mum and also chair of the Friends of Farfield PTA. *Welcome to the team Diane!*

Parking issues

As always, there have been issues with parking last term on Cote Lane. PCSOs have been more prominent on the street, and we understand that some tickets have been issued for illegal or inconsiderate parking. Please do try to drive and park safely and considerately.



We are trying hard to alleviate the problems. Whilst we believe that we are making some progress, it is slow and bureaucratic. Changes to parking arrangements in the area are following legal procedures and this should alleviate things slightly.

We are also seeking permission to use the Civic Hall car park for a free Park and Stride scheme and are seeking match funding and permission to surface the unofficial car park by the park. Councillor Carter and council officers are active and supportive on these issues, and we would expect to see positive changes by the end of the school year.

The proposed 'Walking Bus' from the Co-op is not proceeding as there was insufficient demand.



Internet and Telephone changes

By 31st March, the school will have a new connection to the internet as the previous 'Leeds Learning Network' ceases to exist. Children (and staff) may have to get used to new usernames and passwords and the school's telephone numbers (part of LLN) will have to change. We will also have a brand new website. We will write separately about all this when arrangements are confirmed.



Blogs go International!

One expected feature of the new website will be the embedding of the class blogs into the main school site. The blogs for classes such as 2F, 3C, 5/6D and 6W are going from strength to strength and we hope to add more classes before the end of the year. These blogs can currently be accessed from the front of the main school website and I would strongly encourage parents (and extended family) to visit regularly and give feedback. We know that we have had blog visitors from around the world and that we have regular visitors in the USA and in the Indian sub continent.

At the end of last half term, 6W were delighted to have blog and email correspondence from the Swedish publishing company of an app called Pettson's Inventions that they had been using as a stimulus for writing explanation texts (with accompanying drawings). The publishers Filimundus featured 6W's blog on their own Facebook page and they got dozens of 'likes' from Scandinavia!



Blogs create audiences and motivation - it's simple!

Trees for the future



A group of junior children recently spent an afternoon with Mrs Stephenson and Joe planting alder saplings in the area between the 'apple sculpture' and the infant building. This under-used area of the school is the wettest on the site and the alders should be better suited to these growing conditions.

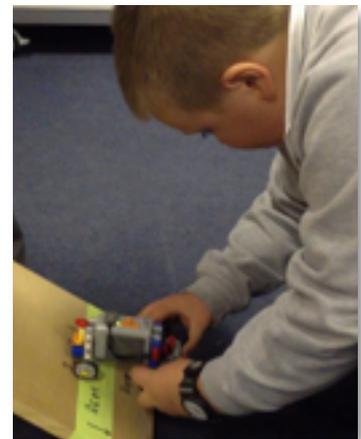
We have further willow and hawthorn 'whips' to plant and this area is likely to be left for another few years whilst the trees establish themselves.

LEGO has the answer!

Lego is hugely versatile and has developed somewhat since we were children!

In 2F, lego is used in lots of ways, particularly in maths to support children with a range of concepts including number bonds and fractions.

Members of the Digital Leaders club went to Crawshaw School's Lego Lab (!) and had a fantastic time with their motorised lego devices and their gearing. We are hoping to use this facility with full classes in the future and have a go at programming lego robots!



Mark (Y6) adjusts gearing for an incline



Georgia (Y2) enjoyed using LEGO to enhance her understanding of fractions!



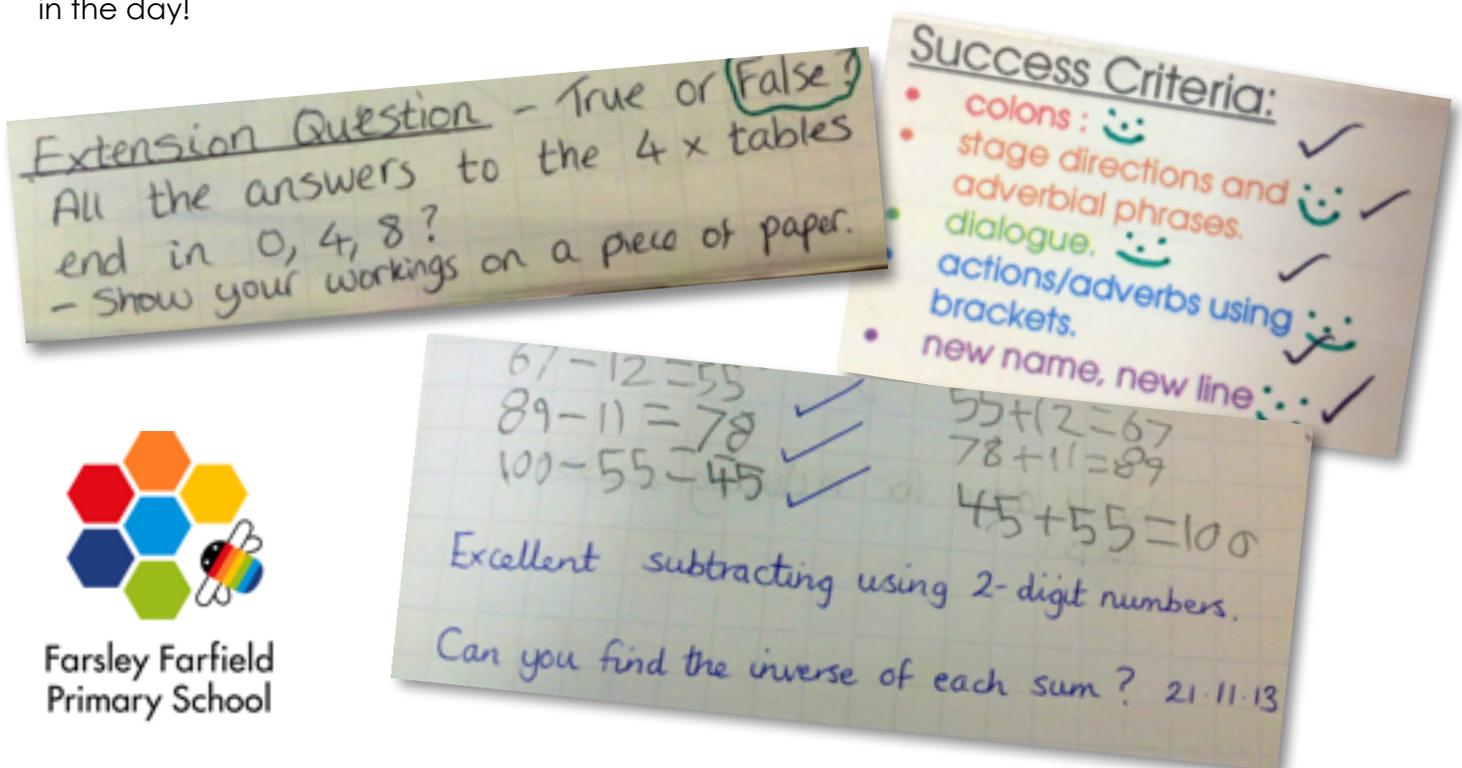
Learning from Feedback

High quality, developmental feedback is proven to be one of the most effective ways to enhance learning. This feedback can take many forms: verbally from the staff, in written comments (marking) and through self and peer assessment.

Pupils are encouraged to enter into written dialogues with their teacher using green pen or pencil. Most pieces of work will have a clear 'Learning Objective' at the top and marking is generally related to this. Some pieces of work will have specific 'Success Criteria' to guide the child, and these might be checked by the child themselves and/or a peer before being moderated by a teacher. Teachers may highlight work to show where the child has achieved well and they often use symbols to draw attention to areas to improve. Some key spelling errors will be addressed but not all. Codes such as 'MADIC' (Marked as Discussed in Class) may be occasionally seen in books indicating that written comments are unnecessary. Not all pieces of work will be followed by extensive written comments - there aren't enough hours in the day!

At Farfield we are trying hard to get consistently high quality feedback across the school. One of the concerns, however, is the extent to which children have the quality time to reflect and act upon this feedback. For younger children, in particular, detailed written comments from a teacher may be 'wasted' if the children aren't supported in its interpretation.

With this in mind, we are encouraging **Year 1 and Year 2** parents to come into class and look through books as an occasional '**morning task**'; perhaps you and your child can briefly discuss any particular written feedback and correct, practise or improve work as suggested? Please look out for notices about this for your classes. If parents aren't available at this time, we will of course do this role, but if you would like to come at any other time, you are always welcome. We will also be publishing dates for more formal 'Sharing Sessions' so that parents can come into class and look through **all** the work with their child. We expect to also extend this into KS2.





An unexpected bonus

It's hard to feel sorry for the energy utilities... Thanks to the tenacity of Mrs Spencer, our School Business Manager, we have secured a considerable refund on some of our electricity bills stretching back to March 2010. As a result, we expect to make a number of small capital investments over the coming months: things that need doing such as roof repairs and enhancements to our facilities that will benefit generations of children but which we would, ordinarily, not be in a position to make. Watch this space.



Brilliant Christmas performances

We hope that you all enjoyed the Christmas performances: 'Superstar', 'The Stable Boy' and 'The Stars are coming out this Christmas'. I thought that the children rose to their roles brilliantly and that the staff did a great job with the choreography. Well done everyone!



As well as the Christmas performances, a number of children also took part in the enormous Leeds Schools Christmas concert at the Town Hall. This is always a special event, with a magnificent orchestra in a fabulous venue (below right). I was very moved by the evening and very proud of the Farfield contingent. Our choir also spent the last morning before the Christmas break singing for our senior citizens at Dawson's Corner sheltered housing - as usual, they were made most welcome and everyone enjoyed their time there.



Special thanks to Mrs Sloan, Mrs Hawkhead and Mrs Lambert, who, in the absence of Zosia this year, have supported the junior children with singing.

School Meals

Please can I remind parents that changes to school meal requirements need to be communicated directly with the school offices and not through class teachers. Please speak directly with an administrator, email or write a note if you wish to begin or cease having school meals. It is expected, and helpful, to give a week's notice where possible please.





Green 'Portakabin' on borrowed time

The green modular building near the junior yard should be removed and demolished at Easter to make way for the new Y6 classroom being built behind it. Please be aware that building work is planned throughout the summer term in this area. Although this classroom should be finished by September 2014, KS2 won't actually have its additional class of children until the following September. I am sure that we can find a use for it in the meantime...

The removal of this building means the end of drama group 'Alive and Kicking' on site. We have valued having John, Martin, Carry and friends on site and on-hand for advice, and we expect to work with them again in the future.

PTA 'Friends of Farfield' News

After funding the new minibus, the focus of the PTA has now shifted to improved outdoor facilities for Reception and KS1, and improved audio visual systems for the Juniors. After a quiz, disco, shopping evening and Christmas Fair, they have already raised £2500 so far this academic year - a great effort! This term will be less busy in terms of events, but the team are already planning a new overnight camping event in June!

PE continues to broaden

Last half term, our older children continued to benefit from external venues and expertise. Two groups used 'Gym Magic' on Richardshaw Lane and for the first time we had a group of children attend a six week course at the 'Depot' learning how to do 'bouldering'. This new course was a great success and another group are going this half term.

Back at school, we introduced a course of 'Boxercise' led by Mrs Snellgrove that was exciting and got the pulses racing. The children enjoyed using the new equipment.

This half term we begin a new partnership with Rawdon Tennis Club and their coach Jonathan Sowden. We will be doing indoor tennis this term, using Farsley AFC's large hall, with older children using the facilities in Rawdon in the summer.



Bouldering at The Depot



Boxercise



Minibuses are helping us to provide a rich PE curriculum that includes new and exciting activities that we hope will inspire and engage the children to lead healthier lives into adolescence and beyond.



Tablets and iPads

The staff and children are enjoying using the iPads at school. We are still planning to run a leasing scheme at some point in 2014 and we are also exploring an assisted purchase scheme (there is a difference). We would also like to be able to accommodate a range of devices in a 'Bring your own device' (BYOD) way so that all those tablets, including the Android operating system, that children got for Christmas could be used in school. Given the changes to internet provision in school (see above), and new servers being installed in February half term, we are also delaying this for a term or so. I would expect to be able to welcome children's own devices in school at some point in the summer term.



More educational visits and residentials

Already this academic year, every class from Reception upwards have been on an educational visit or had a 'special day' with a visiting specialist. January and February see classes enhancing their curriculum with trips to the theatre, museums, galleries and even a Viking settlement! In April and May, Years 6 and 5 will enjoy residential visits to Northumberland and North Yorkshire respectively.

A meeting for Y5 parents about the Y5 residential will take place on Tuesday 21st January 6.30-7.30pm.



We are conscious of the costs of these trips and we do try to minimise the 'voluntary donations' expected of parents. Thanks to the use of minibuses, many trips are free and we are pleased that some trips e.g. the Viking day, are cheaper this year than the last time we went. Our Y5 residential continues to be exceptionally good value due, in part, to fantastic on-going relationships with British Cycling and the local school sports partnership to secure mountain biking and caving free of charge.

We believe that visits and education outside the classroom (in our grounds and beyond) are hugely valuable for our children; I hope that our parent community shares that view and continues to support us financially and in terms of parent volunteers to accompany us - it is much appreciated!

Mr Harris, on behalf of the Governors

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