

Our News

Back in school

We are pleased that we have managed to welcome the majority of children back to school before the end of summer term. As you know, our approach has been to support families as and when they are ready and able to return, and we cannot thank parents enough for their understanding and patience. It hasn't just been a long term – the time since Christmas seems to have blended into one long rolling period of one change after another, which I am sure we have all felt as teachers and parents.

The children? Well our resilient bunch seem to have taken it in their stride for the most part, and maybe some parents have been left more frazzled than children. What is certain, is that they were excited to be back and unphased by any changes, even finding positives in some of the changes we had put in place.



We did a fair amount of filming in the first few weeks back after the initial group of children returned and have used this to put together a short film which is on YouTube. We have had quite a few potential families contact us and it is hard under the circumstances to invite new parents and children in to look round in the way they would ordinarily. And we appreciate that it has been difficult for our current parents too as the children haven't been able to bring you into school and the garden to see what they have been working on. So, thank you to the children who took part in this video and shared a bit about what makes our school special.

<https://youtu.be/z3Q0UrqEa4Y>

What's been happening in school?

Time to focus being with friends again.

Typical! The first day back in June and the rain began. It hasn't stopped the children getting back into the garden though. Those who came back first set about tidying up the plots and pond area. We had a donation of vegetables to plant from our nextdoor neighbours. There have been many discussions about the differences between frogs and toads and whether we had discovered a newt or not.





When we had a week of hot weather the children had water fights and made obstacle courses in PE lessons. Wheelbarrow races really did mean wheelbarrow races too! Nursery returned to a beautiful week and enjoyed chasing bubbles in the area outside their room.

When the drizzle came the children decided they needed shelter so they could still go outside at break and lunchtime. So, the main activity for the older children turned to den building.

The tree at the top of the garden now has a swing. It has been fantastic to see them use their breaktime so creatively.



The village hall has been kind enough to support us by allowing us to use this for a couple of days to provide the children with more space on Fridays and allow us to get back to PE sessions inside as well as outside. Class 2 have enjoyed continuing with Taekwondo. We hope to put this in our curriculum for all children next term.



Our learning

We have enjoyed having the contact with children every day, even if they aren't physically in school, by continuing to have online sessions a couple of days a week.

Class 2 children have learnt about World War 2 code breaking, then those in school followed this up by creating a system to send codes using their knowledge of making circuits.

We have also been learning about migration, racism and stereotypes, focusing on the Windrush era after the war. The children have produced some exceptional poems.



Deb's group has been comparing where they live with the seaside ie. comparing habitats. They've also learnt about the weather and water cycle and had many outside maths sessions measuring and looking at symmetry.



Goodbye to year 6

Our school has a few year 6 children this year and we are so pleased that they have all been able to come back to school over recent weeks to spend their time together before moving onto high school. These children have all been in school for many years and made their own contribution to Dame Catherine's in their own unique way, as have their families. As a country, we know that so many children have missed out on the end of year celebrations they would ordinarily have had. It might not be quite the same as it would have been this year, where families could camp together, but we are determined to mark the occasion for them and create some final memories.

Thank you to the rest of the school for understanding that we aren't able to host the whole school family BBQ, rounders game and sleepover and for letting class 2 and the leavers in particular have a smaller version at least to send them on their way. Fingers crossed that we will be able to have some family events as soon as we can next year.

Summer news.

- With the added challenges we have faced and potential work to get our building ready for next term, it hasn't been possible to plan for a summer club. We have discussed the possibility of organising one or two days at some stage where children could meet and do some activities together given that they now face another break from school and nursery. It is difficult to confirm anything definite just yet, and this would also depend on whether we are able to access the village hall. At this stage, it would be helpful to know how many children might be interested if there were a couple of activities planned. Chris could potentially organise these if there is sufficient interest. We would try to keep the cost to a minimum, so around £15 a day. If this is something you might be interested in, could you e-mail the office, and then we will let you know if it is something we are able to go ahead with.
- Our art show is being held virtually this year. Plans are still being finalised and please check for updates on <https://arts.damecatherines.org/>. We will send out any information over the summer, especially if there are any online workshops which you might wish to join in with.

Looking ahead to September

The first day back for children will be Friday 4th September. Staff will be in school the few days before this and we will send updated information and reminders out about the new term ahead of then. This will contain information about any routines.

Given that some children will be returning after a number of months at home, some children will be new to our school and some would be due to start a new class, we will be planning the initial week or two very carefully to support transition. One way of supporting this process is to have whole school curriculum themes, and, as usual, we will plan to start the school year off in this way. One thing this term has shown us, is how the majority of children just get back into the swing of things quickly and accept change quite readily providing there are familiar faces around. But we recognise that occasionally some children need a little extra support. If this is the case, we will work with parents to plan for this.

Things won't be able to completely go back to how they were before March and we will still have to adhere to government guidelines. For example, we will have to plan drop off and pick up so that there aren't lots of adults crowded together inside in one place and we will spread this out by using two doors. We will need to be mindful about whole school activities and will potentially need to work as 2 groups, so this will mean some careful thought to how any transition is managed. We know that as younger children start pre-school and school some like to have an adult around for a while. Those of you who know Dame Catherine's well

will know that we have a relaxed approach to this. We will do our best to consider how to make it possible for those children who really need it to have parents around for a while in September, and one way will be to continue to have some time outside at the beginning and end of the day for a while.

Dates for your diary

The school calendar for next year was sent out last week but below is a reminder of those dates. The additional 2 INSET days are likely to be in the summer term next year so dates will follow.

Term Dates 2020-2021

Autumn Term 2020

Wednesday 2nd and Thursday 3rd September: INSET days (school closed to children)

Friday 4th September : children start back

Monday 26th Oct – Monday 2nd November inclusive : autumn half term holiday

Friday 18th December : last day of autumn term

Monday 21st December – Friday 1st January inclusive : winter holiday

Spring Term 2021

Monday 4th January : INSET day (school closed to children)

Monday 15th February – Friday 19th February inclusive : half term holiday

Thursday 1st April : end of spring term

Friday 1st April – Monday 19th April inclusive : spring holiday

Summer Term 2021

Tuesday 20th April : start of summer term

Monday 3rd May : bank holiday

Monday 31st – Monday 7th June inclusive : half term holiday

Friday 16th July : last day of summer term

NB. 2 further INSET days will be planned into this calendar

Have a good summer!

We know that the summer holidays might not be the ones you had planned for as we started this academic year. But we hope that you manage to spend some time together and plan some fun activities which we can hear about when we return in September.

Thank you for all of your support this year.

The staff at Dame Catherine's