



**and Year 6**

I hope you have enjoyed a fabulous summer and you’re ready for all that this new school year will bring! It is a privilege to be teaching a class of 18 and there is so much planned and possible. Making the most of the children’s last year of primary education and equipping them with the confidence and skills to move on to secondary school is very much our priority and our curriculum and timetable has that very much in mind.

I am delighted that Mrs Myring has agreed to share the teaching of the class this year. She is an experienced teacher who is just finishing her maternity leave from West Bridgford Junior School and is taking a part time role there as well as working at Willow Brook. She is excited about being with Year 6 on Monday and Tuesday morning. Mrs Zawodniak covers our planning and assessment time on a Tuesday afternoon and I am in the classroom for the rest of the week. Whilst we have different elements of the curriculum to cover, Mrs Myring and I work together to plan, set targets and review progress.

As well as Mrs Myring, we are also really pleased to welcome Chloe to the class! It is always quite nerve wracking joining an established group, but I know she is going to feel at home really quickly.

This first learning letter is a little longer than usual, but it should set out what is expected of a Year 6 both at home and school, as well as introducing the timetable and topics for the half term ahead. If your questions are left unanswered, please get in touch and I will be more than happy to give you further details.

**This half term in the classroom**

In last year’s school survey the biggest request for a topic was the Tudors… Well, here it is! The history curriculum states that we should look at local historical events which show the ‘*changing power of the monarchy’*. With Bosworth and the discovery of Richard III on our doorstep, our main topic this half term will be ‘The Rise of the Tudors’ – one of my favourites! This week we will be meeting some of the key characters from the House of York and Lancaster and our history afternoons will take us through the Battle of Bosworth and on to the reign of Henry VIII. We will be learning about the Tudor way of life as well as some of the plots and gruesome schemes of the monarchs. The whole study would not be complete without a trip to the battlefield at Bosworth which has been booked for 13th October. It will be a busy six weeks, but there’s no doubt that it will be Tudor action packed!

In science, Mrs Myring will be kicking the year off with a study of living things. We’ll be classifying plants and animals and even having a look at micro-organisms.

There will be gargoyles watching over some of our English and art work this half term! As well as creating different kinds of sketches and sculptures, we’ll be looking at their role in the novel ‘Moondial’ by Helen Cresswell and in the poetry, ‘Night of the Gargoyles’ by Eve Bunting. Of course, there will be plenty of grammar, spelling and handwriting during a week, too.

In maths this half term we will be brushing up on arithmetic and applying the strategies we know to more advanced problem solving. We will also be working with time (it’s amazing how many children struggle with analogue and 24 hour clocks), negative numbers and a first look at the geometry of different lines and angles. Times tables continue to be an essential skill…along with dealing with money, measuring, weighing and working through logic problems and puzzles – all of which you can talk about and explore at home – the more experience the better.

PE is officially timetabled for a Tuesday and Wednesday and the children will require both indoor and outdoor kits this term. It is a dream having two 9 a-side teams, and we shall be concentrating on competitive games this term. Please keep P.E. kits in school unless they need to go home for a quick emergency wash at weekends - games sessions are sometimes moved because of the weather or to fit in with visiting sports coaches and it is frustrating for children who don’t have the right kit to take part at full speed!

**Learning at home and supporting your child to be ready for the school day**

There are three main strands to homework in Year 6 and making sure your child is prepared and completing the tasks to the best of their abilities is one of the biggest things you can do to help. The expectations of homework in Year 7 is demanding and it is good for your child to get into the habit of being responsible for their own learning during this year.

Like them or loathe them, the SATs spelling test carries a massive 20 marks and makes such an impact. Spellings are taught throughout the school and focus on specific patterns. The end test is simply based on those rules. The spelling championship that we designed and trialled last year gave a competitive and thorough approach to learning our somewhat unpredictable language. Spellings will be introduced and taught each Thursday and tested the following week. By differentiating the words given, everyone will work on the same pattern but compete in their own league. Week 1 (and the book of words and explanation) will be with you next Thursday.

Each child will also belong to a guided reading group which will meet on a specific day of the week. Whilst the children have been used to reading in a group, this year requires them to take the session one step further. You may have seen your child’s reading pack which contains their group reading journal. I think each page is self-explanatory, but reading response tasks will be given after each teacher led session and the expectation is that they are completed before the group meets again. I have spoken to the children about the care expected when completing each task – it is a school book and should be written in and looked after as it would be in school. We would really appreciate your help in encouraging them to make this a priority. This home task can be a shared one with your intervention, or an independent task, depending on the confidence of your child. As well as having their group reading text they will also have an appropriate individual reading book and, again, this could be a book you share with your child or encourage them to read on their own. Our new recommended titles reward scheme will motivate the children to engage with age appropriate, challenging texts. Reading continues to be so important, and our aim is that pupils leave Willow Brook as enthusiastic and independent readers. The home tasks given are varied but all are designed to engage them more maturely in thinking about language and text.

There will also be a regular maths homework task. This is designed to keep you informed with what is being taught in class and allow your child to rehearse essential strategies. It will come home once a unit of work has been completed. This will be stuck in a homework book so that feedback and responses can be more meaningful. Please get involved and let us know if more practise or explanation is required.

Other areas of the weekly timetable will soon slot into place. Language learning is very much a part of the new National Curriculum and Class 6 will be having French lessons on a Wednesday afternoon. Friday mornings are filled with ICT and music and we should all be exhausted by Friday afternoon!

As I have said, there are lots of new ventures for Year 6, from DARE to residential visits, clubs and opportunities for learning outside of school. Like all Year 6 classes that have gone before, the children will enjoy the privileges and responsibilities of being the eldest in the school as well as getting their teeth into new topics and systems. As I have said to them, this carries the weight of being good role models around school – a duty I know they are keen to get right.

With so many important things occurring in this last year we would ask you to be aware of taking your child out of school during term time. Each half term has a highlight and each day delivers an essential part of the jigsaw. End of key stage SATs take place in May, crucial secondary school visits are spread throughout the year and taking the lead in their last school production in the week beginning 5th December is memorable and not to be missed!

Our first official Parents Evenings will be in the week starting 17th October but, as you know, you are always welcome to come in if you need to see any member of staff. I am usually in the playground at the beginning and end of most days for quick conversations or queries and am available for longer discussions, if required, on a Monday or Tuesday morning.

Finally, but importantly, whilst we do not encourage children to have mobile phones in school, some parents feel happier if their children have them for reassurance if they are walking home on their own. If this is the case, we are happy as long as the phones are put in my desk at the start of each day and taken out at 3.30 pm. No mobile phones are to be kept in the children’s bags or used on the premises without our consent.

I think that covers everything… Apologies if it’s been a long read!

Here’s to a happy, positive and successful year both in and out of the classroom.

With best wishes,

**Louise Ballard**