

Ickford News

I had a lovely message from a parent and friend today which I absolutely agreed with, *"When you are feeling sad, channel your inner Jacob!"* Everyone who was at the French Assembly this morning will know exactly why that was sent.

Without a doubt the assembly was a huge success and the message above was not the only one I received. Another read, *"We are accustomed to being impressed by the school, but today's assembly was astonishing. Calm, amusing, delightfully acted, exquisite pronunciation, thoughtful stage management. And - dear to my heart - whole-school singing of high calibre integrated seamlessly into the curriculum. Wonderful."*

That does really sum it up. Every child showed off their talent and each one bore testament to the great teaching and inspiration that Mme Basnett provides. The sight of Year 6 children organising the rest of the school and the beautiful renditions of Silent Night in German and We Wish You a Merry Christmas in Latin were really the icing on the top of a very well made cake. It was, however, Jacob (Class 1) who stole the show and sang with such clarity, enthusiasm and gusto that we, the audience, were captivated and ensured that we all left feeling everything was right with the world.

Had I not been blown away by the French assembly, the newsletter would have started with a glowing report of the Infant Nativity that I had the great pleasure of watching last night. This was another very special occasion and a window into just how talented, confident and united the children at Ickford become. I have seen plenty of Nativity plays and at Ickford, they have always been of a high quality

but this year, the performance really was one of the best I have seen. I never cease to be amazed at how such young children learn dialogue by heart, dance moves and songs and deliver everything with perfect comic timing.

As I said at the end of the performance, there are many aspects to the tradition of the Nativity and some will have enjoyed the connection with the Christian faith whilst others may have considered it as just a school play. Whatever, personal beliefs are, I always feel it a great privilege to be part of helping your children to have experiences that hopefully will become fond and lasting memories. A huge thank you to Miss Vukomanovic, Mrs Lynott, Miss Southgate, Mrs Brunet, Mr Woodley and Mrs Winfield for their work in ensuring the success of the Nativity this year and a special thank you to Mrs Shackleton who provides the wonderful accompaniment.

Today I met with Jenny Armitstead our Chair of Governors and following this meeting I promised to explain the situation about school lunches in the newsletter.

Prior to coming to Ickford, I worked in a large Primary School where we took control of our own catering, employed a Chef and assistants and provided hot breakfasts and lunches for staff and children. It was a challenge to try and provide healthy food with a very restrained budget but also very gratifying to succeed. We were lucky in having a big kitchen on site and two separate school halls kitted out with fold out tables and connected chairs. We also had a large number of children on role and a substantial budget to work with.

Unfortunately, things are different at Ickford and I inherited a school reliant on

children bringing a packed lunch. In my early days, I can assure you, I looked at the options for providing some form of hot meal to children and met with several parent groups to come up with ideas. When the Government decided to offer all infant children a free school lunch I was compelled to look at all possibilities and came under the scrutiny of the DfE who duly visited the school.

I explained that we had sought quotations for installing a kitchen and dining area and concluded that we would need in the region of £130,000. We also discussed using the sports hall as a dining hall and attaching a kitchen to it also at a significant cost. I must stress that the DfE were not inclined to give any funds towards either project.

I took the sports hall conversion further and canvassed parents. Using the sports hall as a dining room would in reality take away the use we currently have for lessons and clubs and consign it to being a normal school hall, most of which I can assure you are used for lunches and very little else. In addition to using the hall, the school would have had to employ kitchen staff and extra midday supervisors thereby increasing a salary bill that already accounts for almost 80% of our budget.

The overwhelming majority of parents returned an answer that they would prefer to provide a packed lunch each day and keep the facilities that we have. The DfE did not pursue the matter any further and we remained in the position we are now. I am always happy to look at the option of hot meals but it would be foolish to pretend that this would be easy. Furthermore, an extra classroom would, in my opinion, be of far greater use.

The Governor Surgery also raised the issue of the staff turnover in Class 2 and my failure to communicate with parents about this.

I am more than happy to meet with parents and had intended to before I broke my leg. Unfortunately, with so much going on in this term, it is difficult to ask parents to come back to school in the evenings. I hope that parents know me well enough by now to recognise that I try my best to ensure a high quality learning environment for the children and I empathise with them about the disruption changes of staff may cause. However, it is not always easy to get it right and not always easy to predict how things will turn out. I accept the concerns I have been told about and any criticism that has come my way. I am happy to meet with all Class 2 parents as a group on Monday December 16th at 3.30pm if so desired or to make a date early in the New Year.

Some of you will have received a letter notifying you of your child's attendance percentage for the term. These letters are a standard letter that we are required to distribute when a child's attendance falls below a certain percentage. The electronic system does not consider the reasons for absence simply the number of sessions missed. Most people recognise this and understand that we have to keep check on attendance. I am happy to meet with those that don't.

Next week is a short but very busy one. I am looking forward to it as I imagine the children are. The team here are determined to make each day a valuable one.

Mr Ronane

Ickford News from the office

Dates for your diary...

16 th Dec	Christmas Lunch
17 th Dec 7-8pm	KS2 Carols in the Church
18 th Dec	Whole School Pantomime Trip – Beauty and the Beast
19 th Dec	Inset Day
6 th January	Inset Day
7 th January	First day of Spring Term

School Lottery

A winner within school every week!

If you would like the chance to win, and support the school, please click on the link below and get signed up!

<https://www.yourschoollottery.co.uk/lottery/school/ickford-school>

Poppy Appeal

Mrs Readman collected for the recent Poppy Appeal and raised £70.99

Thank you to everyone who bought a poppy or donated to such a worthwhile cause.



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