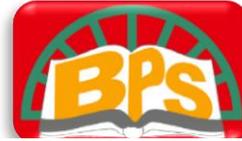


## Governor Newsletter April 2017



Dear Parents and Carers

*Learn today, be a star of tomorrow*

Since SATS season will shortly be upon us, we wanted to take this opportunity to inform you of the different types of assessment of academic ability that your child will undertake whilst at Brinsley, and explain why this is necessary. As a parent, none of us wants to see our child undergo test after test and thinking of all the exams that our children must go through during their school career, particularly in secondary school, I'm sure this fills us all with dread! However, such assessment is a necessary tool both to ensure that we meet government targets and more importantly to ensure that your child gets the education that they need and deserve.

Prior to becoming governors, many of us knew little about this and other issues surrounding the national curriculum. However, we now appreciate why routine, regular assessment is necessary, not least to make sure that teachers are aware of every child's current ability so that they can be appropriately stretched.

As a bit of background, the national curriculum is determined by the government and sets out what each child should know at a particular age (this does not however apply to schools with academy status). How this is delivered is up to each school. There are several packages available to schools to help in lesson planning and to ensure that the curriculum is delivered in an appropriate manner. The school has recently bought one of these called the Cornerstones curriculum which aims to deliver the curriculum in fun and interesting ways with the information broken up into short topics each accompanied by a "WOW" day to get the children enthused.

Obviously it is important that there are checks both on teaching performance and pupil understanding to ensure that each child is being delivered the curriculum appropriately and is understanding what is taught. Up until several years ago the government had a national assessment scheme in place for each year group to monitor the attainment and progress of each child, which allowed a school to easily identify whether a given child was meeting age-related expectations or not, and could be compared to other pupils across the country. The government then took away this scheme leaving nothing in its place, so that schools had no way to routinely assess a child's performance relative to the rest of the country. The only national assessments that remain are the SATS taken at the end of year 2 and year 6. However, schools still had to be able to demonstrate the progress of pupils within every year group with no guidance from the government as to how this should be done. Following the removal of the national assessment scheme schools had to work quickly and buy in assessment packages prepared by several companies that had been designated by the government.

Brinsley Primary and Nursery School decided to use assessment packages called PUMA and PIRA for Maths and Reading. These tests are taken by each pupil every term and the results are analysed relative to the expected mark that the child should get based on age. The data allows gaps in a pupil's or group of pupils' knowledge to be identified which is then fed back into lesson planning to ensure that these gaps are closed. Governors review these results on a regular basis and work with the school to identify any positive or negative trends.

So far, these tests have proven to be very useful and allowing us to demonstrate the progress of pupils during the year, and then as the pupil advances through the school. Staff can now readily identify any child that may be struggling and also those children that are doing very well and who may need to be stretched even further. Different cohorts can be analysed easily, for example the results of boys and of children on free school meals can be compared to the overall results, particularly useful since the attainment of these groups is historically and nationally lower than the year group as a whole.

We then ensure that the appropriate interventions are put in place where necessary. For example, last year's year 6 were identified, through these tests, as not meeting their expected attainment levels in

maths. Maths booster sessions were put in place and the year 6 maths SATS results were well above the national average.

In year 1, children also undertake a national phonics test with the opportunity to retake the test in year 2 if necessary. Through recent interrogation of historical data, the way phonics is being taught has now changed and booster sessions were put in place for last year's year 1s resulting in a marked improvement in the number of children achieving the required mark.

Finally, your child's attainment and progress is monitored on a day-to-day basis by the class teacher. Work is marked according to the school's marking policy. This involves the teacher not simply giving the red tick that we may be used to from our childhood, but instead giving positive feedback for example what your child did well and what they can try to do better next time, and also giving the opportunity for them to physically go back and correct the work themselves.

Governors regularly meet with the Senior leaders and Assessment co-ordinator when books from each year group are reviewed for consistency with the marking policy. Any discrepancies or areas for improvement for the teacher are fed back by the Senior Leaders and a follow-up meeting takes place shortly afterwards to ensure that the feedback has been acted upon.

Since the SATS results are the only results that can be compared nationally, and are the results that OFSTED place great emphasis on, we do place some importance on them. However please be assured that the preparation work and tests themselves are carried out in the least stressful way for your child.

As stated at the outset, this letter sets out some of the assessment of your child's *academic* ability which does not and cannot take in to account all of the other wonderful attributes that the S.T.A.R.S. of Brinsley share. Please be assured that your child is not simply taught the necessary information required to pass tests. Whilst this is an important aspect of your child's education, we are also primarily dedicated in nurturing your child's creative and emotional needs and talents and take an overall holistic approach to learning.

As always, please let us know if you have any questions or comments or if you would like to become more involved in school life, for example by coming in to school to listen to the children read or volunteering in after school clubs.

### ***Would you like a say in how the school spends its money to ensure our children get the best education possible?***

**We are looking for a parent governor with financial experience to join our Governing Body and Finance Committee. The role includes:**

- **Ensuring that the School meets its statutory finance obligations.**
- **Setting of the annual budget within available resources.**
- **Working with children, parents and staff regarding projects within school and on how any spare funds are spent.**
- **Working with the head teacher to make tough decisions about balancing resources.**
- **Ensuring spending is kept within budget.**
- **Ensuring funds are spent for the educational purposes of the school (for the benefit of the pupils).**
- **Ensuring resources are used wisely – value for money (VFM) is secured.**
- **Providing financial information to parents e.g. on the pupil premium, sports grants etc which must be published on the school's website.**
- **Showing how funds have been allocated to SEN provision.**

**If you are interested please contact the school office for further information by the end of April.**