



# The BERRY HILL PROPHET

BE KIND \* WORK HARD \* BE BRAVE



OPAL \* MUSIC \* NEW CHAIR OF GOVERNORS \* WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY \* NEW CURRICULUM PRIORITIES \* FAMILY SUPPORT WORKER \* SWIMMING \* CLUBS \* READING VOLUNTEERS \* DATES

## FANTASTIC START TO 2023-24

I just wanted to share what a privilege it has been to see that way that all children have returned to school after the summer. Every single child at Berry Hill has made a great start to this school year and as we've walked around school, there is such a healthy buzz of learning taking place in every class. It has also been delightful to see the children discovering that we have finally got a sports pitch to play and learn on.



## IMPORTANT OPAL UPDATES

OPAL (outdoor play and learning is fully up and running across school and children have looked really happy and engaged over lunchtimes. As this approach is relatively unique, Miss Hedges and I (our OPAL Lead) will be hosting a brief parents' information Teams meeting in Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> October at 5:30pm. We hope that lots of you will be able to join us so that we can really convey what it's all about. This is in preparation for: Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October where parents are invited to pop in over lunchtime to see OPAL in action and play alongside your child 12 - 1 so that you can fully immerse yourself and hopefully have a lovely time in the process.

## MUSIC AT BERRY HILL

We are delighted that this year we have started enhanced music lesson for children in years 3 & 4 through 'Sound Advice Education'. Mr Stanton will be in with his giant trucks of instruments every Thursday and delivering a huge range of musical opportunities. Off the back of this, we are hoping to be able to offer further music tuition opportunities.

## A HUGE THANK YOU TO MR PEARCE

Mr Ian Pearce has been the Chair of Governors at Berry Hill for over 11 years which is an absolutely phenomenal contribution. This autumn, he has decided to step down and I wanted to take this opportunity to share what a huge asset he has been to this school and to thank him for the hours and hours he gives to supporting us. Thankfully, he has agreed to remain on our governing body. May we also take this opportunity to announce Joan Bowes as our new Chair of Governors. I have no doubts that she will contribute much to school life.

## CLASS DOJO

Class Dojo is our main communication tool at school now. It is the platform that we award house points through and is also how teachers and parents can digitally communicate. At present, we still have some families who have not connected the app and I am concerned that they may miss important messages as well as miss out on seeing how wonderful their children have been at school. If you do not currently have access, please speak to the office of your class teacher. F1 and F2 are currently in the process of signing up. Across school, the proportion of families signed up are as follows:

1JMNK	94%	2HK	97%	3AT	97%	4CS	69%	5JT	90%	6AA	90%
1SH	97%	2MM	100%	3EC	97%	4LD	90%	5MT	77%	6HSW	87%

# WITHDRAWAL FROM LEARNING REQUESTS

I am very aware that the issue of term-time holidays is a divisive one and can be the cause of bad feeling between home and school. At the moment, the national statistics for overall school absence is 7.5% and 24.2% of pupils nationally being classes as 'persistently absent' (10% or more of schooling missed). All schools are under huge scrutiny and the discretion we can exercise in authorising any withdrawal from learning requests is significantly reduced. In general, exceptional circumstances are based on, but not completely limited to: completely unavoidable / unforeseen circumstances, attendance of a religious or significant family event such as a wedding or a funeral (for which only the actual event is authorised and in very rare circumstances 1 transportation day), certain medical circumstances or additional exceptional circumstances which are considered on a case-by-case basis. Personally, I think it is horrendous that the travel industry charges so much more for term-time holidays but I just wanted to share where school stood to try and avoid any families taking it personally when we are unable to authorise holidays. Even in the case where family members have jobs where they might only be able to book a term-time holiday, as a school we are still expected to be the ambassador for education and prioritise pupil attendance. Please also be aware, that any fines are by the local authority and school does not financially benefit at all.

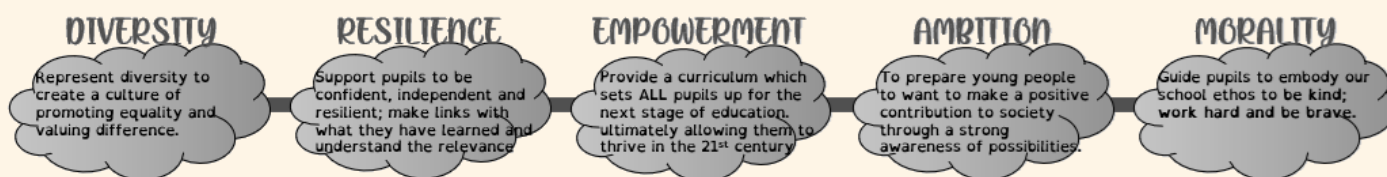
## WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

World Mental Health Day is on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> October. To promote awareness of mental health, children are invited to wear something yellow as part of school uniform. It could be a badge, a hairband, a wristband or socks. It could be as simple as some yellow dots stuck to their school jumper – this is not intended to result in families having to buy things.

## CHANGES FOR 23-24

Over the past year we have been re-writing all of our curriculum. We want to make learning as meaningful and joined-up as possible for all of our pupils by ensuring that what they learn links to prior and future learning. Our curriculum is underpinned by 5 drivers: Diversity, Resilience, Empowerment, Ambition and Morality – which as luck would have it spells DREAM!

We have also got a new website – please feel free to check us out on [www.berryhill.notts.sch.uk](http://www.berryhill.notts.sch.uk) – we'll be adding new content throughout the term.



## PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR

This year our main development focus is on: Writing outcomes across school, further enhancing our curriculum and embracing further opportunities to link this to our local community, focusing on the personal development of our pupils. One of the areas we really want to work on is the concept of 'see it to be it' – if children can see success stories of people either from or living in Mansfield / Nottinghamshire, they're more likely to believe that this could also be them. If you know of anyone who could come in and inspire our children (or if you are an inspiration yourself), please get in touch!

# FROM OUR FAMILY SUPPORT WORKER . . .

*As our new school year begins, Berry Hill is continuing to evolve into its very best version. Such exciting times! We are passionate at Berry Hill about the holistic approach to educating children, our ethos is based firmly in supporting well-being, community cohesion and our families and carers. To support our children; with them achieving their full potential, we rely on our celebration and support of the family, in all its forms. The 'family' of staff, our school family, our children's family and our community.*

*With this in mind, we will be holding parents' support Coffee afternoons/early evenings, with specific parenting courses/support. We will email these out as they are confirmed. Although the most special role – being a carer or parent can also leave us all, at some points, feeling overwhelmed and isolated. The more supported we feel, the better for all.*

*As an ELSA and family support, I will also have a parent drop in, weekly, on a Thursday afternoon. Please do contact the office for an appointment. This year our main development focus is on: Writing outcomes across school, further enhancing our curriculum and embracing further opportunities to link this to our local community and focusing on the personal development of our pupils. One of the areas we really want to work on is the concept of 'see it to be it' – if children can see success stories of people either from or living in Mansfield / Nottinghamshire, they're more likely to believe that this could also be them. If you know of anyone who would inspire our children (or if you are an inspiration yourself), please get in touch! Mrs Kirk.*

## SWIMMING AT BERRY HILL

Contrary to a few rumours, we are not building a swimming pool at school, as such.... What we are doing though, is having a temporary one built on site, within a marquee, so that we can provide swimming lessons for the 3 weeks prior to the Easter break. The company we are using can run up to 11 ½-hour lessons a day and they provide us with 2 qualified swimming instructors / lifeguards. It eats so much into children's timetables to be transported down to a swimming pool and get back – this typically takes 2 hours out of the day, so this year we are trying something different. Exactly which year groups will be involved in lessons will be sorted much nearer the time.

## CLUBS AT BERRY HILL

Following some feedback, we are changing how we allocate places for our after-school clubs. We are in the process of trying to offer a richer and broader range of clubs and will be writing to you soon. When the clubs are open for signup, the chance to register your interest will be open to parents for 2 days. If we get more interest than there are places, we will pick names fairly out of a hat so to speak. Any children who are unsuccessful will be given first consideration for the next club.

## COULD YOU BE A READING VOLUNTEER?

At Berry Hill we are always on the lookout for reading volunteers to come in and listen to readers. This is especially important to help our less confident readers who need as much support as we can possibly muster. If you would be available for an afternoon or a morning each week to come in, we and our children would be ever so grateful. Please don't worry if you're not sure what to do – we'd provide some guidance to help. Please contact our school office if you can help: [office@berryhill.notts.sch.uk](mailto:office@berryhill.notts.sch.uk)



# A FEW DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- **Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> October at 5:30pm** OPAL Teams Meeting – all parents invited
- **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October 12-1** OPAL open lunchtime – come in and play alongside your child
- **Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> October 5-6** Open evening for parents considering Berry Hill
- **Tues 3<sup>rd</sup> & Wed 4<sup>th</sup>** Parents' Evenings 3:40 – 6:30  
(F1 times differ slightly)
- **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> Dec** F2 to Y6 Pantomime @ Palace Theatre  
(arriving back to school approx. 5pm)

Many thanks, Mr Trenowden