

Dear Thornhill Family,

As I said in one of my assemblies to the children and to the Thornhill community earlier on this term, in this time of the pandemic, we could all do with a good dose of 'Hope.' I spoke of what the definition of hope is - a light that you can see, however small, despite being surrounded by darkness. It is now that we must hold on to hope, as we navigate our way forward.

If we look hard enough, we will find a little candle of optimism flickering in the night that will eventually grow to light our way, because the road to tomorrow is paved with hope. We need to remind ourselves that there are pages to be written, stories to be told and our new chapter begins here and now.

As you know, I am a Liverpool fan (no judgement please), so I thought that I would use their rousing anthem, by Oscar Hammerstein II, 'You'll Never Walk Alone' to depict the way forward, because as a school, we have many things to look forward to.

'Walk on through the wind,
Walk on through the rain,
Though your dreams be tossed and blown.
Walk on, walk on, with hope in your heart
And you'll never walk alone.
You'll never walk alone.

So, forward, together with 'Hope' we move on.

House Points - Term 1 Winners

Congratulations and well done to Shashe house who wrapped up the trophy for the first term. They were followed by Chobe in second and Notwane and Limpopo in third and fourth respectively.

Staff News

It is with a very sad heart that I must inform you that Mrs Stuart's mum passed away in Zimbabwe last week. I hope that you will keep the Stuart family close to your thoughts and prayers during this very difficult time.

News from the Curriculum Head

While it is plain for all to see that the pandemic has disrupted our lives in new and frustrating ways, at Thornhill, it has prevented us from operating at a level that is far from normal, it has given staff a time to work on their professional development in a way that is far from easy in the normal packed afternoons and terms that we have seen in former years. It is not always easy to slot in the all-important professional development of our academic staff, many of the courses, workshops and conferences have to be attempted to be slotted into less than ideal times. The pandemic, while wreaking havoc with the normal programme has revolutionised the availability, cost and accessibility of high quality educational professional development and we have been able to take advantage of this.

Most of last year was taken up with learning new skills, then consolidating them and then developing new good practices for teaching online, whether it be a blended/ flipped classroom, or providing a hybrid environment for those students forced to isolate at home. This development, while largely independent in nature, was augmented with sessions that allowed teachers to share their experiences, research and problem solve together. This led to a raising of technological literacy and forged links across the school hopefully releasing some of the burden from the ICT department.



Though 2020 was largely driven by technology, we did manage to rescue some of the more academic areas of professional development, as we enrolled all class teachers and Maths teachers in three online courses from White Rose in the UK, to help them in their Maths teaching. In 2019, we began the process of introducing and using the UK-East Asian fusion of Mastery Maths into Thornhill and up until March last year, we had begun to see promising results.

Mastery Maths is based around three core processes: concrete, pictorial and abstract. These in themselves are not revolutionary in Maths teaching, but how they are used and the ideas behind this, are much more

powerful. For those that do not know, the concrete element is the use of counters, unifix blocks, Numicon and other hands on Maths equipment, or manipulatives for breaking down an idea or problem. The pictorial element, while used before in Maths teaching, assumes a much more powerful way to look at and express mathematical concepts, problem solve and start to deliver proofs. This in turn provides a much stronger and deeper understanding of the mathematics involved leading to a much firmer link between the concrete manipulatives and the abstract idea of symbols representing numbers.

Where this works much more effectively is that it is not, as it may seem, a three step process, but rather a road that can be traversed in either direction. If the abstract is proving problematic, move into the pictorial, can you model this question? I.e. Can you draw a picture to represent the problem? Still an issue... then into the concrete we go to help understand what we are being asked. Now you see it...what about that model? OK, now how does that relate to the original question? Also, this can be used with no particular question in mind - What do we know about the number 29? From this, can come a wealth of mathematical information from all points of arithmetic, bonds, multiplication and division facts.

With this in mind, we embarked on a series of webinars from White Rose Maths from Week One of this term. These are designed to consolidate and augment the skills and knowledge gained from the online courses in 2020/21. Unlike those courses they are presenter led with staff able to contribute and question. These webinars come with a wealth of information, scenarios and resources, which are ready to use the day after. These webinars covered the concrete, pictorial, abstract, Using questioning in Mathematics and Reasoning and Problem Solving. They are extremely useful and we will revisit the other webinar courses offered by this group during the course of the year.

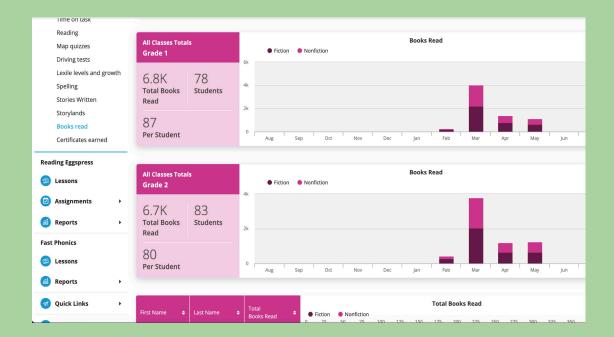
Professional development is, as with other occupations, essential in teaching. It allows us, as educators, to access the latest thinking in teaching in all areas of the curriculum and now, thanks to the power of meeting conference call apps, we can access this within the walls of Thornhill. A development that is so useful, that I hope to see its continuation long after the demise of COVID-19.

News from Mrs Stuart on Reading Eggs in the Foundation Phase

It is now four months since we introduced Reading Eggs to our Thornhill children. Reading Eggs, being a vast and comprehensive learning tool, has enabled children to keep progressing through phonics, word skills and reading practice.

The Reception, Std 1 and Std 2 children have taken it on with enthusiasm and are making great strides in the programme. The month of March showed an excellent number of books read in Std 1 and 2. To date, our children have read close to 7000 books in each year group. Impressive!





Our Reception children took on the challenges of the Reading Eggs lessons and have worked diligently trying hard to build their skills for reading. Many are enjoying the library as well. We have very encouraging results for this young year group.



We are confident that we will be able to make full use of the resources on Reading Eggs this year with your support from home. We are anticipating significant results in Reading this year. There will always be hiccups and digital access problems, but it is important to persevere. Fast Phonics is a fairly new addition to the programme, but it fits our progression accurately and we will endeavour to make full use of it too.

Thank you to the parents for your time and support in making this a success.

In closing, stay safe, take care and enjoy the Winter term with us. If you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher, or make any appointment to see me.

l Greaves Headteacher





