

Headteacher's Reflections

As salaamu alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu

As we settle into the new year after a long break from school, combined with the uncertainty of the 'new normal', it is understandable that people may be feeling uneasy, nervous and worried about everything. Each day brings change in terms of approaches to sickness, behaviour and wellbeing. It is no wonder that some people get trapped in a circle of negativity and anxiety.

However, upon reflection, our faith is the source of our strength and reminds us of the importance of trusting in Allah, trying our best to please Allah. Ensuring that we start everything we do with good intentions and ensure that we work hard for the school and the children. As a staff we remind ourselves of what we are grateful for and how important it is to remain positive.

Each day I ensure that I take time to think positively. I wanted to share some of my thoughts with you and hope that it can fill our community with positive thinking.

Here are my top 5 positive 'Thinking Moments' since returning to school!

- To hear the children's voices in the classrooms and have people in the school building once again is a great blessing
- To see the children with their happy faces calling out my name as I enter the building is a wonderful way to start my day
- To hear the recitation of Quran once again warms my heart
- The opportunity to have face-to-face Golden Teatime and hear what they are enjoying about school
- To have our staff team back together onsite again and supporting each other

Why not think about your top 5 positive thinking moments? Ask your children to think of their top 5 positive moments about school. Share these over the dinner table.

Please make duaa we stay open and safe.

Date Valley School Autumn term Newsletter



Our Whole School Focus

Each academic year we create a 'School Transformation Plan' which is designed to support us in our journey to becoming a 'good' school at our next inspection. As a school we identify areas that need developing. These then become our focus of staff development, assemblies and workshops. Please take note of our whole focus areas outlined below. These were also mentioned in our Meet the Teacher Meetings in September:

- Spelling
- Reading for Pleasure and comprehension
- Handwriting
- Creative Writing through the Storytelling approach
- Developing Maths language & Problem solving
- Speaking & listening skills through Philosophy Circles
- Wellbeing
- Diversity
- COVID measures

We hope that you can support our journey and keep the profile of these areas high by supporting the initiatives we launch around the school. Please look at the schedule for our Parent Workshops for this year to support your understanding of how to help your child learn effectively.



"At Date Valley, we are respectful, resilient and reflective learners."

Wellbeing

As a school we have started off the school year with a BIG focus on wellbeing. Each day, classes participate in wellbeing tasks to ensure a smooth transition back to school. The focus is to support children in the following areas:

- Expressing feelings and emotions
- Being positive and having self-belief
- Understanding the importance of self-regulation
- Playing games that strengthen the skills of caring, communication and collaboration.

Please ask your child about the wellbeing tasks they have been doing in class. Ask them to share their feelings with you.

Here are some sentence starters to guide you:

1. Can you tell me about ...?
2. What if ...?
3. How are you ...?
4. That's interesting, tell me more about that!
5. Why?
6. Can you give me an example?
7. How did that make you feel?

Here is a discussion question you can try at home!

'What is happiness?'

Record the discussion with your child and share with me on Class Dojo. Children will receive a prize from me for their participation.

The PTFC needs your help!

We are now looking for a new PTFC chair who can support the school and ensure that we maintain our community links. This is a crucial role at a time when we need strength in our community. Please do consider this as an opportunity for immense reward.

I would like to take the opportunity to say Jazakallah khairan to our previous Chairs for their hard work and commitment.

COVID-19 Information

Since reopening in September, we have sent 2 updates regarding our COVID-19 measures. Please ensure that you are reading these carefully as we review our risk assessment every two weeks to ensure we remain compliant.

Recently we received a call from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) who have asked to review our systems and ensure we are following the guidance diligently.

As the colder weather approaches, we request that you arrive at school at your allocated time. We are looking into alternative entry points to reduce waiting time and will update you soon.

Wear Red Day

On Friday 16th October we are participating in the Wear Red day which has been organised by Show Racism the Red Card. Wear Red Day is a national day of action which encourages schools, businesses and individuals to wear red and donate £1 to help fund anti-racism education for young people and adults across the UK.

Each primary class will dedicate some time during the day to discuss racism and play a few games.

CAR PARKING!

I realise the closure of Canons car park and the new restrictions due to Merton's School Streets initiative has made parking a challenge. Since September, I have received a number of complaints from upset residents and the Citizen's Advice Bureau, requesting we remind our parents not to use their private parking spaces. Our neighbours have complained of being spoken to rudely and aggressively which is unacceptable, and I have had to apologise many times for their experience.

I have given my support to our neighbours to take whatever measures they feel is necessary to ensure their private property is protected. Please, I ask you, to park considerately and show courtesy to our neighbours.

Philosophy Circles (PC)

Our primary teachers have received the first part of training to PC, which links strongly with our focus on Wellbeing. It will also allow the children to develop 'soft skills' which will help them become confident, independent thinkers in an ever-changing modern world. PC allows children to make sense of the world in their own way.

Some of the skills children will gain include:

- Participation: It supports children who are quiet and shy in class
- Disagreement: Its purpose is to talk enthusiastically and purposefully, understanding the art and etiquettes of disagreement
- Challenge: it is a challenge to justify your point of view, which means you have to think carefully about what you will say and how one's words have impact.
- Empathy: Some children have fixed mindsets and need to develop the skill of acknowledging the view point of others; this can also help them develop their understanding of a topic by listening to the views of others
- Forming opinions: children need to develop their own critical thought process rather than follow the opinion of others blindly. After listening to both sides of a discussion, they can then form their own balanced and informed opinion.

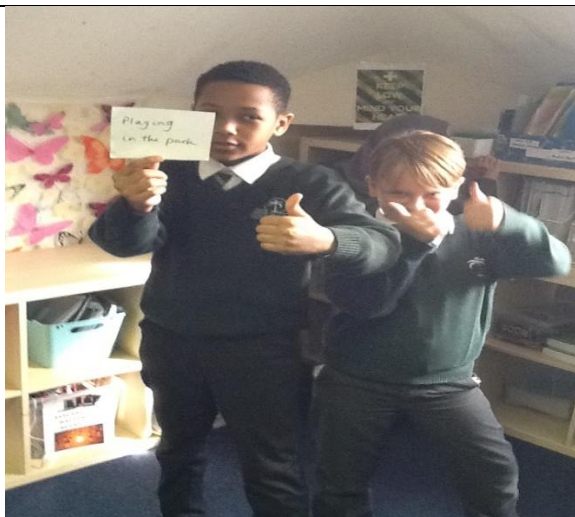
Research from the Education Endowment Foundation suggests that regular PC sessions can accelerate a child's attainment in reading and writing by two and half months.

Our teachers have benefitted from the training and have been trying out their new skills in the class. Do ask your children about their Philosophy Circles.



Year 1 watched a video of the deep sea and corals, complemented by natural underwater sounds. This was to promote feelings of peace and calm. The classroom had the lights switched off and blinds closed to allow the children to focus on the images, without the distractions caused by natural and artificial light.

The children imagined themselves as fish swimming through the calm waters and colourful coral. They said it made them feel happy and relaxed.



Year 5&6 had a Philosophy Circle in which they discussed what makes them happy. Some of the things that make them happy include:

- Coming to school
- Playing in the park
- Reading a book
- Eating certain foods

Dates for the Diary

- **Friday 23rd October – Primary INSET day – Primary closed; Early Years open**
- **Monday 26th – Friday 30th October – Half Term**
- **Monday 2nd November – school reopens: Parliament Week (School Council elections)**
- **Friday 6th November – Kidz-Fit PSHE workshop**
- **Monday 16th November – Anti-Bullying week; Anti-Bullying Drama workshop**
- **Monday 23rd November - Primary INSET day – Primary closed; Early Years open**



Year 2 listen to Quran recitation every day after salah and before the afternoon lessons start. They spend some minutes with their eyes closed and heads resting on the tables. The beautiful recitation calms and relaxes the children and allows them to refresh before they start their learning once again.