



UPPER KEY STAGE 2 YEAR 5 AND 6

CURRICULUM NEWSLETTER – SPRING 2020

I would like to begin by wishing you all a happy New Year and saying how much I appreciate all the cards and presents I received from you and your children – thank you. I hope you have all had a wonderful Christmas break and a brilliant start to a new decade in 2020. We have another busy and exciting half-term ahead of us and a lot to look forward to.



Our theme for this half-term is called *Born in the USA*, a geography topic all about the United States of America. We will be exploring the countries of North America, the states of the USA, American culture, famous people, landmarks, traditions and the climate and extreme weather seen in the USA. We will also have an American theme in our art lessons as the children will be practising their cartooning skills as we look at the life and works of Walt Disney. Our theme for the following half-term will be a history topic about Victorian Britain.

In our English lessons we will begin this half-term with narrative writing, using the wonderful wordless picture book *Journey* by Aaron Becker as inspiration. If you have yet to “read” this book yourself, I recommend it highly and I am sure your children would greatly enjoy exploring it with you. We will follow our narrative writing with non-fiction explanation texts, linked closely to our *Born in the USA* theme and extreme weather. Here, we will explore and research the causes and effects of various extreme weather phenomena seen in the USA and explain what we have understood in our writing. The class book we are enjoying together this half-term is the highly celebrated *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio. We are currently only a few chapters into the book, but it has already shown us the rollercoaster ride we have ahead of us, making us laugh and simultaneously causing us to pause to think about how much we can be grateful for.

In our maths lessons, our primary focus will be our understanding of and confidence in working with fractions. We will begin by taking a practical approach to build strong foundational knowledge of what fractions truly are then swiftly move on to abstract representations where the children will develop skills in finding equivalent fractions, adding and subtracting fractions, multiplying and dividing fractions, simplifying fractions, finding fractions of amounts and converting between fractions, decimals and percentages. Throughout the term, we will continue to develop the children's mathematical reasoning by having weekly problem-solving lessons. We will also continue with our “Maths of the Day” every afternoon to ensure the children experience a full range of mathematical topics even when our learning is focused on fractions in our morning maths lessons.

Our science topic for this term is *Living Things and Their Habitats*, and we will continue to teach science in a “Science Week” towards the end of each half-term. These science weeks have proven successful and much more immersive as we can fully dive into a science topic every day

of the week. We will be looking at how living things are classified and then more specifically at animal life cycles and life processes.

Reminders and updates:

- We will continue to have **PE** on Wednesday afternoons and Thursday mornings, so please ensure that PE kits are in school when needed,
- **Homework** will continue to be set on Mondays and be due in for the following Monday. There have been some changes to homework for the spring term:
 - **Maths** homework has a new arithmetic focus and will later transition to reasoning skills. Children are expected to complete **two sides** on the sheets they are given. On certain occasions there will be more than two sides in order to cater for the range of abilities in the class. Children can choose the two sides that suit their ability best, or choose to complete everything they are given if they so desire,
 - **Spellings** homework has a new focus on spelling rules and word families. Children will be asked to complete short activities for two spelling rules or word families each week. This can be completed on the sheets provided. The children will also be asked to learn and will be tested on **five words** in the Year 5 and 6 statutory spellings list each week, which will be tracked in their spelling journal. The children can use their spelling journals to learn these words, for example by completing "**Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check**", but there is no longer a requirement to complete a "Word Bomb" for each word as in the Autumn term,
 - **Reading Comprehension** homework has been added this term to further support the children's learning at school. Each week, children will have a short text or extract to read and five or six questions to answer. Children can complete this on the sheet provided,
- I would like to emphasise again how large an impact **regular reading** with your child can have on their learning. As such, any time you can spend reading to, listening to and discussing what has been read with your child would be incredibly beneficial and appreciated. We will also be monitoring weekly how often your child is reading at home, so please ensure that your child **bring their reading bookmark into school every Monday** when their homework is due in,
- We are introducing an exciting new way of thinking about and teaching handwriting this term called **Kinetic Letters**. The strategy's focus on children's physical strength and correct pencil grip, paired with a fun and clear method for learning letter construction has already engaged the class, and I look forward to seeing the impact it has on our writing. If your children start to talk about meerkat or gorilla poses, Kinetic Letters will be the reason,
- We are also very happy to introduce a new online programme for learning and practising times tables called **Times Tables Rockstars**. The children were introduced to TT Rockstars last week and have already created their Rockstar persona and tried some of the games and activities available. A letter was sent home last week containing your child's login to TT Rockstars and some important frequently asked questions. Times tables activities will be set every week in accordance with your child's current times tables ability. If you should have any difficulties in accessing TT Rockstars, please let us know and we would be happy to help.

I have been so impressed with how much energy and enthusiasm the children have returned with this year and have already been blown away by the work they are producing. As always, if you have any questions or would like to come in for a chat, please do not hesitate to arrange a meeting with me.

Mr Michael Burrige