

Mr Bates' Blog - September 2017

The Summer holidays are a distant memory and we are now halfway through an 8 week term - it's payback time! The school year started extremely smoothly and remarkably quietly, even in Nursery and Reception (where we normally have a few tears!). The countdown to Christmas is on and, according to the staffroom whiteboard, there are only 84 days to go! We actually received our first card several weeks ago from, predictably, somebody trying to sell us something!

Gilwern



The annual Gilwern trip with the current Year 6s during the third week back was a great success.

The usual mix of climbing, canoeing, crate stacking and hill walking (The Sugarloaf) were, as ever, topped by nearly everyone's favourite, gorge walking. The gorge that we use is up above the Black Rock Heads of the Valley roadworks on the south side of the Clydach Gorge. It never fails to amaze me that the generation of wall to wall screens and gaming can have so much fun splashing around in rock pools and climbing over boulders! It does make me think that perhaps we should do more of these activities and I was toying with the idea of introducing an adventure day trip out for the current Year 5s, possible canoeing down the River Wye. Any thoughts on this, let me know.

The large oak tree

...by the Juniors is not quite as large as it used to be! During the high winds in mid Sept we arrived in school to find a rather large branch (several tonnes worth of timber) leant up against the building. Other than a bit of guttering and the railings by the Year 5 door, no damage was done, so we are counting our blessings that there wasn't anything more significantly damaged to the building and that, of course, the branch had come down during the night when the site was clear. Tree surgeons were

with us within a couple of hours to chop up and remove all of the smaller branches and limbs with a monstrous chipper and chainsaws. The main branch, however, which is a good 800mm in diameter, remains and will have to be tackled by either a pretty industrial sized chainsaw or some kind of crane and flatbed lorry. The tree was surveyed immediately and we were told it was safe, but we will get this tree, along with others that could possibly affect the pupils and staff, checked over in the coming weeks. True to form, and admirably, Year 6 dropped the planning for the day and engaged in an impromptu day of journalism interviewing, photographing, videoing and writing about the big event which was, whilst potentially scary, quite exciting nonetheless!



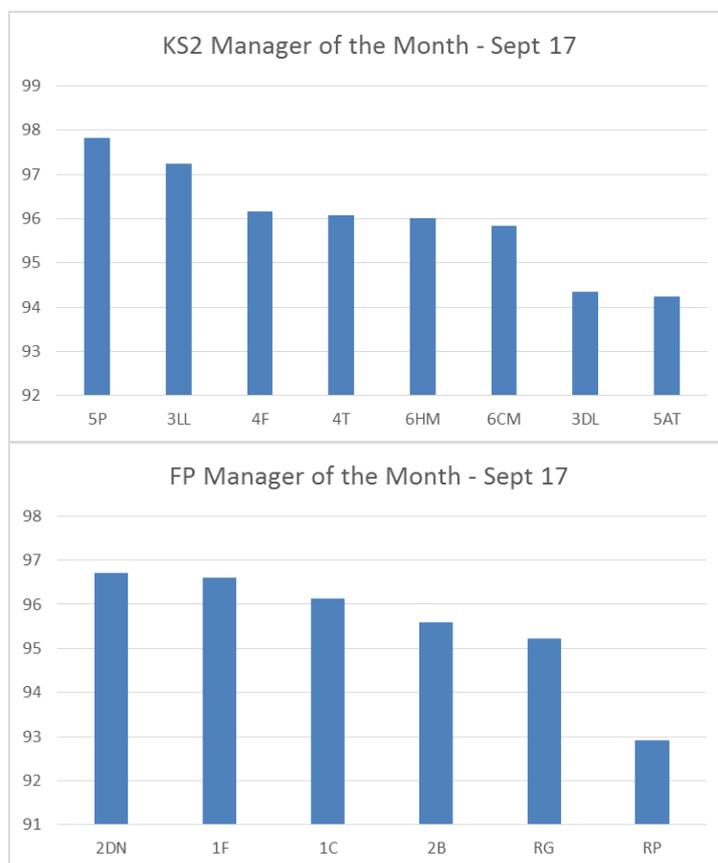
Accelerated Reader / SurveyMonkey

I have had some great feedback about Accelerated Reader which is nearly all (but not exclusively) positive. All 8 KS2 classes are now up and running and we have catalogued all our books and ordered new books to plug the gaps in provision. During part of the annual self-review process later in the school year, I will ask for your feedback on this initiative once it has had time to 'bed in' and, hopefully, raise standards of reading comprehension. Well done, in particular, to Mr Miles who has taken the lead with this initiative.

On a related matter, amusingly, it emerged during our joint staff / governors school improvement plan meeting that our survey of the KS2 pupils had only 100 responses analysed despite the best part of 240 undertaking it! The issue was that I thought that I had hoodwinked SurveyMonkey by using batches of 10 questions (which comes free) but what I didn't realise was that the free version limits the responses to 100! As such, part of this year's School Improvement Plan is to subscribe to SurveyMonkey so, as a result, the parental questionnaire will be one link next time around, not two!

Attendance

We are embarking on our second year of inter-class attendance competition with a view to getting your children here so that they can learn!! Managers of the month in September were as follows:



Well done to Mrs Payne's and Miss DiNunzio's classes! Own clothes day to follow!

On a personal note...

Just over a week ago we dropped our daughter Ellen off to Bristol University so the house seems unusually quiet (and the level of conflict has dropped significantly!). Before leaving she managed to negotiate her monthly maintenance allowance up via her mother (whatever happened to free state education?!), and, from what limited evidence we have, she seems to have survived 'Freshers' Week' and is having a fantastic time. She did communicate with us once as she could only pay for a music festival that she was going to allegedly through our Paypal account! With Christmas fast approaching and a new financial trend fast emerging, it looks like we may need to take a closer look at those Christmas Bargains!

Keep an eye out for pictures on our Twitter feed, news on the webpage, Croesy Newsflash (a bargain at 50p) and the Oct Blog!

All the best.

SB (03/10/2017)

