

Barndale 'Behind the Scenes' – A reflection on the half term from Daley

Well here we are at the end of the autumn term – how did that happen? Since returning to school after the October half term holiday, Barndale has certainly been a hive of activity. And while I have five minutes to catch my breath, I thought it would be nice to share some of the highlights from this half term.

We were so pleased to welcome a large number of parents to our Makaton signing and phonics workshops in early November and will be developing our parent and carer training offer as we move forward into 2020. Please do get in touch if you have any ideas about what could be included as part of this.

Our whole school 'Super Skill' this half term has been 'to be caring' and our pupils have certainly been showing a huge amount of care and compassion towards others. I have been giving out lots of 'Super Skill' certificates during our weekly assemblies to recognise how caring our pupils are. They really have been helping each other out which is so lovely to see and by getting involved in fundraising activities for charities such as Children in Need and Mission Christmas, they are able to extend this beyond the school.

As part of our aim to promote a love of reading, in mid-November we hosted a successful book fair (a big thank you to Kate for organising it!) which enabled us to buy all of our pupils a book of their choice. Pupils enjoyed exploring a variety of books during the week and it was lovely to welcome some parents too. I have a feeling that some of our favourite books may be pulled out of a few Christmas stockings this year!

As you know, Barndale is home to lots of super sporty and active children and young people, some of whom enjoyed taking part in the Panathlon Challenge at Morpeth Leisure Centre in November. It was fantastic to welcome 'Team Barndale' as they arrived back at school looking and feeling proud with their shiny medals. The school Curling competition was also a huge success (and lots of fun!) – I am certain that our cheers could be heard all the way down in Newcastle!

Behind the scenes, I have been working with the teaching and support staff on the implementation of our new curriculum to ensure that it is driving forward our vision for the school whilst providing pupils with the opportunity to engage in lots of fantastic, well planned and meaningful learning experiences. This is an ongoing piece of work that will continue into the New Year and beyond so that we remain committed and focused on providing a good quality of education for our pupils. As you are aware, we received a visit from Ofsted in early December which was a very challenging experience due to me being so new to the school and a new inspection framework. The report is yet to be published but what I do know is that it will reflect where we are at in our journey. This is most certainly a new chapter for Barndale and there is still some way to go, but I am confident that with the hardworking, committed team of staff we have and with the support of our parents, we will achieve great things. School improvement and development is a marathon, not a sprint... so whatever the outcome of our inspection, we are ready to dust off our running shoes.

In other Ofsted news, we are so delighted to have achieved a 'Good' rating in all areas of our residential provision thanks to the hard work of Tina, Shirley and our residential team. We have welcomed new pupils into our residential for overnight stays this half term which is great.

The run up to Christmas has been super busy with lots of things happening in and out of school. Pupils have enjoyed visits to the RAF Boulmer Christmas party, The Alnwick Gardens and a visit to Thomas Bewick School in Newcastle to see a production of 'Beauty and the Beast'. We also had a visit from a touring theatre company who performed 'Aladdin' for us in school. Of course, I could not write about Christmas without mentioning our own FANTASTIC performances. Our Nativity performance and adaptation of Cinderella was the highlight of this term for me – a wonderful end to a very busy term. I felt so proud to see how much our pupils enjoyed performing for you, so thank you to everyone who came along to see it.

Well... that's it from me. Thank you for your continued support, it really means a lot to us. I hope you have a wonderful Christmas and best wishes for the New Year. See you in 2020!

Daley