

Primary Prize Giving 2009

Review of the year.

Governors, Mr. Garbett, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls,

Thank you very much for coming this afternoon to help us celebrate the achievements, effort and progress of our girls and boys. We had a very special assembly in school this morning where every child in the primary department was presented with a certificate. The teachers all thought long and hard about each child to try to decide what it was that made that child unique and what their special contribution was to the BSA. Amongst the certificates was one awarded for excellent manners both on and off the football pitch, many certificates were awarded to children who are always polite, who are considerate, who behave well at all times, who can be relied on to help out around school, who are good role models for the younger children and even certificates for having the widest smile and for wearing a pink frock!

This afternoon is the more formal part of our proceedings. We value every child in our school, but we are an academic school and this afternoon we are here to congratulate those children who have done exceptionally well throughout this year. Who have achieved highly academically, who have made a sustained effort throughout the year in one or all areas of the curriculum or who have made significant progress.

I will begin though with a brief review of the year at BSA. This is my third prize giving at BSA and every year that I have been here seems to have been busier and busier and our calendar fuller and fuller. I begin every year by thinking that we can't fit any more into our calendar but somehow we do.

The year got off to another good start with last year's year 6...now year 7 achieving some very good end of KS2 results, significantly above the national average for schools in England. I have every confidence that we will have another good set of results from our current year 6 which will arrive sometime during the summer holidays.

Throughout the year there are some school events which stick in your mind. International Day this year took place for the first time on the secondary site and had an Olympic theme. Every pupil in the school was involved in some way and it was yet again a very successful day. I am sure that parents and staff who were there will carry a picture in their heads of Year 2, who are not yet the tallest children in our school, being led in their Olympic torch procession by an extremely tall Mr. Dowling. Children in Foundation and Key Stage 1 also took part in a fantastic and very competitive 'mini Olympics' event.

Christmas came and went with its usual array of concerts, bazaars, shoe boxes, discos and parties. Foundation and Key Stage 1 put on a highly intricate and colourful performance of The Nutcracker in which every child and every member of staff was involved and our annual Christmas concert allowed our musicians and choir to show off their talents.

The weeks go by very quickly in a primary school and no two days are ever the same. Book day is a popular day with staff and children. I am always amazed and impressed at some of the ideas that people come up with for costumes. Our children and parents are a very imaginative lot. Most memorable amongst the staff this year I think were the Hungry Caterpillar, the owl who was afraid of the dark, Mrs. Tiggywinkle and a very convincing pirate in key stage 1.

A few weeks after Book Day a storyteller came to school. This was an Egyptian lady who now lives mostly in London but returns to Egypt a couple of times a year to tell her stories in schools. Her stories were about the myths and legends of Egypt and were certainly very well received by our pupils. Children in year 6 wrote some very interesting and thoughtful endings to the 'unfinished legend' which she has asked me to send to her when we have time. Days like this are invaluable and inspire our children with their reading and writing. Writing has been an area of the curriculum on which we have placed a great deal of emphasis this year and the standard of writing has shown significant improvement. **Taylah is a highly imaginative and skillful writer. She would like to read you one of her short stories.**

Sports Day was once again a very successful event with all the children in Key stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 together at the stadium. Foundation and Key stage 1 also had their own scaled down sports day at school. A very good day!

The summer bazaar, organized by the Friends of School, was another fantastic family day. A number of the children were involved in one way or another and many of the parents and staff ran stalls, beauty parlours, tea rooms, a haunted house, sold raffle tickets and made promises which were auctioned to the highest bidder. Thank you to everyone who was involved and who helped to make this day so enjoyable.

One of the questions on the questionnaire that we send out annually to our parents is about school trips and outings. Last year's questionnaire indicated that some parents did not feel that we offered enough trips to the children. We have tried really hard this year to put this right. Not only are we offering more trips but the uptake of the trips has improved enormously. It is now much more unusual for us to be told that a child is not allowed to go on one of the trips we have organized and we really appreciate the fact that most of our parents value the extended educational opportunities which such trips offer to their children.

This year some of the trips offered have been local. Our children have had a bus trip around Alexandria to help them to get to know their own city; some have been to Qait Bay, Montazah, the University of Alexandria, the Bibliotheca, the zoo and the amphitheatre.

Some trips are further afield. All the children in Key Stage 2 were offered the opportunity to go to a theatre workshop in Cairo and those who did go came back very excited and enthused with some excellent ideas to improve their creative writing and their imaginations. During the year children in our primary school have also visited El Alemain, Rashid, the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and have done numerous trips up and down the Desert Road to take part in a large number of CIBSA events, both sporting and academic.

Residential trips are also becoming fixed now into our annual calendar and we are hoping to extend these even further next year. Year 6 spent 2 days in Cairo during the first term which included an overnight stay in a hotel. This trip was in connection with their history curriculum and we visited the Citadel and the Ibn Toulon mosque. We also visited the playground at the Park Al Azhar which didn't have much to do with history but was great fun!

Year 5 spent 3 days/2 nights camping at the Eco Lodge at Wadi El Natrun. (**Ella, Khadiga, Mahinour to read excerpts from their camping trip recount**). These three young ladies have been very patient with me. They were the winners of the tidiest tent competition and I am sure that they think that I have forgotten all about the prizes I promised them...but I haven't! Well done girls. This is the third year that we have done this trip and it gets better and better each year. I am sure that year 4 is already looking forward to their turn next year.

A great deal of planning and preparation is needed whenever we take the children out of school even if it is just down the road to the orphanage. Teachers have to get permission for the trip from the leadership team, complete a detailed risk assessment to minimize any potential dangers, ensure that the staff to pupil ratio is correct, get permission from parents, organize transport.....and all that before they even get out of the gate! We are very lucky to have members of staff who appreciate the importance of extending our children's learning opportunities beyond the school gates and who are willing to take the responsibility for trips like these.

The last couple of weeks in Key Stage 2 has been dominated by rehearsals and preparations for the end of year production of Oliver! I am sure that even the people who work next door in the consulate must be wandering around with the tune of Om pa pa! going around in their heads! I know we, in school are and I even heard one of the

security guards outside of the Main Site whistling along on one occasion! What a fantastic performance though and what a credit to every child and every member of staff in key stage 2. Thank you all very much indeed. It is this sort of thing that makes our school such a very special place to be.

I wouldn't like you to think that life in primary is one long round of trips, special days, sports events, plays and parties. Whilst we value these days enormously as a very important way of extending the curriculum beyond the classroom, in between times, in keeping with the aims and the ethos of the school the children really do work very hard. Our expectations of the children are high and they are, as you will see when we begin the presentations, on the whole met by them.

The children in the primary school are assessed continuously by their teachers, often without them even knowing it! This is exactly the way it should be. Year 2 were led very smoothly through their end of KS1 assessments and achieved some very pleasing results with no fuss at all. Well done year 2. Optional SAT's took place in Key Stage 2 without any high drama but with an enormous amount of marking for the teachers! And year 6 were well prepared for their end of key stage tests by Mr. England and again the week of the SAT's, that they had been dreading so much all year, came and went with very little fuss at all. I am sure that the children will get the results that they deserve.

The end of the academic year is always arrived at by teachers with mixed feelings. Relief! Exhaustion! But also with a little bit of sadness. Basically primary teachers are all big softies and they do get very fond of the children in their classes and really do miss them when they move up to the next class after the summer holidays. Of course once the new school year starts they start again and become equally attached to the children in their new classes but it is always hard to watch a class moving on when you have given so much of your time and energy to them and have built up such a good relationship with them.

We would like to say thank you and goodbye to year 6. They are a lovely group of young people. They have been an asset to the primary school over many years and I am sure that they will continue to set a good example as they progress through the secondary section of the school. We wish them well and hope that they won't forget us but will come back and visit us occasionally next year.

We are also very sad to be saying goodbye this year to Mrs. Millett. Mrs. Millett has worked at the BSA now for two years and is moving on to a new and exciting job in Vietnam. I would like to thank Mrs. Millett for all the hard work which she has put into our school, as FS2 teacher, F/KS1 leader and as a member of the senior leadership team. I will miss her personally as a good friend and travelling companion as well as professionally.

I have only been able to give you a very brief insight into the many, many activities that take place in our school. The BSA is a thriving and vibrant place to be and to learn. Our website now gives a very good overview of events taking place and is regularly updated with letters, calendar dates and photographs. Do check it regularly.

The children in year 6 have been lucky enough to have had the opportunity to spend a few days in the secondary section of the school over the last couple of weeks. This has helped to calm some of their nerves and fears about making the transition from year 6 to year 7. Some of the children have written poems about their feelings which they would now like to share with you.

Hamza & Moneim
Marwa & Mariam