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Dear Parents and Guardians,

Hopefully you and your children have got your head around the fact that I will be teaching your lot for the foreseeable future. This letter is to briefly outline what I will be covering with the class in the first half of term, and loosely what I intend to do if I am still teaching the year 4s after the half term break. I hope it is useful, but in the meantime, if you do have any questions, please do not hesitate to come and speak to me.

Topic: Rivers and Castles

My intention for the first half of term is to cover the Rivers part of this term's topic. I intend to do this through a 'Mountain Rescue' scenario, which will challenge the children to plan and carry out the rescue of a skier. Through this the children will need to consider the environment and as part of this will learn about the stages of a river. It is intended that the scenario will evolve and change as we progress through the work, but what is next is a surprise, so no spoilers in this letter!

Literacy

We will be looking at the work of Michael Morpurgo this term, looking together at 'The Dancing Bear', a story set in the Alps. As part of this study we will be looking at the writing style of Morpurgo and how he uses language to engage his reader and create suspense in his writing. To support this, the children will also be reading Morpurgo books in their guided reading sessions, in which we intend to focus on the assessment focuses 4, comment on structure and organisation of text; and 5, explain and comment on writers' use of language. All of the clever use of language and structure used by the author will then be 'maggied' in the hope that we can create some super narratives of our own. Obviously, set in the mountains, 'The Dancing Bear' has some natural links with the Mountain Rescue, our vehicle for learning this half term!

Spellings may well now happen on a Wednesday, but I will firm that plan up as I get through the term and see how it works with the other adults I have available with me. The children should continue to read each night to an adult wherever possible.

Numeracy

Wow, what great mathematicians they are in year 4! We will be focusing heavily with the children on the targets for this term. So, we will be doing lots of investigations, lots of applying what the children have already learnt and opportunities to build up a bank of new written and mental methods for calculation. To give you an example of the types of things we will be doing, here's one for you. (Don't forget to test them kids!):

"If I add three consecutive numbers together, the answer is always odd. Is this always, sometimes or never true?"

If you see the idea, then have a go at home. Any kind of statement about numbers and their properties can be investigated, and the children can think about the best way of working it out and proving that a statement is true or not. The children have already agreed that no less than 10 examples can be useful when gaining proof of something.

As I get to know the children better, I will look to set them some times tables to learn and consolidate. All useful to solve these kind of investigations!

We will also be looking at Data Handling and reading and interpreting data within our topic and that will become clearer as we work through the term....no spoilers remember!

Science

Even more investigations, particularly into materials and their properties. Use your imagination and you can probably work out how this might be done in connection with our mountain rescue!!!

Geography

Obviously we will be looking at rivers, their source, their journeys and what happens as they enter the sea. I also intend to look into the Alps and what the environment is like there. We will think about who lives there, what they might do and what life would be like for them, including how the seasons affect their lifestyle. We will think about what animals live in the environment and the issues they face. That's as much as I'm giving away, and it already feels like too much.

Design and Technology

If possible, can you let us have as many shoe boxes as you can spare? This will support us in what we have planned for D&T! Just wait until you see the outcomes...

Art

We will be looking at the work of Claude Monet, not only because he is French, but also because he did many paintings of the Seine, particularly in his early days. I intend to challenge the children to recreate a number of his pieces, initially on their own, then in pairs, then in groups of four and then in groups of 10 or 11. We will use pencil, chalk and pastels, water colour and eventually paints. Very excited about it. (Sad aren't !!)

PE

PE with Brighton and Hove Albion will continue on a Thursday afternoon for the children in year 4. There will also be a PE slot on a Tuesday afternoon when I intend to cover bat and ball games and athletics with the children. Once the pool is up and running, which should be very soon, we will also have a swimming slot on a Tuesday. So lots of kits to remember, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, for the children.

MFL

We will be doing some French with the children this term. This will be at varying times, but we will do some lessons so that the children can hold a basic French conversation as needed for their rescue!

IT

The children will be improving their internet use as part of their studies this term. They will also be expected to improve their use of powerpoint, their use of word as well as using a variety of media devices to produce an advert, but all in good time! That was nearly a spoiler...phew.

History

We will be moving into a much more historical study after the half term break, which will, as you know, include our class trip to Arundel Castle. A more detailed letter about the plans will follow after half term.

As mentioned before, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to come and see me and I will pass you on to Monty, who will be handling all PR for me this term.

Yours excitedly,

Matthew Barnes