

Woodcote Primary School

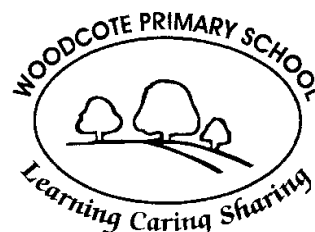
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Chair of Governors: Sue Whitehead



Governor Newsletter – Winter 2019/2020

Winter Governor Newsletter

Welcome to our first (admittedly slightly belated) governor newsletter of the 2019/2020 academic year. We hope that all pupils and parents enjoyed the well deserved Christmas holidays, and have come back refreshed and ready to hit the new decade with renewed vigour and enthusiasm!

As always seems to be the case, the last few months have again proven to be a busy time for the school, and for us as governors. In this newsletter we wanted to again highlight some of the work we as a governing board have been performing, such as in relation to the school's building and maintenance, whilst also drawing attention and celebrating our pupil achievements in last year's SATS results.

As ever, we hope you find the latest newsletter informative, but please feel free to provide any feedback you have to the addresses at the top of this page.

The newsletter has been prepared by various members of the governing body

Buildings and Maintenance

We start our latest newsletter with a discussion on the school buildings and our plans to improve these over the coming years.

The School Governors, together with Mrs Hunt and her leadership team are working on what we believe will become an exciting programme of work aimed at improving the condition and functionality of the school's buildings.

This work will support the delivery of an enhanced curriculum and allow the school to offer improved pre- and post- school activities (wrap around care) into the future.

The story so far...

To help us better understand exactly where we are now, during the summer of 2019 we commissioned a Building Condition Survey.

The survey concluded that given the school's construction and age it was in reasonable condition but requires approximately £200,000 worth of building maintenance work to be undertaken over the next 10 years and a total of £365,500 over the coming 20.

Whilst this is a large amount, we are not alone in facing these challenges, and the governors felt understanding these long-term maintenance requirements was a vital part in planning the school's long-term strategy.

Discussions with architects have already started to establish what changes to the school's layout could be made in an environmentally sympathetic manner to address the maintenance issues identified in the survey. In the coming months we will be establishing the costs for the various schemes under consideration.

Funding

You probably won't be surprised to learn that one of our major challenges will be raising the money we need to deliver this project.

The sources of funding that may be available to us include:

Oxfordshire County Council: The sad reality is that in recent years the council have been unable (due to the education budget cutbacks) to fully fund school building maintenance needs throughout Oxfordshire. Currently the annual building maintenance budget allocated by the Council to us is £5,000. We will continue to engage with the County Council regarding these issues but obviously need to explore all revenue streams to meet the potential maintenance requirements into the future.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): This is a recent government initiative aimed at providing local communities with funding to help relieve pressure on infrastructure (including schools, health facilities, social facilities etc.) caused by new housing development.

New housing development planned for Woodcote (see the current and emerging Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan) could deliver significant CIL revenue over the next 15 years.

The County and Parish Council will each receive some of the CIL money to support schooling in Woodcote. Woodcote Parish Council will receive 25% of total CIL revenues and may choose to spend this on a wide range of infrastructure improvement activities including health care facilities, social amenities (the Village Hall etc.) and most importantly (we think) education including building maintenance and enhancement.

We will do our best to ensure our school gets its fair share of CIL funding from both the County and Parish Councils.

Third Party Grant Funding: Finally, we are actively looking for potential donors. Identifying and submitting grant proposals is a specialist area and one that we need your help with. If you have any expertise or experience in this field, please let the school know and we will be in touch!



As you can gather from the discussion, buildings and maintenance funding is a major area of focus for the governing body and will be a key determinant of the environment and facilities available to pupils at Woodcote Primary in the future.

As our plans become clearer we will seek input from parents, pupils and other stakeholders so please look out for details of consultation events as our plans develop.

Governor Monitoring Visits

One of the most important roles of the Governing Body is to monitor the progress and performance of the school. This is a statutory responsibility and something that the Governors must be able demonstrate and discuss at any time but particularly during any inspection.

This monitoring can be achieved through the analysis of statistical data, as covered below in the newsletter with regards SATS results, but another valuable tool that the Governors use to monitor and observe the performance and day-to-day life of the school are "Governor Monitoring Visits".

Each term at least two governors will visit the school. These visits are not an inspection of the school or for the Governors (for example) to make judgements on the quality of the teaching but are a fantastic opportunity for Governors to see school life in full swing and get a real understanding of how the school operates on a daily basis.

Prior to each visit a detailed agenda is agreed between the governors and Mrs Hunt, ensuring the monitoring visit is focused and allowing the Governors to get the most from their time in the school. The agenda will typically focus on topics that are included in the School Development Plan (SDP), any resource

requirements, student wellbeing and also that school wide initiatives, such as "Growth Mindset" (that each child is encouraged to give everything a go) are fully embedded in all aspects of school life.

After each visit the governors will discuss their observations with Mrs Hunt and produce a formal report to be submitted to the Chair of Governors and the full governing body at the next meeting.

Although these visits are a key part of a Governor's role, they are also something that all of us look forward to performing. The visits enable the Governors to see the school at work, allowing them to get to know the staff and pupils, plus gain a greater understanding of the range of attitudes, behaviour and achievements within the school. This additional information and insight can then help the governing body provide better support and make better decisions going forward.

Standards and Achievements Committee

A key sub-committee on the school governing body is Standards & Achievement (S&A). This group meets regularly throughout the school year, and encompasses four governors – Diana Hadaway, Paul Smith, Pete Sudbury (chair) and Sue Whitehead – plus the headteacher and senior teaching staff

At these meetings a wide range of topics tend to be discussed, but generally the aim is to talk through and monitor the performance of our pupils – and various cohorts within year groups – from the perspective of both our school development plan and other schools (locally and at the national level).

2018/2019 SATS Results

Given the focus from parents, government and the media on SATS (Standard Assessment Tests), the committee naturally takes a keen interest in our own school results. Recently we came together to discuss 2018/2019 data and we are pleased to report that our pupils again turned in a positive performance.

At KS1 level, year 2 pupils (now year 3) produced a terrifically positive set of results, with 82% of pupils achieving either expected or higher standard in both maths and reading. In each case, these scores were comfortably above respective national averages. Moreover, two fifths of pupils were operating at greater depth (GD) for both reading and maths.

For our KS2 pupils (year 6 in the 2018/19 academic year, but now moved on to secondary school), reading and writing were both above national averages for expected standard (77% and 80% respectively), with pupils operating at GD at impressive rates of 30% and 20% respectively (both at or above national average). Maths came in a little lower at 73%, but nonetheless a solid performance.

It's worth noting that, as a committee, we are always aware of factors that can impact on these results. For instance, the size and makeup of a class can make comparisons with previous year's results challenging.

We therefore aim to look through the 'noise' of data and attempt to better understand the 'signal'. This then helps us to support decisions made by the school's leadership team in the utilisation of resources to plug any potential gaps in pupil's understanding and teacher knowledge in core curriculum activities.

Examples here would be areas that we're sure many of you have heard about from your own children such as the utilisation of time for pupils to perform 'big-writes' i.e. free writing on a topic or greater focus on USSR (uninterrupted, sustained, silent, reading).

Extra-curricular Activities

Outside the core curriculum performance, governors on the S&A committee are also supportive of the teaching staff's vision of not only providing strong core curriculum teaching, but also ensuring that our children receive a well-rounded education in areas related to the arts, humanities, sport and community.

Walking around the school, there is plenty of evidence of art, drama and history being taught, whilst our sports teams have had notable successes in football and cross-country.

Moreover, recently our year 6 pupils invited 15 elderly members of our community into school for tea and cakes. This gave our pupils an opportunity to not only learn about what Woodcote was like many years ago, but also enhance the school's community and intergenerational links. We are sure that parents will add to the committee's views that such activities add considerable richness to our children's education.

Finally...Meet the (New) Governor

Please welcome the newest member of the governing board, Andrew Hawley, who brings skills from the world of business and finance to the team.

Andrew is locally born and bred, having grown up in Caversham Park Village, where he attended the local primary school, followed by Chiltern Edge and then Henley College. He went on to read Business Studies at the University of the West of England. As well as achieving a degree he also met his better half, Charlotte, at university whom he married in 2005.

Having finally admitted to himself that his career lay outside of being a footballer, golfer, rockstar, cowboy, stuntman, or an astronaut, Andrew finally found his calling in 2003 when he stumbled into the world of tax!

Charlotte and Andrew have lived in Woodcote since 2006, and their daughter Emily started in reception last September, whilst his eldest son Ben moved up to

Langtree at the same time.

Andrew's other son James also attended Woodcote Primary but as many are aware, he lost his fight with a congenital heart condition in late 2018. Andrew notes that James is very much their inspiration in everything they do.

In his spare time Andrew enjoys playing golf and football when he can and participates in other sports and activities as the opportunity arises. You may also see him on occasion running around the village attempting to beat his 3-mile PB (he's decided he's not built to run any further than this!)

When not being active Andrew enjoys watching movies, drawing, and finding and playing less well known board games, as well as spending time with his family and friends. He is an avid Spurs supporter and one lifelong ambition is to persuade Ben that he should also support Spurs rather than Arsenal or Crystal Palace!