



Governors' News



School dinners are on their way...

Issue 5 - Summer Term 2014

Welcome to the final newsletter of this academic year. I would like to extend a very warm welcome to Mat Church, Maria Mosquera and Kathryn Gorsuch, who joined us as new governors at the end of last term. I hope that they will find being a member of the Governing Body at West Horndon Primary School is a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

The structure of the Governing Body has changed this year. The three committees which reported to the Governing Body have been disbanded and two new committees created in their place. These are: the Finance, Personnel and Premises Committee and the Curriculum and Achievement Committee. The Governors felt that the new system would work more efficiently.

I hope that you have been listening to the School Radio Station as you wait at the gate for your children. I received a great introduction to the station by the pupils and I think it's brilliant! It will give the pupils lots of speaking practice as well as providing sparkling entertainment at break times.

Once again we have building work going on in school. This is so we can provide school meals as well as continue to teach the children cooking.

On behalf of the Governors, I would like to wish all of the Year Six pupils every success at their secondary schools and hope that they will visit us in the future.

I trust that you will all have a wonderful Summer holiday and we look forward to seeing the pupils return to school in September.

Jenny McGeachie

Social Networking - 1

As you will be fully aware, the internet has become a powerful tool to connect and to share ideas and opinions. In recent years, social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have grown in popularity and many people use these sites to communicate with family, friends and others.

The vast majority who use social networking sites show respect in their communications with others and this is something that we must encourage to show our children that we are positive 'digital role models'. However, like other aspects of society, there are people who disregard the rules and will use social networking to harass, provoke or upset others.

Recently there have been a number of high profile cases in the media where people using social networking sites in an inappropriate manner have been investigated and in some instances prosecuted.

As a School, we encourage parents and carers to support us with the education and wellbeing of their children. If at any time, parents or carers feel that they have any issues regarding their children's education, they should make an appointment with the School to discuss matters. If parents or carers feel that their concerns have not been properly addressed, there is a formal complaints procedure by which the matter will be brought to the attention of the Governing Body for determination. Please note that the School website has a link to the complaints policy.

As a community we should all frown upon the use of social networking sites to criticise unfairly, threaten or make unsubstantiated comments about the School, the staff (including the Headteacher), or its pupils and their families.

The Governors consider that pursuing legal means to address untrue or damaging comments made on social networking sites would be an option of last resort; however the Governing Body has a duty of care to those within the School to take action where appropriate to do so.

Social Networking - 2

Despite Mr O'Grady frequently voicing concerns regarding the use of social media by the School's pupils, the Governors are aware that some pupils are still using sites and apps such as Facebook and Instagram. All of these sites have a minimum age requirement which none of our pupils meet.

One or two of the Governors have recently received messages from pupils via Facebook, offering to share photographs. Whilst we have no doubts this was well-intentioned, it is not appropriate and pupils should note that no such requests will be accepted and also that the School office will be notified each time.

You will see many Governors at the school gate as well as at important school functions, such as Sports Day or the School Show. If you have any comments or questions for us, please do stop and tell us, or alternatively, please write in, leaving your letter (addressed to the Chair of Governors) at the school office.



Finance, Personnel and Premises Committee

Interest this term has centred on alterations to the school accommodation. The introduction of free school meals will necessitate the present kitchen area being remodelled. It would also mean that unless alternative provisions were made, cookery and nutrition would no longer be possible as curriculum subjects. To ensure this does not happen the present staff room will be converted to have new cooking and worktop facilities. The present library will be subdivided to provide a new staff area. Funds for the conversion of the kitchen will be provided by the local education authority. Monies for other changes can be found from present school funding. School expenditure remains within the available budget.

Curriculum and Achievement Committee

The role of the Curriculum and Achievement Committee is to review the curriculum; the performance of the School against national and local indicators; and the School's plan for development (known as the School Transformation Plan).

Since the last Governing Body newsletter was published, the Committee has reviewed the School Transformation Plan and considered the progress made towards achieving the targets set in each aspect of the plan. The benefits of Forest Schools and the introduction of a school radio station were also discussed in depth. The criteria for funding the School's enhanced provision were noted as well as resources that are available for the support of highly able pupils. The Committee was made aware of the implementation of the new National Curriculum and the fact that it will afford greater opportunities for flexibility as well as meeting necessary standards. There is now a statutory requirement to teach a foreign language at Key Stage 2 and we are delighted that French has been selected.

The School's attendance figures were reviewed and it was noted that although the School's target has been met, it was still below the national average for similar schools.

Thank You's

The Governors would like to extend their thanks to all members of staff at the School, in particular Mr O'Grady for yet another wonderful year. The past term has been particularly difficult, but the whole year has been full of exciting developments. Mr O'Grady has already highlighted some of these in his newsletter, but these were some of the Governors' favourite moments:

- The "Best of British" end of year show, which showcased the fantastic singing, acting and all round entertainment skills of our pupils and which everyone spent many hours out of school preparing for.
- The trip to the O2 Arena in London to take part in Young Voices – pupils, teachers, and families all staying up late to take part in an amazing show.
- The care which the older children showed to the new Acorn class when they started last September – it made them feel safe and welcome.
- The effort made at sports day. Congratulations to all those who won medals, but those who did not win still gave it their all and showed great sporting behavior.
- The opening of the School radio station – how many schools of a similar size to us have one of those?!
- Forest Schools is a highlight for many of the pupils. Getting children outside and teaching new skills in the natural environment is a wonderful way to inspire.
- The closer ties which the School is developing with Brentwood County High School. One of our Governors, Kathryn, is a teacher at BCHS and many of the pupils have been there to take advantage of the specialist equipment and facilities.
- The way the school got so heartily stuck into the World Cup – flags were flying all over the place and the curriculum was used creatively to teach the pupils about life in Brazil
- The class trips were great thanks to the behaviour of the children and the time spent preparing by class teachers – thank you all
- The whole school walked a mile for Sports Relief and many parents were able to join them. The whole school community raising money for others.
- Acorn class in the Nativity Play – always brings a smile
- The massive improvements to the School in the past year, led by Mr Norman our Site Manager – it is hard to believe he has been here for less than one year
- Talking homework – do fish dream? Was Goldilocks naughtier than Jack from Jack and the Beanstalk? Sunday lunch has never been the same!