

Governors' News

July 2017

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to the Summer 2017 edition of the Governors' Newsletter. It has been another very full year and through this update we hope to inform you about achievements and challenges faced by the school in the last year, as well as some changes and plans for the future.

Governing Board Membership

Our governing board is currently made up of 13 people including four parent governors, seven co-opted governors, one staff governor and the Headteacher.

- Andrew Doran (dad of Leon Y5 and Will in Y3) has now completed a second year as Chair. This is a very time-consuming role and we are grateful for all the hours and commitment he has put in over the last two years.
- Thank you also to Emma James who has continued as Vice-Chair. Along with Andrew Katzen, Emma has formed part of a working group with other Berkhamsted schools as they discuss the possibility of forming a Multi Academy Trust.
- We have welcomed three new governors, all of whom got in touch in response to a mail drop last year. They are:
 - Ian McCaul, an Executive Headteacher for a group Special Schools in Bucks;
 - James Percival, who brings great financial expertise to the governing board from his role as Vice President of Finance for Europe, Middle East and Africa at Hilton Worldwide;
 - Jane Basnett, an active member of the local community who has experience as a Learning Mentor at Ashlyns Sixth Form. They have all settled into the role very well and have already made very valuable contributions to the team.
- Earlier this year we said thank you to Peter Thompson who stepped down as a governor and we will also be saying goodbye to Henry Ripley at the end of this term. We thank them both for all the time and commitment they have both shown to the school over the last few years.
- Rebecca Harvey has now completed her first year with us as our Clerk. We are grateful for all the

experience and knowledge she brings to our meetings.

You will find more details about our current Governing Board on the governors page of the website.

What we do

Our Governing Board is a team of volunteers drawn from parents, staff and members of the local community. We are not involved in the day-to-day management of the school — this is the role of the Headteacher and staff. We are there to ask questions and challenge the Headteacher in order to ensure that the school continuously improves. To achieve this, our main responsibilities are to:

- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school;
- Hold the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff;
- Oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well spent.

The full Governing Board meets every half term. In addition, governors are members of the following committees, which meet four or five times a year:

- Finance, Premises and Personnel
- Curriculum, Staff and Pupils
- Pay and Performance Management

Individual governors are responsible for specific subject areas linked to school development priorities, meeting regularly with lead members of staff to keep ourselves informed about how the school is approaching learning in Maths, PE, English, Growth Mindset, Forests Schools - as well as ensuring that the school is fully meeting its obligations on matters such as Special Educational Needs, Pupil Premium Spending, Safeguarding, health and safety and finance.

The Governing Board has focused on a number of key areas this year. Understandably, academisation has been thoroughly scrutinised (see the separate article in this newsletter), with the Governing Board carefully weighing up the pros and cons of different options.

More visible to parents and children will be the new fitness trail and forest school area, both of which we considered to be improvements which would reap

rewards for the children and were directly relevant to the school's key improvement objectives in Westfield's School Development Plan.

Day-to-day, the Governing Board looks in detail at the school's finances and in the current climate, every penny counts. The board works closely with Mrs Stace to try to ensure that the school achieves the best possible value for money.

Whilst we usually meet outside of school hours, we again had the privilege of spending a day in school in March in order to get a better understanding of school life. In doing so we were able to ask the children directly for their views about the school, to get to know the staff better and raise our profile within the school.

In short, this has been another busy and rewarding year for the Governing Board!



Henry Ripley discusses Maths with the children on Governors in School Day

Update on Academisation

On 20 June 2017, we announced the consultation for a proposal to create the Berkhamsted Educational Trust. This would result in the formation of a Multi-Academy Trust comprised of Westfield and four other local schools (Ashlyns, Bridgewater, Greenway and Swing Gate). If it goes ahead, it will mean that Westfield will convert to Academy status later this year. Consultation meetings took place with staff and parents and carers on 3 July and we conducted a joint online survey with the other schools for anyone interested to give their views.

We have been considering the options available for many months, including remaining as we are under Local Authority control or joining an existing Multi Academy Trust. We believe that the creation of the Berkhamsted Educational Trust gives Westfield the best way of sharing the skills and resources available whilst maintaining our individual school's vision, values and goals. The governors at Westfield feel that the proposal is a unique opportunity to join together with the other local schools for the benefit of the children, parents,

carers and staff. Given the challenges Westfield faces in terms of government policy, funding and recruitment and retention of staff, we see the formation of the Berkhamsted Educational Trust as providing the best solution for the future.

Standards / Attainment

We continue to be supported by our School Improvement Partner, Alan Phair. This is a service which the school chooses to buy into and Alan visits us each term to support and advise the school on maintaining standards, to offer objective scrutiny, challenge and advice and to ensure that we are continually striving to improve. He also supports a number of other schools in the town.

There were two main areas of focus for his visit in March this year: to evaluate the progress we have made with our agreed School Priorities, and to provide an independent assessment on the school's overall effectiveness.

Alan was very impressed with what he saw as these excerpts from his report demonstrate:

“Leaders and governors focus on consistently improving outcomes for all children including disadvantaged children.”

“The school's focus is on the whole child, ensuring that all children are ready for learning. Relationships between staff and children are exemplary.”

In addition to overseeing results and quality of teaching and learning, the Improvement Partner also advises the school on areas for school improvement, which in turn feeds in to our School Development Plan.

KS2 SATS RESULTS

This is only the second year that Westfield has had a Year 6. The children have worked incredibly hard, supported by Mrs Edwardson, and should be very proud of what they have achieved. The results below show the percentage of children in Year 6 who have achieved the Age Related Expectation in Reading, Writing, Maths and Spelling and Grammar at Key Stage 2, and those children who are working at 'greater depth' in these subjects.

We have included the national average scores for comparison but do not yet have this data for those working at greater depth.

Attainment

Reading			Spelling & Grammar		
Sch	Nat	Sch GDS*	Sch	Nat	Sch GDS
83.3	71	30	83.3	77	36.6
Writing			Maths		
Sch	Nat	Sch GDS	Sch	Nat	Sch GDS
83.3	76	17	70	75	30

Note that 2 out of the 30 pupils did not sit the test, they are deemed not to have achieved the ARE

*GDS = Achieving greater depth standard

Progress

Pupils are expected to make three steps of progress in a year to be making good progress. This table shows the average progress children have made since the end of Year 2. Expected progress = 12.

Progress			
	All (30)	Boys (15)	Girls (15)
Reading	12.5	12.7	12.3
Writing	12.6	12.7	12.5
Maths	11.7	12.1	11.3

KS1 SATS RESULTS

Whilst we have the data for this year's Year 2 SATS results, we do not yet have comparative data for National and Hertfordshire. We have therefore included last year's national averages for comparison.

The table shows the percentage of pupils achieving Age Related Expectations for the Key Stage and those working at 'greater depth'.

Percentage of children achieving ARE (Age Related Expectations) at KS1					
Reading		Writing		Maths	
Sch	83	Sch	73	Sch	83
Nat 2016	74	Nat 2016	65	Nat 2016	73
Sch GDS	27	Sch GDS	20	Sch GDS	17
Nat GDS	24	Nat GDS	13	Nat GDS	18

In the national Year 1 Phonics Screening test, 90% of the cohort achieved the expected standard.

These results have all been closely analysed by Mrs Stace, the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Board, alongside the school's assessment data for children in all the other year groups. We use this information to inform the School Development Plan as we assess what the school's Teaching and Learning priorities should be for the coming year.

Parent Survey

Part of the governors' role is to gather and consider the views and opinions of our stakeholders, including parents and carers. Each year we ask parents to complete a survey online so that we can get a representative idea of how parents and carers are feeling about Westfield. Thank you to all of you who completed it this year. We had a record 170 responses which is credit to the very engaged parents and carers we have at the school (although we would still like to have every child represented next year!)

Academic progress and achievement

- 98% of you see the teaching at Westfield as good.
- 96% of you believe that the school helps you to support your children's learning;
- 95% of you think your children were making good progress at Westfield, (this is up from 86% last year) with 85% of you feeling well informed about the progress they are making;
- 97% of you feel that your children are encouraged to work hard and do their best;
- 83% of you believe that your children get the right amount of homework (9% think too much, 8% too little).

Well being

- 98% of you believe that your children are safe and well cared-for at Westfield and 97% of you feel that your child is happy there.

Behaviour

- 95% of you think behaviour at Westfield is good, and 84% feel that misbehaviour is well-managed (this is up from 68% last year).

Communications

- 97% of you think the school communicates effectively with parents and 93% of you feel the school responds well to any concerns raised (up from 87% last year).

Leadership and management

- 97% of you believe that Westfield is well led and managed;
- 83% of you said you know how to contact us, the Governors (3% up on last year but we are aiming for 100% — see below for how to contact us!)

A very encouraging 97% of you are happy with your child's experience at Westfield (63% of parents agreeing with this strongly), with 93% of parents feeling that Westfield meets their needs.

Once again, these results are a real credit to the professionalism and hard work of the school's leadership team and staff. We are also careful to read all the individual comments in the survey, and would like to thank parents for taking the time to go into a little more detail. Amongst the comments this year was a desire for children (especially in KS2) to have the opportunity to take part in more competitive sport. This has been taken on board by the governors and staff and we are working on ways to improve this aspect of the school (see separate item on Sport).

Several other parents mentioned that they felt there was a discrepancy in the amount of homework different year groups were being given. Again, these comments have been discussed at our meetings and Mrs Stace and the team will be working on how the school can be more consistent with this. On Inset Day we will be reviewing the Home Learning Policy and inviting parents and carers to a parent workshop in the Autumn Term.

School Development Plan (SDP)

We are pleased to report we made good progress against the priority targets identified last year:

- **All pupils to make at least good progress from the end of Key Stage**
Reading 98%, Writing 95% and Maths 95%. Children who haven't made expected progress are identified quickly and are given extra help and support tailored to their individual needs.
- **Early Years – to increase the percentage of boys achieving a Good Level of Development by the end of Reception**
Improved from 44% in 2016 to 70%.
- **Closing the gap in attainment between identified groups of children and their peers, particularly upper KS2 children in receipt of the Pupil Premium Grant**
In 5 out of 6 measures children receiving the Pupil Premium Grant have made equal or more progress than their peers.
- **Continue to embed Growth Mindset and Mindfulness**
We continue to see the positive impact of mindfulness and growth mindset approaches in the increased resilience of our children. Here are some quotes from pupil voice:

"If I make a mistake in the stretch zone then I feel proud, not because I got it wrong but because I didn't understand it to begin with and now I've worked really hard and now I do."

"My feelings have changed about making mistakes, at the beginning of the year I hated making

mistakes but now I know I am always learning and mistakes are good things. When you make a mistake, your brain grows."

Teachers also report that starting the day with meditation helps to create a calm atmosphere in class and sets the expectation for the day.

The plan for the coming year was discussed and agreed at the beginning of July at a meeting attended by Mrs Stace, the Senior Leadership team and three of our governors. Among the key priorities identified for 2017-18 are:

- To increase the percentage of children meeting the end of year expectation in Maths across the whole school;
- For the vast majority of pupils to make at least good progress from end of key stage and ensure disadvantaged children make progress equal to or better than their peers;
- To ensure the teaching and learning in foundation subjects produces high quality outcomes in KS1 and KS2, with a particular focus next year on Art and the implementation the new scheme of work in Religious Education;
- To further increase collaboration with all schools in Berkhamsted.

Forest Schools

The Forest School movement is a way of teaching which offers children regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment. This year Mrs Lambert has completed her Forest School qualification and has started to roll these lessons out across the school.

These lessons have been incredibly popular with the children and we feel that the aims and values of Forest School teaching fit very well with the Westfield ethos.



Next year, we hope that Mrs Lambert will be able to offer all year groups a chance to experience Forest School lessons.

Sports

Through the Government's commitment to ensure all children lead fit and healthy lifestyles, Westfield received a Sports Premium grant of £ 9,030 for

2016/17. This grant supports the enjoyment of sport and PE for all our pupils, including our continued up-skilling of PE teaching across the school and high quality sports coaching from external providers (e.g. Year 5 lacrosse and cricket). In addition, we owe a huge thank you to W1SPA and to Mr Bray's successful Lottery grant application enabling the installation of the outdoor fitness trail. This year we have also introduced a number of new sports including curling, archery, american football and yoga for KS2 and staff

Last week saw another great Sports Week at Westfield, including wheelchair basketball, Storm Basketball and BMX biking. The week culminated in Sports Day: following the successful format from last year, the morning was dedicated to fun races for all, and the afternoon to competitive races for Years 3 to 6. Our thanks to Mr Bethune, Mr Jones, our Sports leaders and Ashlyns Sports Leaders for helping to run this day. See this month's Sporting updates on our website for further details and photos of the week.

Our newly introduced Sports Leaders from Years 5 and 6, identified by their red PE tops have also helped to further raise the profile of sport this year. We have also been developing our competitive intra and inter sports, and are looking to grow this for 2017/18, particularly for Upper Key Stage 2.

School Dog

We are looking forward to welcoming Milo, our school Cockapoo puppy, in September.



We believe he will be a valued addition to our Westfield community, working as a therapy dog, and — in time — a reading dog. Our aim is for all children to be able to spend quality time with him, if they wish. As governors, we are always looking at innovative ways

to improve our school, and after a lot of research into school dogs and speaking to other head teachers, we are delighted to be the first school in Berkhamsted to have one. The children are very excited about his arrival and have already started receiving training on how to behave around him and care for him.

Staffing in 2017-18

You should already have been informed by now of the staffing arrangements for your child's class next year.

Firstly we are delighted to welcome Miss Sarah Branigan who joined us as Deputy Head after half term this summer. Hopefully you will have had a chance to meet her at Open Evening. She has hit the ground running and is already making a great difference to the team and providing valuable support to Mrs Stace.

We will also be welcoming several other new teachers next term: Mrs Nicky Gower, an experienced Nursery teacher; Mrs Louise Moorby, who will be teaching in Year 3 with Mrs Shirley; and Mrs Carol Williamson, who will be returning to Westfield Nursery as a Teaching Assistant.

Mr Bethune will be taking time out of teaching next year to write a book on teaching mindfulness to children. We are grateful that he has agreed to continue to work one day a week at Westfield; he will be covering classes across all year groups to release teachers for the subject co-ordinator time and will lead a 'mindfulness assembly' once a week.

As you already know, Mrs Keller is moving with her family to California at the end of this term. She will be greatly missed and has been an asset to the team at Westfield. We wish her all the best in her exciting adventure.

Finally, Mrs McGovern will be taking time out to have a baby next year. We wish her and her family all the best and look forward to welcoming her back at the end of the school year.

In an increasingly challenging environment for recruitment of teachers, we feel incredibly lucky that we have such a strong and dedicated team here at Westfield.

And Finally...

We would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to everyone who gives up their time for the school, either by supporting children with reading, helping teachers with admin, supporting on school trips or donating gifts, money and time to the school.

As usual, a huge thank you to the W1SPA team who have worked incredibly hard over the year to raise an amazing £18,700. This money really does make a huge difference to the school by providing them with much needed resources and equipment as well as contributing towards enrichment activities such as school trips and workshops. The new fitness trail installed earlier this year and was largely funded by W1SPA. It is being used daily by the children in playtimes and in some PE lessons.

The Governors would like to wish you a very happy Summer holidays. If you would like to get in touch, or would like to find out more about any of the items in this newsletter, we would love to hear from you. Please email us at governors@westfieldprimary.herts.sch.uk