



# WOOTTON LOWER SCHOOL

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Deputy Head Teachers: Mrs Wendy Burnett B.A. (Hons) Mrs Leanne Grove B.A. (Hons)

## Parent Newsletter - Summer 2019

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Hello and welcome to the Governor newsletter for Summer 2019. This term we thought we would share with you some of the work we have been doing this year. As school governors we have the following core functions, amongst others:

- Setting the ethos and strategic direction of the school. This involves looking at the bigger picture of the school including areas which might impact its future and how these can be planned for, as well as how the school performs with today's challenges. This includes holding the Headteacher and Leadership team to account for the education of the school and progress of each child.
- Ensuring School Improvement Advisor visits are effective and ensuring their recommendations, findings and aspirational advice are actioned upon.
- Ensuring financial health and achieving value for money of the school as well as ensuring its assets (buildings and contents) are protected, safe and fit for purpose.
- Accountability for the strategic leadership of the school which includes ensuring governors are an effective team which is able to fulfil its roles and responsibilities, that we are compliant in these areas and evaluate ourselves annually to ensure we remain effective. This includes attending training sessions and looking at the work we have been doing and what needs to be done.

### Budget

Taking these areas into account during our annual review we have identified key areas we have worked on this year. These include analysing our budget and expenditure, where we have been working with Schools Forum and the Local Authority (LA), for a second year, to ensure we get more appropriate site funding for the school due to its increased costs incurred by being separated over two sites. Historically this is an unusual set up within Bedford Borough and was not financially recognised and whilst we have invested many hours on this, the funding remains less than we had hoped. We have also been securing the money that is given to the school by builders of new developments to ensure the infrastructure within the village can accommodate its needs (Section 106 monies), where this is specifically related to Education. Alongside this there have been a lot of meetings with the LA and builders to ensure the new school accommodation is ready on time, within budget and kitted out for our new reception class in September. We have had to ensure this meets the needs of the future school whilst in keeping with what has recently been built, within the restraints of the budget we have. Other areas of financial concern as you have now been made aware, is the cost and staffing of the minibus and provision of our afterschool club. These are not easy decisions for us to make and a lot of time has been spent exploring and considering other choices and alternative cost saving initiatives. However we have been left with no choice but to make the decision to extend After School Club to Harris Way and offer only one session provision for a two hour period as well as rescind the minibus, we wish to take this opportunity to apologise for any disruption this may cause.

### Standard of Education and children's progress

Towards the end of the last academic year we were visited by OFSTED. We recognised as they did, that whilst we offer a good provision there is room for improvement. We have been addressing their recommendations and expanded our senior leadership team (SLT). Last summer we employed new leaders, Miss Wright, Mr Dixon and Miss Tully, to take on increased responsibility for standards of learning in Maths, English and Early Years alongside their classes. We have been monitoring their impact and continue to support Mr Tavener and Heads of Schools in developing these staff and are pleased to welcome them to the school team.

Termly the governors receive data which allows us to assess the progress of the children by class and year group and highlights where attention is required. Along with the SLT we are able to identify where there is a need for more tailored work in the following term or further, depending on the change required and evaluate if this has been effective. Areas we have addressed this year have been the embedding of a new phonics programme, Read, Write, Inc, boys writing, science and extending opportunities for capable children's learning.

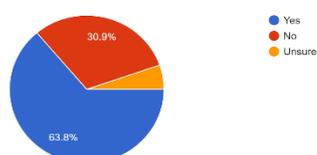
### Local schools working together

We have been working alongside other schools in the cluster to ensure consistency across the local family of schools which includes Holywell, Wootton Upper, Marston Vale, Broadmead and others. This work involves moderation of children's work to see what each school is expecting, as well as a consistent approach to attendance and safeguarding. We have also had a lot of conversations to ensure all children in our school will have a place in year 5 going forward due to increases in numbers within most of the local lower schools. These conversations have included going two tier across this area, as the rest of Bedford Borough have already done. This decision has to be agreed amongst all schools in order for the Regional Schools Commissioner to give permission for the change to go ahead. This is to ensure all schools remain viable as well as to ensure there is minimal disruption for children, but instead, well planned structures and continuity. There is not an option for a new middle school to be developed as education is moving towards phasing these out throughout the UK. Once agreement is achieved amongst all schools, and at the time of writing this has not been achieved, the process will take two years, during which time all locally schooled parents will be formally consulted. Within those two years schools we will be supported by the local authorities and Department of Education to ensure buildings have sufficient capacity and that teachers within schools are prepared and able to teach different age ranges of children. For Wootton Lower School this would mean competent to teach to year 6 and ensure the children are suitably educated to achieve their potential in Year 6, both of which we have been giving consideration to in anticipation of a change. Some facilities currently offered to Year 5 and 6 in middle schools are amazing and develop specific skills such as Design and Technology. However the Department of Education do not require children to have this degree of technical skill by the end of year 6, therefore these facilities are not implicitly required to extend a school to a primary school, although some will be.

As Governors we were keen to know your opinions on this, not in any way part of a formal consultation but in order to ascertain what your preference and/or concerns are about the two options we currently have, as your opinion matters to us. We hope that this goes some way to clarifying points which were raised and the position we currently find ourselves in.

Where there is a preference for 3 tier this is stated to be because of personal experience or

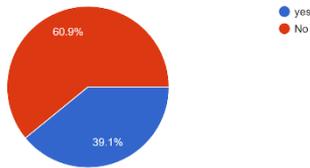
As a parent would you like to see Wootton Lower School move to being a primary school  
94 responses



that it provides a more gradual transition between the culture of a lower school and an upper school including the number of children and facilities such as a gym, science laboratories and music facilities. Opposing opinions include knowing and

liking Wootton Lower School and its nurturing environment where children can mature more and the way we deliver the curriculum, extending the time a child stays here and keeping them local, decreasing the number of school changes and not needing to use the bus to get to middle school.

Do you have any concerns regarding a change to a primary school?  
87 responses



Where concerns were expressed these all reflect the concerns the school leaders will have to consider in order for the transition to occur, as mentioned earlier.

### Celebrating Successes

We have had a busy year and I would like to share some celebrations too as Mrs Burry has worked very hard this year with Marston Vale Forestry Commission and Councillor Wheeler with tree planting at Harris Way and it's great to see so many have taken. Alongside this they have been developing a forest school area at Harris Way. This is coming along nicely and we hope to be able to utilise this area more in coming years.

We must also say a huge thank you to the PTFA who have carried out some fantastic events this year for adults and children to attend and have raised a huge amount of money to help make the school develop its environment towards a better place to be for the children. The Spring Fayre is really becoming a talked about event within the village community which is great. We also would like to thank in advance the Dads of Wootton who again are using the school facilities for the Car Fest on Saturday 31st August and we hope that you support this too, it is getting a great reputation.

Finally, on behalf of the Governors I would just like to thank you all as parents for your support over the last year. As Governors we recognise your support has been in many ways from ensuring your well behaved children appear at school smartly every day, attending parents evenings, supporting the PTFA, assisting with school activities and sharing moments that are important to your children with us. Without your children and your support of their learning we couldn't be the school that we are and we are very thankful for this.

We would like to wish you all a lovely summer with your children and look forward to seeing you all again in September. For those leaving us to move to middle school or elsewhere, we wish you all the very best and hope that you take with you some treasured memories of your time at Wootton Lower School.

Best wishes

Helen O'Neal  
Chair of Governors