

Hotwells Governor News

January 2014

www.hotwells.bristol.sch.uk



The children's creativity was on display during the West Bristol Art Trail. More on page 2.

Welcome to our Governors' newsletter

Here we cover governing priorities and school performance news.

We would also like to offer a warm welcome to all the children and their families who have started at Hotwells this school year.

HIGH STANDARDS AT HOTWELLS!

An important part of the governors' role is to monitor the academic standards our children are achieving. The governors were delighted to see that last academic year, we again achieved excellent standards at Hotwells.

At the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6), 91% of pupils achieved Level 4 (the expected level) in Reading, Writing and Maths; significantly higher than the national figure of 75%. In addition, 41% of pupils achieved the higher level 5 in Reading, Writing and maths, again significantly above the national figure of 21%. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2) was also well above national standards.

Governors also look at the amount of progress pupils make and were delighted to see that the number of children making expected or better progress by the time they leave Hotwells was well above the national levels in ALL areas.

Governors also analyse information about the standards achieved in every year group and were pleased to see that in all classes, children are achieving highly and made expected or better progress during the academic year.

It is fantastic to see our children are achieving such high standards!

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SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Like all schools, we have an Improvement Plan every year, in which we identify areas of our work we are currently focussing on. We have four goals; areas in which we want to strengthen our current practice. This year, our improvement plan goals are:

1. Strengthen the teaching, learning and assessment of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

We are making some changes to the aspects of Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling taught in each year group, so that we can be sure there is a clear progression in children's learning and that all our pupils reach a good standard in these important areas by the end of each school year and by the time they move onto secondary school.

2. Strengthen the standard of handwriting and presentation of written work.

We are helping our children improve the standard of their presentation and handwriting, for example by making sure handwriting is taught consistently and regularly. We know this is important so that children's work is of a high standard and the children can feel rightly proud of their achievements!

3. Strengthen the teaching and learning of mathematical problem solving.

We know that successful mathematicians are able to use their knowledge and skills to tackle and solve all sorts of mathematical problems. We are making sure children experience lots of opportunities to use their mathematical ability to solve 'meaningful' problems and mathematical puzzles. This also helps children see that the maths skills they are learning are useful and relevant – as well as being good fun!

4. Track and sustain good progress of vulnerable groups in English and Maths

We know that nationally there are some groups of pupils who do less well than others in school, such as children who speak English as an additional language and children from lower income families. We are carefully tracking the progress of pupils who are in these or other 'vulnerable groups' and making sure that where needed, they are supported to be just as successful as all our children.

Other areas that remain a priority for us at the moment include:

- Sustain good practice in **inclusion**, ensuring pupils with Special Educational Needs make good or better progress.
- Re-visit and strengthen **learning to learn** through the use of ELLI, so that children develop excellent learning skills
- Strengthen the teaching and learning of **philosophy**, enhancing children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Ensure robust **safeguarding** procedures remain in place, including **e-safety**.

THE WEST BRISTOL ART TRAIL



Once again, our pupils put on a spectacular art display for this year's Art Trail. The whole school participated in a range of fine art and sculpture projects that filled the hall and delighted visitors. A massive 'well done' to all. Here are some examples of our wonderful art.



FOCUS ON LUNCHTIME

Last term I went into school to witness first-hand what actually happens during the hours of 12.00 to 13.15. It was an enlightening experience and I thought I'd share some of my observations.

First it brought to my attention the challenges posed by the physical environs of Hotwells school. The green, whilst being a wonderful resource during the dry summer months, is limiting when it has been raining for a length of time as was the case this day. Because of this, only one Key Stage (either Rec, Y1 and Y2 or Y3 to Y6) at a time was able to use the exciting environment of the lower area with its trees, apparatus, nooks and crannies that invite all kind of creative play. Other classes had to use the upper playgrounds, tarmaced, more confined and altogether less stimulating, although the staff skilfully manage this so that the children have a happy and safe playtime. I saw some inventive use of equipment including skipping ropes, balls and hoops. The key stages do swap over during the lunchtime, so that all children have the opportunity to play in the more interesting bark area. It made me appreciate the challenges that lunchtime staff have to face with so many children and so little space.

Lunchtime itself is a major logistical achievement! Getting every child fed, in shifts due to the space limitations of the dining hall, in the time available is a challenge in itself but was

managed very effectively. The food provided by Eden is of an excellent quality (I have tried a school meal before – a far cry from the spam fritters and semolina of my day!). I was impressed how each child's eating is monitored with children not allowed to progress to their "pudding" until they have checked with an adult if an acceptable amount of first course has been eaten. If not the children are encouraged to (but not made to) eat more to ensure each child has eaten sufficient to get them through the rest of the day. Children with packed lunches are encouraged to take home any uneaten food so their intake can be monitored by parents.

On the day I went in, 3 of the regular lunchtime team were absent, and those staff were replaced by supply staff who inevitably did not know the children or systems as well. This highlighted the value of the Play Leader scheme whereby certain year 6 children are timetabled to play and engage with the younger children at lunchtime, an excellent way of providing additional pastoral care and providing a great personal development opportunity for the older students.

I didn't witness any unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour – testament to the high level of behaviour standards at our school. Instead I saw a lot of fun being had and even some games that took me back to my own childhood.

Jo Eades, Parent Governor

GREEN UPDATE

The Governors have set up a small working party to look at the ongoing issue of our Green.

Historically a lot of time and effort has been spent attempting to improve the quality of the grass but unfortunately for a number of reasons this has not worked.

During the autumn and winter it is often unsafe for the children to go on the grass as it becomes muddy and slippery. As a consequence this large, lovely play area is not in use for much of the year.

The Governors feel passionately that we should maximise the space for play and sport in the school. The freedom to run, play and have better sports facilities are every child's right. More physical activity would also have a positive impact upon their health and behaviour and alertness in the classrooms.

So, we are now looking at the possibility of having an artificial grass surface installed that would enable them to have all year round access to the outdoor space that they need.

We are in the process of getting quotes from suppliers at the moment and are hoping to have some designs up on display by the end of term. Then it will be all hands on deck in terms of fundraising as the costs will be high and only limited funding will be available

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WHAT IS THE PUPIL PREMIUM AND WHY IS IT LINKED TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS?

The Pupil Premium is Government funding given to schools so they can give extra support to disadvantaged pupils.

The Pupil Premium is paid direct to schools based on the number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals (or have been eligible for Free School Meals at any time in the last 6 years) from Reception to Year 6. The money makes a huge difference to the school, enabling it to give

the children extra support, for example, to give children who need it extra tuition or to help pay for children to take part in clubs or trips.

Many children are entitled to free school meals, for example, if one parent is receiving income support, job-seekers' allowance or working tax credits, then this would enable the child to qualify for free school meals.

If your child qualifies for free school meals but does not like hot dinners and prefers a pack lunch, the school can still claim the pupil premium. The office staff will be happy to answer

any questions or help any parent who thinks they may be eligible.

An important part of the governors' role is to monitor the use and the impact of Pupil Premium funding at Hotwells. The governors were pleased to see a great improvement last year in the standards achieved by children supported by Pupil Premium. You can find out more about how the funding has been used and the standards achieved by looking at the Pupil Premium report in the 'About us' section of our website.

ACADEMY UPDATE

Shortly before Christmas last year, the governors decided in favour of Hotwells Primary School converting to an Academy.

This decision followed a full parent and staff consultation process and an extensive review of the pros and cons of Academy status. Out of these discussions two main benefits became clear. Firstly, following parents concerns regarding the financial stability of 'going it alone' for such a small school, the governors conducted a full assessment that confirmed that academy conversion was financially sustainable and should enable greater financial flexibility, particularly when the school works in partnership with other academies in our area.

Secondly, the affect academy status would have on the

teaching and learning at the school was discussed. In particular, Annie Butler and the senior leadership team reviewed the new curriculum which is due to be taught in grant-maintained schools from September 2014. It became clear that the new curriculum will have a significant effect on how teachers at Hotwells Primary School teach and the content of their lessons.

At present the school teaches a very successful creative, skills-based curriculum.

The new curriculum is much more prescriptive and could compromise the creative input of our teachers. Whilst Academy schools do still have to teach within the framework of the national curriculum, they enjoy a far greater level of freedom regarding how it is taught. The majority of governors and staff therefore felt that converting to an Academy would help to

protect the school's current ethos and its core teaching values.

An important part of the academy conversion process is the drafting of a School Charter which will enshrine the school's core values and principles. All the staff have been involved in drafting this Charter which really encapsulates what makes Hotwells Primary School so special and we hope to be able to share it with parents for your thoughts and input very shortly.

The conversion process is running smoothly so far, and we are hoping, all being well, to be able to officially complete the process by the beginning of April. Further updates on our progress will be in the weekly newsletter and the governor team would be happy to talk to any parents who have questions about the Academy conversion process.

YOUR GOVERNORS

The role of the governing body is crucial for the effective leadership and management of the school.

The governing body complements the professional leadership of our head teacher and senior staff by bringing a range of perspectives to bear on issues facing the school.

We have four committees; Finance & Resources and Teaching & Learning Standards meet once a term.; Pay meets once a year and the Academy Working Group is meeting as required during the conversion period. We also hold a Full Governors Meeting six times each year.

Your current governors are:

Eddie Harding (chair),
Annie Butler (head teacher)
George Gibberd (vice-chair)
Jo Eades
Lisa Clarke
Laura Hifle
Elizabeth Vance
Jon Little
Rob Logan
Matt Edwards
Amanda Bleach
Kirsty Barnes
Gina Channell

There are two regular observers from the school staff, Alison Lambert (deputy head) and Patsy Lawrence (business manager). Our clerk is Paula Parker. You'll find photos of all the governors on the noticeboard in the school entrance hall and on the website.

GREEN UPDATE (FROM P3) from the Council, if any at all.

We would really appreciate parental support with this process in terms of expertise in grounds maintenance and particularly with securing sponsorship from local companies.

If you have any contacts, questions, comments or fundraising ideas please could you hand them into the office marked FAO the Green Working Party.



COMMUNICATION

Good communication is vital to our school and we have tried to make it as easy as possible to stay in touch:

In person: If you just need a quick word, please feel free to approach your class teacher at the start or end of each school day.

If you would like a bit more time to discuss something in particular you may like to book some time with your teacher to suit you both. If you would like to meet with our head teacher, Annie Butler you can pop into the school office and make an appointment.

Email: This is a great way for you to contact the school office, your teacher or the head teacher. Martine in the office will always forward your emails confidentially to the intended recipient.

hotwellsp@bristol.gov.uk

By phone: One of the office staff will always be available to answer your query, pass on a message or arrange a good time for your teacher to call you back.

0117 903 0044

Text: Tell us your mobile number and we'll keep you informed of all urgent or important messages by text.

Website: We've got a great website that is kept right up to date. Please visit it regularly to see the latest pictures of school trips, term dates, spelling tests, and class work. There's opportunity for you to feedback on there too.

Post: Our address is:

Hotwells Primary School
Hope Chapel Hill
Bristol
BS8 4ND

School closure notices:

During extreme snowy weather you will be notified of our school closure by one, or all of these: local radio announcements, a message on the school website or a text message.