



Upper Beeding Primary School

Governing Body

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Chair: Mrs C Willmott

Clerk: Miss L Brown

Tuesday 15th December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Governing Body Newsletter Autumn 2020

I'm writing to you on behalf of the school Governing Body who work in a strategic way to support the school in delivering the very best education for your children. We said a tearful goodbye to the wonderful Neil Pringle in the summer as he hung his Chair of Governor's hat up. Now it is my turn to take the baton, and wow what a start it has been!

Never have I felt so strongly that the staff deserve a good rest. It has been a monumental term, getting all children back into class after rather a long break away for many of them. I am pleased to say that this has been done with excellent care and precision, allowing the children not only to return to their classrooms, but to continue to excel in their learning too.

I know Mrs Linford and the staff are exceptionally proud of how all of the children have coped during these tricky times, and they are also very grateful for the support you have provided in this.

Covid-19

Mrs Linford and the staff have worked tirelessly behind the scenes, writing risk assessments and altering routines in order to create a safe environment for children and staff. Whilst it has been important to have rigorous hygiene and cleaning routines in place, this has been balanced with the need to keep things as familiar as possible for the children. The Governors haven't been able to visit the school building this term which feels very unusual to us, but through our many Zoom meetings with different staff members, we are reassured that the children are certainly getting on with school life just as they always do. Mrs Linford did such a thorough job of preparing Upper Beeding's reopening to all children after the lockdown that she has been asked to support other schools in doing so. As previously, this helps to bring more funds in so we have a better chance of balancing our very tight budget which Mrs O'Hara in the office does an excellent job of!

Governors have been able to meet virtually with school leaders and teachers in order to gain a picture of what is going on in school at the moment, and monitor the use of funding which is designed to help children get back to where they need to be in their learning after lockdown.

Wellbeing

Staff and pupil wellbeing are of paramount importance at Upper Beeding. It is also currently high on government agenda and so it's important, now more than ever, that Governors monitor this well. We are making sure that we ask the right questions of staff and pupils to ensure everyone is supported and happy. Whilst tiredness clearly creeps in, particularly at this time of year, attendance figures and low staff sickness levels speak for themselves. We are told by staff that they feel supported and know who to turn to if they are experiencing stress, concern about something, or feeling over loaded. Children have also indicated that they enjoy school and certainly know which adults they can approach if they have worries. Through our rigorous questioning we have been reassured



that staff are proactive in spotting the signs of a child who may be experiencing difficulties, and the school has robust systems in place to trigger support. We will continue to monitor the wellbeing of all staff and pupils into what could prove to be an interesting New Year!

Staff Workload

Staff workload is an issue that has faced teachers for many years, but has been more at the forefront of thinking over the last couple of years. Upper Beeding has an excellent staff retention level, but Governors are always keeping an eye on staff workload levels and it remains high on our agenda. Previously, data collections have been reduced and the marking and feedback of children's work has been overhauled in order to remain focused and talk to the children about their learning rather than feel the need to write too much, in turn reducing workload for teachers. Governors have found that this continues to be the case and, as a result, staff do feel their workload in that area has been reduced, and children continue to make progress and know where they are in their learning.

School Funding

As ever, balancing the budget has been something of a skill this year, but with careful and considerate use, it has balanced once again. Lots of West Sussex schools continue to be in a tricky situation where budget is concerned, but we remain fortunate to have income through the school support work undertaken by Mrs Linford.

Supporting Charities

Despite the Covid-19 restrictions, Governors have been impressed at how UBPS has still been able to continue supporting chosen charities. At the beginning of the term we saw the children wearing their jeans in school for the day to raise money for Jeans for Genes and taking part in Children in Need. As well as this, they supported Mr Moule in his Movember campaign and, once again, all of the children donned their reindeer antlers and raised valuable funds for Chestnut Tree house with their annual reindeer run. It is always so lovely to hear the Christmas music blasting across the playground!

Music

What a shame it is that the usual musical festivities, including the wonderful Christmas nativities, weren't able to go ahead this year. Another reminder of how different times are right now. However, Governors have been most impressed at the ingenuity and fabulous ideas that the teachers have come up with in order for it to still really feel like Christmas for the children. They were still able to sing their Christmas songs outside on the playground; Christmas parties and end of term celebrations will still be taking place within bubbles; and all children will have the opportunity to have the much-loved Christmas lunch, with a Christmas cracker kindly donated by FUBS. The O2 is another big event in the calendar that isn't able to happen this year, but here's hoping we can get back to these wonderful events sometime next year. I know Mrs Wellby is keeping her fingers crossed for this!

It just remains for me to thank all of you for supporting the school so well this term, especially if you had to go back to home schooling and try out Google Classroom for the first time! A huge thank you also to FUBS who have continued to come up with amazing fundraising ideas despite not having the usual fetes and fundraisers. The children have loved being involved in the various events. This fundraising is vital for school, and your continued support is very much appreciated.

Wishing you all a wonderful, if slightly quieter, Christmas and we look forward to more school excitement in January.

Best wishes

Coralie Willmott

