



Upper Beeding Primary School

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Tuesday 17th December 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

Governing Body Newsletter Autumn 2019

I'm writing to you on behalf of the school Governors who support the school in delivering the very best education for your children. It's been another busy (and rather long!) term and staff and children deserve a good rest over Christmas. We wanted to update you on some of the wider issues affecting the school, though once again I'm pleased to say that Upper Beeding Primary School is in a strong position, well led, with excellent and committed staff, a rich curriculum, and with confident and well-behaved children.

Supporting Local Schools

The Governors are delighted that the school continues to be rated as "Outstanding" by external assessors. Our status means that we are regularly visited by teachers from other schools who come to observe the best practice here. It also means that our school leaders are able to go out and help other schools in West Sussex which need support. We know that our primary responsibility is to children here, but in many ways helping other schools has a positive impact on our school. It gives our team the opportunity to take on new challenges and responsibilities which can make them even more effective here. This external work also brings much needed income into the school budget so that we are able to maintain staffing levels. We see our external work as beneficial for the school.

Staff Workload

One of the big issues facing education at the moment is that too many teachers are leaving the profession. Stress and workload are two of the main reasons. At Upper Beeding Primary School, we don't have a high turnover of teachers, but Governors are keen that staff have a good work life balance. This term, Governors met with the Head to talk about the ways that the school is facing this challenge. We have discussed the amount of data which needs to be collected on pupil progress and how feedback can be best delivered verbally and on-the-spot rather than through comments in books. As Governors, we want to be satisfied that any changes are sensible and will not adversely affect children. Next term, Governors will be meeting with staff to ask them about the impact of the changes that have been made.

Ofsted Changes

Ofsted is the organisation which goes into a school to assess its performance. We were last examined in 2015 when we were given the best rating possible – outstanding. Governors expect that inspectors will return to the school in the next academic year as the government have signalled that outstanding schools should be seen as regularly as other schools to check they are still at the top of their game. This year, Ofsted have revised the way they inspect schools giving a much stronger emphasis on "The Quality of Education". They still want to see excellent progress in reading, writing and maths but they will be looking at the all-round education too, a broad range of foundation subjects and things like art, music, and sport. Governors believe the school is in a good position as we have always celebrated a broad and rich curriculum which gives children lots of different ways to shine. However, the school team is reflecting on this area during the current academic year and Governors will be supporting the Head and subject leaders in this work.



School Funding

It seems no Governor newsletter would be complete without talking about money! At the risk of boring you, I'm afraid the picture is still not good. Most schools in West Sussex are struggling to balance their budgets and we are no exception. As already mentioned, we are in a better situation than most because the school is able to bring in income through its school support work, without which we would almost certainly be contemplating reducing staff numbers, something which would directly impact on the children. On a more optimistic note, all parties during the election have promised to put more money into education. Now we have a new government we will have to wait for the budget to see whether some of those promises materialise. Campaigners for better funding point out that schools have suffered significantly during austerity and that it will take a lot of new investment to bring us back to where we were a decade ago. We will keep you informed of progress and continue to bring you updates from the WorthLess campaign organised by head teachers in West Sussex and across the country.

Supporting Charities

The Governors are immensely proud of the way the children, parents and the school have supported so many different charities this term:- The reindeer run for Chestnut Tree House hospice for children; Movember; Children in Need; and the Connor Saunders Foundation. Our partnership with Connors 5 has worked both ways. We have raised money for their work and we were also the recipient of the Foundation's 100th school defibrillator donation. The charity also gave the children some excellent hands-on first aid tuition, and talked to our older children about their message that actions taken in anger can change lives. We will continue to work with this excellent local foundation – you can read more about them online. <https://www.connors5.com/>

Sport and Music

The school has once again been recognised for the excellent range of sporting opportunities with another Gold Sports Award. The school's aim is for all children to find a sport they love which is why there are so many different opportunities. We want to play our part in keeping children healthy. Well done to all the children who have represented the school and a special mention to the rugby team who did so well at the recent rugby festival. We will also be working on another Artsmark award which reflects the work of the children's music, performance and art. I hope you have been able to enjoy some of the performances this term - from the adorable "Baa Baa Bethlehem to this year's Harvest Festival for senior residents of the village. A special mention goes to the boys' vocal group, 'The Backbeatz', for winning Choir of the Year at the Arun Young Musicians Festival.

Finally, a special thank you to you for supporting the school. Whether you are a member of our brilliant parent group FUBS (raising money for projects which otherwise we wouldn't be able to afford); whether you help out in the school with reading or with school trips; or simply being a taxi service so children can attend the many events on offer - the school couldn't do it without you.

Have a wonderful Christmas and a great break so the children are up for another exciting term in the new year.

Best wishes



Neil Pringle
Chair of Governors



