

# Governor Grapevine: Autumn Term Report 2018

## Woodstock CE Primary School



Firstly, a very Happy New Year 2019 to all as we take our look back over the Autumn Term.

This term had a real sense of new beginnings as Governors met both informally in September to get set up for a successful year of working together as a team, and formally at the end of November to review and make progress on the commitments for 2018-19. This report gives you an update on those and a look ahead to what is to come in 2019.

Although early in the school year, the Autumn Term report 2018 reflects more than just a term of focus, with one piece of news in particular that celebrates a whole decade of shaping the school and delivering on the commitments of its vision with Nurture at its heart. More to follow....

It is also a time of change as we welcomed new staff members, bringing fresh eyes, their individual skills and talents and personal aspirations to complement the strong team.

As always if you want to find out more about what we as Governors do, who is on the team to represent you, or about some of the plans in place for the school, please do get in touch.

## News

### Admissions 2018/19 and beyond

Ahead of applications timings for admissions into Reception, we were aware that across the County, and indeed locally, birth rates affecting this year's intake were significantly down on previous years and therefore admissions were projected to be lower than in previous years. The school has consistently been over-subscribed even within catchment, and very attractive to parents outside of catchment, making places highly sought-after. For the first time we began the school year with places still available, and although these places are being taken up, we discussed as governors the need to continue to plan for tomorrow's mid-term expected growth in school age children – particularly as the housing provision within the local plan is confirmed.

We met with the Country Council to understand the latest position on the potential for future expansion of education provision in Woodstock. Whilst as Governors we unanimously rejected the proposal within the application for 300 houses, which was to use the WUFA site for school expansion and loose the playing fields to a multi-use games area, we have agreed to a Country Council preliminary site visit to assess viability of any kind of future expansion that would not compromise our current position. Governors and the SLT remain committed to the school enabling education for all within the community, but equally to develop the school only in a way that has positive impact.

### Success in our Teaching School Bid for Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF) monies to support 17 Oxfordshire schools

We were delighted to hear news at the very end of the Summer Term that the application made for Round 3 of the Strategic School Improvement Fund was successful! This is a major achievement given that only two bids in the region were successful and the DfE has ended the SSI Fund having spent just £56m of the allocated £140m.

This has meant as a Teaching School we have secured just over £150,000 to support 17 Oxfordshire Primary Schools to improve standards in writing. We are excited about the opportunity to lead this work as part of OTSA (Oxfordshire Teaching School Alliance) and in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council.

## Highlights of the Term

This term there have been three key highlights we are sharing, that are all linked through a common thread of our vision and how it comes to life in practise:

### 1) **Evolving our Christian Vision & ethos**

Our Christian vision has always underpinned our ethos, values and aims, as well as guided our practise in delivering the highest quality of education to all children, as unique and valued individuals. 'Nurture-Believe-Discover-Achieve' has been a very deliberate central focus with the progress children make being directly linked to their wellbeing, self-belief and creating engaging opportunities to discover, learn and grow. As governors we use our vision to guide our strategic aspirations, and to underpin the way the school operates.

This year we have been working on evolving our vision in line with the newly published Church of England Vision for Education and to reflect what is needed to support children now and in the future, given the different and ever-changing pressures of a modern world. Our core values have not changed but we have built in language and aims that better link to some of the strands of emotional wellbeing that are developing out of our practise.

We reviewed and adopted our updated vision at our autumn meeting. We believe it reflects what is visible in school life as experienced by staff and children, and sets an aspiration for the future. We hope you agree. Our updated Christian vision can be found on our website using the link below:

<http://www.woodstock.oxon.sch.uk/page/?title=Our+Christian+Vision%2C+Ethos+%26amp%3B+Values&pid=43>

### 2) **Achievement of the national 'Wellbeing Award for Schools'**

In-line with the Christian Vision shared above, Nurture and Believe have always been the foundations on which Woodstock CE Primary has built in order to support and enable all children to thrive –as unique individuals, as life-long learners, and as part of a strong and caring community. This has been a priority over the last decade and is visible in the fabric of the school.

However, for the past two years we have been working even harder to ensure effective practice and provision is in place that promotes the emotional wellbeing and mental health of both staff and pupils. We recognise the fact that children today face new challenges – such as the demands of 24-hour connectivity, the risk of cyber-bullying, changing family dynamics, and increasing pressure to do well.

Research has shown that these pressures are resulting in a rising tide of mental health issues amongst the young. Having seen an increase in the number of children in school with concerns around their mental health and wellbeing, it became apparent that we needed to further create a culture of resilience and good mental wellbeing. In 2016 the decision was taken by senior leaders and governors to work toward the achievement of the 'Wellbeing Award for Schools' and use the rigorous criteria needed to gain the Award to guide what we do.

In the final week of the Autumn Term we welcomed an Assessor into school for a day to look at our practice around promoting and protecting positive emotional wellbeing and mental health. During the day, the Assessor toured the school to see our work in action, scrutinised a range of evidence and spoke with groups of children, staff, parents and governors. She was extremely complimentary of all that she saw, and had no hesitation in confirming that we had been successful. She also took away many examples of best practise and encouraged us to share as widely as possible the work we have done and the evident impact it is having.

*“Woodstock CE Primary School is a wonderful, welcoming, nurturing and happy school. It is a school where the wellbeing of staff, pupils and parents is paramount. Because of this, the whole school community feels highly valued and involved. It is very clear that Wellbeing is an integral part of the school vision and ethos (Nurture-Believe-Discover-Achieve) and this is evident through the longstanding nurture programme, the provision of activities and the impact on the emotional wellbeing and mental health of pupils.”*

The governors, senior leaders and staff are extremely proud of all our awards, and importantly what we learn and adopt by going through the work in the lead up to application and assessment. However, this award was particularly special in that it validated how much emphasis is placed on wellbeing of every child and member of staff within the school community. Governors would like to thank Craig McKay and Lisa Rowe, as well as the staff and parents whose expertise we have been so fortunate to draw on.

### 3) Celebrating progress and achievement

In the Autumn Term the final data becomes available on how we as a school benchmark against the National and County average and against like schools – not just on progress and attainment but on how we invest our resources to get the best impact for all. As a school, our focus is always on the progress, potential and enjoyment of learning for every individual child and these benchmarks are not measures of that but they have a valid role to play given we, as a maintained schools, are measured through statutory assessment.

As Governors, we are very pleased that across the board from Early Years, Y1 Phonics, KS1 SATs to Year 6 SATs, the school has again achieved outstanding results and benchmarked considerably ahead of Local Authority and the National average. KS2 results were very strong, with 15-20% more children achieving expected standard or better in Reading, Writing, and Grammar than within the national average of schools. In Maths our performance vs national benchmark was 7% higher. Pleasingly the number of children achieving greater depth across all four areas of Reading, Writing, Maths and Grammar was 29% vs a national average of 9%. We continue to monitor progress as the key measure of success and ensure that expected progress is being made by all children.

These are amazing achievements the teachers, parents and most importantly the children themselves should feel very proud of. All of the results can be found on the school website following the link below:

<http://www.woodstock.oxon.sch.uk/page/?title=School+Performance+%26amp%3B+Reports&pid=19>

## Raising Achievement Plan Progress

Governors continue to work together with members of staff to achieve priorities aimed at taking the school forward. Whilst early in the year, progress is being made against all areas of the RAP. This term we are highlighting progress against 2 areas of the RAP.

### Teaching, Learning & Assessment

**Target 2.2** Continue to develop children’s comprehension skills with a particular focus on extending the use and understanding of ambitious vocabulary. (Jennie Isherwood; Anne Hipwell; Governor, Anna Watkinson)

*“Vocabulary breadth and depth are two of the most important factors in helping pupils to understand what they read and to express themselves effectively as mature learners.”*

This target focuses on enabling teachers to have a sharper focus on developing a broad and enriched vocabulary in order to further enhance pupils’ understanding and achievement in all aspects of English, and within the broader curriculum. In the Autumn Term, time was spent looking at our baseline across the year groups and giving teachers a good understand of the benefits of expanding children’s vocabulary and the best way to approach this. Resources for classrooms – including some inspiring books that take known words and

give a broad and imaginative collection of alternatives, all beautifully illustrated – were purchased for teachers to use. Actions and impact will be measured over the course of the next term.

### **Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare**

**Target 3.2 Put children's rights at the heart of Woodstock CE Primary School to empower pupils to be active global citizens and encourage courageous advocacy.** (Janine Coaker and Sally Rees; Governor, Pete Savage)

This is a newer area of focus within the RAP and one intended 'to ensure that with relation to their personal development, behaviour and welfare, children will have a broader understanding of their rights to a safe and inspiring place to learn, where they are respected, their talents are nurtured, and they are able to thrive.' Part of this is securing firstly the knowledge and understanding of the children on what this means and then giving them a voice to influence how we progress how we do this in Woodstock CE Primary. In the Autumn Term some Year 5 pupils visited a 'Rights Respecting School' to learn more and see elements in action which was a good way to bring it to life. A plan is being developed which will be worked on in more depth over the coming months.

### **Governor Committee News**

Over the course of the year we share headlines from the three key committee meetings, to provide more understanding into the work of the Health & Safety, Finance & Personnel, and Curriculum Committees. This term we will give headlines from Finance & Personnel but also detail on Music Provision – an item raised and reviewed at the Curriculum Committee following input and interest from a group of parents.

#### **Finance & Personnel Committee Headlines – Autumn Term**

The school's finances remain in a positive position as a result of strong financial management practices. We have now reached the point as a school where our budget is fixed as we have reached our maximum intake of 45 per year group, and admissions are important to maintain.

We continue to invest the vast majority of our budget (>70%) on teaching staff which is a clear benefit and commitment as it gives us the quality and breadth we need to deliver a diverse curriculum, but it's also a limiter to discretionary funding. We continue to choose to support sport, music and the arts, Forest Schools and swimming tuition over and above the level outlined in the curriculum but believe these choices contribute to our overall success as a school and the range of opportunities we can offer.

Beyond the budget, governors supported needed changes to the request and payment system for after-school clubs and school lunches to eliminate the current level of late payments or debt, the school is carrying risk against. These changes will also alleviate admin and make it quicker and easier for parents and office staff to manage both of these areas. Changes came into force immediately with selections and payments for Spring Term after-school clubs. Early feedback has been positive on maintaining fairness and equal opportunities whilst putting in place these changes.

#### **Curriculum Committee – Music provision**

As part of the Curriculum Committee agenda a discussion was had about music provision in-line with the National Curriculum, and the enhancement opportunities we offer for children to take aspects of music forward beyond the curriculum, for example through after-school clubs, instrument tuition or attendance at/participation in performances. Governors were supportive of the current broad approach taken in KS1 that covers all aspects of music, composition, voice and a range instruments, and supported the ongoing funding for clarinet for children in Years 3 and 4 but agreed that providing greater opportunities after-school would

always be welcome. A group of parents have given their support to bring singing and potentially instrument tuition into the after-school clubs offer if interest is there. Full details of music and arts provision is provided as part of the curriculum maps on the school website if you are interested to learn more.

## Diary Dates

One of our critical priorities as a school is keeping children safe online. We are the only primary school in Oxfordshire to be E-safety accredited for the work we do to educate and protect children in using technology. In the Spring Term we will be recognising National Safer Internet Day on 5 February when we will work together as children, staff, parents and governors with the latest guidance from CEOP, to keep at the forefront of this important topic.

Over the last few years we have been fortunate to have 70-100 parents join us for the afternoon to hear from their children on what they have learned and to get input from 'experts' – ICT leads and older children – about what's important to know as a parent in helping children navigate this. This year we are again planning to have Chris Hall, Deputy Head and E-safety Lead for The Marlborough School, along with a number of students to share their perspectives on growing up with technology as such a big part of their lives, and what it means to them to be active on social media and the internet whilst being ever mindful of the risks. We also plan to run sessions that give parents the tools (in the form of Apps, controls, settings, and guidance) to have the right conversations with the children and make choices together about the protections to apply as they become increasingly savvy with gaming, mobile devices and social platforms.

Please put this date in your diary:

**Safer Internet Day –5th February 2019**                      **1.30pm – 3.00pm**

## Your feedback

If you have any feedback on this termly report or there are questions you would like us to answer through it, please pass on via the school office.

We hope that the New Year started well and look forward to seeing you over the course of the spring term.

Best regards

All the Governors of Woodstock CE Primary