



Leading Our School

A Newsletter from the Leadership

Issue 8 - July 2014

Ofsted 2014

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After a period of transition, we are back on track, balancing care, guidance and support with high academic standards and good progress in all areas of the curriculum. Whilst Ofsted inspections are a snapshot in time, they provide useful external validation of the regular monitoring and oversight being undertaken by Hertfordshire Local Authority and the governing body.

Having worked tirelessly to bring about school improvement at Grove Road, we were very pleased with the recent Ofsted evalua-

tion of the school. In all of the key areas Ofsted judged the school to be securely good, with many elements of excellence in the teaching, leadership, behaviour and safety. The staff are rightly very proud of what has been achieved, having worked hard to balance the drive for improvement with ensuring that the children still enjoy their learning.

The report was very clear about the good relationships that teachers and teaching assistants have with their classes, which contributes to the ethos of care and pastoral support

that has underpinned the improvements in academic standards across the school as well as the outstanding pupil safety judgement.

The report also acknowledged the fierce ambition of leaders to drive further improvement, and plans are already underway for the next phase in school improvement. Going forward governors will be working with the school to enhance the leadership structure, building the roles of Middle and Senior Leaders to further promote improvements in teaching and to share their expertise more widely.

Their First Taste of Leadership - comments from our outgoing House Captains

We met with the Year 6 House Captains to find out what this year has been like for them. What did they get out of being House Captains, and did they make a difference? This is what they said:

Making positive changes

“It’s really nice to have your say if there’s something you want to change”.

“We helped choose the new playground equipment this year. We also chose which charities we wanted to support, as well as the fundraising activities”.

Sense of community

“It’s been really fun, almost

like being a member of staff! Smaller children come to us for guidance in the playground”.

“The House Forums have helped children to make friends outside of their class groups”.

“I’ve really enjoyed the experience with younger children. They ask us if they would make good House Captains, and ask our opinion on things. They look up to us. It makes you feel more important than just Year 6”.

“I love it when the little kids come up to me and tell me they’ve gone on the shooting star!”

Leadership

“Being a House Captain has really boosted my confidence. I was worried about public speaking before”.

“I’ve really enjoyed this extraordinary experience. I’ve built a relationship

with the members of my house. They see me as a role model, someone to look up to. I feel I’ve given them a voice”.



National Testing & End of Key Stage Results

The data for 2014 shows continued improvements in attainment and progress across the school. Every cohort of children is different and they will make progress at different rates. However, the end of Key Stage assessments are used as an indicator of success over time, with attainment and progress measures being used to make national comparisons.

This is an early view of the data available, and full analysis will be published by the school in the Autumn term. Attainment at the end of both Key Stages is above the national averages in Reading, Writing and Maths particularly for the percentage exceeding age related expectations. The children have made excellent progress, with many exceeding the progress expected by the end of Year 6. Maths remains a focus for the school, with a focus in 2014/15 on problem solving and mathematical enquiry.

Year 1 Phonics Screening

89% of the pupils in Year 1 passed the phonics screening check (86% in 2013) which is well above the national average of 69%

In Year 2 100% of pupils have now passed the screening check, compared to a national average of 85%

KS1 (Year 2)	Reading 2013	Reading 2014	Writing 2013	Writing 2014	Maths 2013	Maths 2014
L2C+ Just into age related	97%	100%	95%	95%	97%	100%
L2B+ Securely age related	83%	95%	68%	83%	75%	93%
L3C+ Exceeding age related	32%	44%	15%	34%	25%	37%

KS2 (Year 6)	Reading 2013	Reading 2014	Writing 2013	Writing 2014	Maths 2013	Maths 2014
L4+ Age related expectations	100%	98.0%	98.0%	99.0%	86.0%	89.0%
L5+ Above age related	51.0%	64.4%	44.0%	55.6%	44.0%	53.3%
L6 Well above age related	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	2.2%	9.0%	9.0%
Expected Progress (2 levels from KS1)	91.0%	98.0%	100%	100%	82.0%	91.0%

Parent Survey 2014 - Results

Thank you to those who took the time to complete the parent survey. We very much appreciate your views and use the results to inform our planning. In general, satisfaction levels are high, and in almost all areas results are better than last year. Headline results are as follows:

Number of surveys completed: 68

The following areas show an improvement in satisfaction compared with last year:

- I am kept well informed about school activities and receive enough information generally about the school** – 94% agree compared with 89% last year, with 54% strongly agreeing (47% in 2013).
- The school gives parents a clear indication of what is taught and how** – 97% agree compared with 83% last year. The percentage of those who strongly agree has nearly doubled, from 21% in 2013, to 41% this year.
- Communication about my child's attainment and progress has improved** – 85% agree, compared with 79% last year. The percentage of those who strongly agree has more than doubled, from 23% in 2013 to 51% this year.
- My child is making good progress in school** – 94% agree (41% strongly), compared with 90% last year (38% strongly).
- The Behaviour Policy at school is working well, including the Behaviour Ladder and Blue Sky Playtime** – 81% agree (49% strongly), compared with 68% last year (37% strongly).

In some areas, satisfaction levels are similar to last year, but more of you *strongly agree* with certain statements:

- I understand the steps that the school is taking to continue to improve** – 63% strongly agree compared with 47% last year. Overall agreement level is still high at 94%.
- I have been kept informed about the progress the school is making** – 68% strongly agree compared with 47% last year. Overall agreement level is still high at 97%.
- The school has a happy and welcoming atmosphere** – 75% strongly agree, compared with 61% last year. Overall agreement level is similar to last year (96%, compared with 98% in 2013).
- The school seeks and takes account of the views of parents** – 57% strongly agree, compared with 33% last year. Overall agreement is similar to last year (85% compared with 83% in 2013).
- The school is helping my child become mature and responsible** – 53% strongly agree compared with 44% last year. Overall agreement is similar to last year (93% compared with 92% in 2013).
- My child enjoys being part of the House System at school** – 60% strongly agree compared with 50% last year. Overall agreement is up from 81% last year to 90%.
- Teaching at the school is good** – 47% strongly agree compared with 36% last year. Overall agreement level is similar, 94% this year, compared with 93% last year.
- I feel we are part of a successful school** – 69% strongly agree, compared with 54% last year. Overall agreement level remains at 94%.

In a couple of areas results showed a downward shift:

- I feel that my child enjoys attending and being part of the school** – 91% agree, compared with 98% last year. *However the Ofsted Parent View online survey, completed by 145 parents, showed that 98% of parents agree that 'my child is happy at school'.*
- If there is a problem my child knows who to talk to and feels listened to** – 76% agree, compared with 83% last year, although a higher percentage strongly agree (41% compared with 38% last year). *Ofsted reported that 'pupils feel safe and are confident to seek help, should they need it from any adult in school'.*

We have many measures in place to help your child feel they can talk to an adult - from the emphasis on confidence and independence through our Learning Habits, to circle time and high adult ratios in the playground. If playtimes are presenting particular challenges for your child and they need help navigating social situations (sharing, negotiating, friendship dynamics, team games), staff are there to help and class teachers can offer guidance. Please come and talk to us about any specific issues.

Many thanks again for giving us your feedback. We are delighted that 97% of you would recommend our school to another parent (*Ofsted Parent View May 2014*). If you have any specific concerns throughout the year, please don't wait for the parent survey to air your view, come and talk to us so that any issues can be resolved.

A full summary of survey responses can be found on the school website.

Some of our highlights of the year



Year 2 took part in the Jamie Oliver World Food Challenge to break a world record.



Nursery had a new arrival in June; a chick, hatched out of an egg they were looking after from Aldenham Country Park.

As part of their life cycles work, Reception looked after caterpillars, which became chrysalises, which then became beautiful butterflies!



Year 3 made magic potions in maths, inspired by their work on Macbeth in literacy!





We raised £835 for the Pepper Foundation by dressing in pink and purple (the foundation's colours) and holding a cake sale!



Year 6 enjoyed their trip to PGL in May... raft building and trying out a climbing wall, as well as lots of other activities.

A 'Vikings day' involved Year 4 dressing up and taking part in a range of activities, finding out what it might have been like to live in Viking times.



A busy and enjoyable year, we think you'll agree!

New curriculum

From September 2014 there will be changes made to the National Curriculum (the statutory programme of study that sets out what your child learns).

The Government's guidance on the curriculum for literacy, maths and science is detailed and prescriptive, giving learning year-by-year, and we are taking account of these changes in our September planning. Hertfordshire LA is producing a range of materials to support the planning and teaching of literacy, maths and science, and we will make use of these documents to supplement the new National Curriculum. The expectations in maths and literacy have been raised slightly for each year group. In the autumn term we will be giving further details of how these expectations may affect your child (for example which Year groups are expected to be learning particular number facts). Parents can download a copy of the new

national guidance (entitled 'Primary National Curriculum Sept 13' from the school website under 'Learning and Curriculum'). The 'Sept 13' denotes the date of publication.

Foundation Subjects

For subjects other than literacy, maths and science, the guidance is very broad. In this instance the challenge for the school is to make the subjects **engaging, creative, relevant and exciting**, and this is our focus. We will be working hard to ensure that the subject matter is meaningful to children and brought to life in a way that makes it memorable.

There is always a balance to be struck between the subject matter that is covered (i.e. the **knowledge and skills** gained through maths, English, D&T, music, art P.E. etc.) and the **attributes of learning** (such as the four learning habits: communication, curiosity, independence, determina-

tion). We focus on both. **We want our children to make progress and enjoy their learning.**

Monitoring Progress

Where there is very little guidance given in the new curriculum on progression (how a child needs to progress through various skills within a given subject), we are working hard to fill those gaps. Each subject will have its own progression map, showing the levels of knowledge a child will need to achieve, and the skills they will need to attain in any given year. Each year group will also have termly curriculum maps, which break down what will be covered in each subject, and how the subjects weave together. These termly progression maps will be made available to parents from September 2014.

Assessment Levels (1b, 2c etc...)

The current standard

system of assessing and reporting a pupil's attainment and progress (using 1b, 2c etc.) will be changing over the course of the next year or so. However, for children moving into Years 2 and 6 in September 2014, the current system of SATs combined with teacher assessment will remain in place for their summer 2015 assessments. As yet there are no clear guidelines on how the grading system might change, but the school is working closely with Hertfordshire LA, and so is well positioned to access proposals for any revised system likely to be suggested. For now, we will therefore retain the levels we have been using, and of course keep you informed of any developments.

Should you have any questions about the new curriculum or the school's response to it, please come and talk to us.

DETERMINATION –

Will-Power the Woodpecker

- Don't be afraid to get it wrong
- Have a desire to improve
- Find a solution
- Be resilient

CURIOSITY – Colin the Curious Owl

- Be inventive
- Be open minded
- Challenge accepted views
- Take risks



Learning Habits



INDEPENDENCE – Indie the Independent Squirrel

- Take responsibility
- Use your initiative
- Be organised
- Review your own progress

COMMUNICATION – Buzzbee the Confident Communicator

- Have a voice
- Work within a team
- Value different opinions
- Listen

Pupils have their say

As part of the 'Pupil voice' activities carried out regularly, a group of 3 Governors visited the school on Friday 27th June to interview a selection of children from Year 1 to Year 6 to gather their perspective on a range of areas. We asked questions around: marking, behaviour, safety, Home Learning grids, Learning Habits and ICT. These reflected areas captured in the parent and pupil surveys earlier this term and also gave a chance for further discussion.

In discussions with the pupils, it is clear that the marking policy is consistently used throughout all year groups and all the children provided examples of how they had improved and developed their work following on from the developmental/green comments in their books.

From their comments it was also noticeable the significant positive impact the House System and House

Points, as well as the Learning Habits, are having on their effort and commitment. They all gave examples of how receiving House Points made them feel and provided examples of how they had used the Learning Habits both in lessons and outside school and they were confidently using the descriptors of these habits in their responses.

With the Behaviour Policy, we were provided with excellent examples which demonstrated that it is used consistently throughout the school and if anything, the children felt that for 'repeat offenders', the deterrents needed to be harsher. The school is already in the process of putting strategies in place, for example to address where pupils are regularly missing some of their Blue Sky Playtime.

They all love the 'Shooting Star' award at the top of the behaviour ladder in

each class, with one child stating that when they received theirs they wanted school to finish earlier so they could share it with their parents. Some pupils did however feel that it was not awarded frequently enough with some children not receiving it during this academic year.

Teachers have recently been discussing the Behaviour Policy to ensure it is used to best effect. All the children feel safe and happy at school and know who to talk to if something happens which is inappropriate.

Regarding Home Learning, the children state that they liked the flexibility, creativity and variety of the grids and in particular the 'family week' which they found very useful when they had a busy weekend. We established that the grids were providing the right level of challenge for the children and were also providing opportunities to

apply the Learning Habits.

ICT was a topic that the children got excited about and said that they have had lots of opportunities to use the laptops in lessons but less so the iPads as yet. This is partly due to the laptops being available most of this academic year and having 48 of them, whilst we have only had the 16 iPads since Easter. The school is looking into how we can source more iPads, for example through grant funding, and will update parents as appropriate.

It was a pleasure to spend time with your children who were all very honest and mature, providing thoughtful responses, ideas and suggestions.



Our School

A view
from the air
June 2014



Our governing body was joined earlier this year by two new eager and enthusiastic Parent Governors. Here they are:



Helen Dear

Profession: Primary School Teacher

I have recently moved to Tring, having been influenced by the friendly community feel of the area, but mainly for the local surrounding schools. I decided to place my three children at Grove Road and they are currently in Year 2, Reception and Nursery.

I wanted to become a Parent Governor to not only take an interest, but be actively involved in the learning and academic development of all children at Grove Road School.

As a teacher myself, I have always had an interest in education and wanted to bring some of my own useful experiences to the Governing Body.

I care about promoting an environment that improves abilities, but also ensures happiness and enjoyment. When I am not busy with my own children or working, I enjoy running and have recently begun to test my erratic tennis skills with some coaching.

Our new Community Governor, Marita Hopkinson will feature in our Autumn edition of this newsletter, along with our new members of staff.



Catherine Pyefinch

I joined the governing body as parent governor in February and have been enjoying getting stuck into my role as part of the People & Communications Committee. In particular I've been writing good news stories for the press and helping to shape how Grove Road is positioned in the media.

This fits nicely with my background, having worked in marketing communications for many years.

I also organise the school running club. I get a buzz from providing the children with an opportunity to run. And they buzz too! Come and see us every Wednesday morning at 8am on the field.

I have two boys at Grove: Sam in year 4 and Joseph in year 1. As a family we love to cycle together at weekends. It's just good to get outside! I love a bit of trail running, and also play flute in an amateur orchestra in Milton Keynes.

Get in Touch

Do you have something you would like to discuss further or would like us to include in future issues of this newsletter?

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If you don't wish to email, please call the school office on 01442 822056 and leave a message.

Leading our school

Leading Our School is a twice yearly email publication produced by the Governing Body and the school Leadership Team.

If you change your email address, please let the Office know asap to ensure that you continue receiving emails from school. You can email the office using admin@groveroad.herts.sch.uk

or call in next time you are at school.

