

Governor Newsletter

March 2016

Governor Changes

We welcomed Dr Wen Wang as a new parent governor last term along with Mrs Louise Jackson. Unfortunately, Mrs Jackson's family circumstances changed and she no longer felt able to hold the post. Work commitments have led to another of our parent governors, Mrs Neena Puri stepping down from her post. We would like to thank her for her contribution to the governing body. We received two nominations from parents for the two vacancies. We are pleased to announce our new parent governors are **Mr Gurmuk Singh**, parent of Joshua Badhan in Year 5 and **Miss Joanne Harvey** parent of Aston Marshall in Year 3. Miss Richards and Miss Davis have also joined us as staff governors this term.

Rev. Jeremy Oakley also resigned as a governor earlier this term when he moved to a new parish. Rev. Oakley has been a long standing friend of the school. We know the children and staff welcomed his assemblies and he enjoyed visiting Uplands and talking to the children. As a voice of the community his contribution to the governing body and the school as a whole has been invaluable. We wish him best of luck in his new parish. We hope to make further appointments to the Board of Governors from the wider community over the next few months.

What a Year So Far!

Looking back at the first half of the academic year it is evident that Uplands has been a busy and exciting place to learn. We have always been proud of the variety of experiences we offer our children and believe it enhances their learning at Uplands Junior School.

The year kicked off with a very successful Macmillan Coffee Afternoon hosted by year 6. Numerous events followed throughout the term including Black History month in October, year 3 Ancient Egyptian Day and Year 5 visit to "Safeside" to learn more on personal safety and a fabulous Diwali celebration at Bantock House. The autumn term finished with a celebration of music, singing and performances. All were very well attended.

So far this term has been equally busy. Children from Uplands represented the school in "Young Voices" at the LG Arena. This was a tremendous way to start the year and a memorable experience for all involved. There have been more trips outside of school. These include trips to a fire station and year 3 and 4 trips to the Grand Theatre. Science week was a great success culminating in an interactive display in the hall at the end of the week. Children were, as always keen to explain and demonstrate their experiments.

Uplands has a good reputation across the city for its involvement in sporting activities. We have seen enthusiastic participation in football, netball, cross country and indoor athletics plus a 'Gold' Sainsbury's School Sports Mark. Well done to all involved.

Our thanks go to the staff for all the time and effort they put in to making these events a success. Thanks also to the parents and families who continually support their children and Uplands Junior School.

Safety and Security at Upland's Junior School

You will be aware that we are implementing a number of changes to the access of the school site this term. This is part of a programme of improvements to school security and child safeguarding that governors have been considering in conjunction with the Local Authority. Your children's safety and wellbeing is always a priority for Uplands Junior School.

PARKING

In January, Mrs Webster-Smith sent a letter to parents giving notice that from Half Term there would be no parental access to the school car park. This includes drop off and pick up for Toast Club and After School Clubs. We hope you will understand the reasons for this change and adhere to our request. Our car park is small and space limited. Congestion and restricted room for manoeuvre has resulted in a number of 'near misses' with children, staff and vehicles. A number of parents and staff have understandably raised their concerns.

Unfortunately, we have also received complaints from local residents particularly at the back gate concerning the rude behaviour of some parents and their dangerous parking. Police Community Support Officers have been informed and advise residents and parents to report the car number plates of reckless and inconsiderate drivers to the 101 Police non-emergency number.

Please remember:

- **The school car park is for staff and designated visitors only**
- **Please do not be tempted to use the school drive entrance and grass verge as an alternative. This is equally dangerous.**
- **Please use neighboring residential streets and car parks. We now have a pedestrian crossing for the times when the crossing patrol warden isn't on duty.**
- **Please park safely and politely allowing residents full access to their homes and drives.**

We thank you for your support and co-operation.

DISMISSAL ARRANGEMENTS AFTER SCHOOL

As part of our review of safeguarding we are looking at dismissal arrangements at the end of school and following after school activities. One of the options we are considering is releasing children from their classroom on to the playground rather than at the school entrance and back gate. An alternative option is for class teachers to accompany pupils to the gates. Both options would give parents and teachers an informal opportunity to meet plus closer supervision of children.

We would welcome your thoughts on this or any alternative suggestion that you might have.

Leave of Absence During Term Time

In line with government guidelines issued in 2013 parents are reminded that the head teacher cannot authorise Leave of Absence, including holidays, taken in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Unauthorised term time holiday requests are referred to the Local Authority who may issue penalty notices.

Dates of the school terms and INSET days for this year and next are available on the school website to help you plan your holidays.

Priorities for Ongoing School Improvement

Every year Mrs Webster-Smith and her team in conjunction with the Board of Governors identify priorities for developing Uplands Junior School. Some of the developments might be determined by changes in education across the country such as a new national curriculum or new legislation. In the context of any national changes we have to decide on the priorities for Uplands and what we feel is key to helping the school improve overall. For this academic year, we have been focussing on the two key priorities detailed below. As governors, we regularly review progress against these priorities and are pleased with the progress made to date. There will be numerous initiatives and developments introduced throughout the year but ultimately these all help to achieve these key goals.

Continual improvement in teaching and learning

We were pleased with our SAT results for last year and continue to look at how we can further improve our teaching and learning. Last year we looked at how reading was taught in school and introduced a number of initiatives. This resulted in a marked improvement in this area. Learning from these initiatives, we are this year working to raise standards in writing across school. This priority also looks at how we can raise expectations and progress for all children particularly those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. We want to ensure that all children progress in their learning regardless of their personal challenges.

Further development of leadership and management

This priority covers a number of areas and builds on changes introduced last year particularly in relation to the new 'Age Related Expectations' system of assessment. The leadership and management of pupil progress data in relation to the new system is a significant part of this priority. This focuses us on further developing the staff's understanding of the new pupil progress tracking data and also how that data is used. Progress Data feeds in to the school reports and discussions at parent evenings. It also enables staff to identify and resolve specific barriers to a child's progress. These are referred to as teaching interventions and may be provided as 'catch-up' sessions for short periods or small group lessons over a number of weeks. Uplands' investment in teaching intervention this year includes the new Study Station, a variety of resources and staff to focus on small group teaching. Planning intervention and monitoring its impact on pupil progress is critical. We have to be sure we are getting the desired results from the teaching intervention initiatives introduced.

Organisation of School Events

We have been informed by the local authority of the maximum number of adults and children permitted in the school hall at any one time. The number of pupils at Uplands now exceeds this maximum number. Regrettably, this means that we are unable to hold whole school assemblies as we have done in the past. It also impacts on the size of audience permitted for school productions and concerts. Mrs Webster-Smith has worked hard with the Local Authority to look at ways of increasing the permitted numbers. Unfortunately, because of the school layout this has not been possible. This means we have to be creative. It gives staff an opportunity to look at how and when events are organised in the future. This may mean we use alternative venues for certain events and that some may be ticket only with restricted numbers. We welcome your suggestions and feedback.

Our School Refurbishment

Our aim is to provide our children and staff a safe and happy learning and working environment, one that enhances their experience of school life. Over the past twelve months governors have authorised refurbishment of all the classrooms.

Sinks have been replaced, rooms have been redecorated and furniture replaced. The old IT suite is now a smart Study Station providing an extra classroom for smaller group work. Communal areas such as the dining hall and reception have also been redecorated creating a more welcoming entrance to the school.

This term the library is under renovation. This is an underused space and cluttered with too many rather tired books. Working with the children and a 'Pupil Voice' activity, Mrs Beasley has been redesigning this space as a quiet reading and working area. The library is to become the new Reading Hub. Redecoration is in progress and we hope to have some of the new furniture and equipment in place later in the term.

The PTA is generously purchasing one of two new wooden framed gazebos for the playground. These will provide shaded seating at playtimes and for the After School Club plus an outside teaching area. The playground has also been remarked to further improve its use and appearance.

We continue to review IT facilities and are currently upgrading the IT network and resources.

Uplands School Governors

- Mr Dave Hughes (Chair)
- Mrs Debbie Anslow (Vice Chair)

Parent Governors

- Miss Joanne Harvey
- Mrs Sam Hicks
- Mrs Pat Perry
- Mr Gurmuk Singh
- Dr Wen Wang

Staff Governors

- Mrs Webster-Smith (Headteacher)
- Mrs Bull
- Miss Richards

Associate Governors

- Mrs Shakesheave
- Mrs Walker
- Miss Davis

You are welcome to contact governors through the school office

Thank you to the PTA

Our thanks as always to the PTA for their ongoing support, for organising events and purchasing resources for the school. We are looking forward to the new wooden gazebo they have purchased for the playground. Hopefully we will have a warm summer to make full use of it.

Our thanks also to the parents, relatives and friends of the school who donate and support the PTA fundraising events