

Hello parents, staff and any inquisitive children that have happened to stumble on this note from the Governors as we move towards Spring half-term and a well-earned break, although short, for everyone involved in Wheatcroft. My name is Rob Bexon and I am now in my fifth year helping the school achieve its ambitions. I must say I am very impressed with the advances made since my youngest started in nursery some years ago. The school has been making great strides forward so I thought I'd mention a few of the high-lights creating positives impacts and enhancements to school life.

In line with continuing statutory focus (updated legislation Sept 16) and a firm commitment by the senior management and governance team 'Safeguarding' has been at the forefront of scrutiny in recent years. The school's commitment to keeping children safe is not simply a tick-box exercise but visibly surfaces in every aspect of school life. I'm sure those who do drop-offs have seen the 'no mobile phones' signs in the playground, the new security system at reception and a general increase in information available to parents but there are many other initiatives that can slip under the radar if not mentioned. Children are encouraged to be in school earlier (at 8.45) and in their classrooms enabling them to settle and prepare for their learning in a streamlined and focussed way. Year 6 children are encouraged to monitor 'traffic' (toilet passes for example) around the school during the day helping younger children feel safer and 'smiley charts' encourage children to add a sticker to show how they are feeling, in turn helping them communicate with staff and their peers in a non-verbal, non-threatening way. This final point being incredibly important as it provides a device where children draw awareness to potentially serious situations when words or confidence in approaching an adult directly may be lacking.

Another area that has caught my eye has been the implementation of new practices in classrooms encouraging children to take responsibility for their own learning; something of huge importance in enhancing essential skills for the development of strong, confident individuals embarking on life's journey. There is much mention in early years' and Primary education today, globally, of terms such as 'mindfulness' and 'resilience'. I am not only hearing these terms at Wheatcroft I am seeing examples daily where it is embedded in the children's learning. Two such examples are the use of 'Purple Polishing Pens' in Y5 where the children take responsibility to improve their work before submitting to the teacher – a focus on the 'fun' aspect of the (essential) editing side of producing written texts while mitigating the laborious side, of which we are all too familiar I'm sure! The second is the 'Catch-up keep-up' initiative where students deposit work in red, yellow or green 'buckets'. The traffic light approach signals if a child wants extra help (red) or their level of confidence (yellow or green) in the activity completed.

Governors have been busy visiting classes as always, some highlights here:

School Council – visit 23/11/17 with year 1 and year 2 children

- The children were really aware of their role and responsibility to represent the views of all their peers because they had been elected to the role.
- They take an active part in deciding which charities would be supported by the school.
- They will be meeting local councillors to learn about different roles within the community and the impact these roles have.

Sports Premium – visit 10/11/17

- Mr Wilkie is the new lead for PE and is very enthusiastic and knowledgeable, with lots of new ideas for developing PE at Wheatcroft.

- Year 5 children will be trained in play leading to increase the participation of physical activity by all children.
- Introduction of a nutrition food club so children understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and how this impacts on sports professionals, to inspire the children to eat well.

PSHE – visit 13/10/17

- PSHE is an important part of the school and fits with the ethos and values of the school.
- The Jigsaw programme is being used to teach the same themes at the same time throughout the school at an age appropriate level.
- The PSHE lead, Miss Clarke, is new to role and has a good knowledge of the Jigsaw programme.

SEN – various visits throughout term

- New arrangement with Mrs Standon working with Mrs Tuck supporting children with SEN and their families on a day-to-day basis and liaise with external
- SEN child on the school council representing the views of SEN children in the school.
- New reading initiative implemented last year with Teaching Assistants providing focused one-to-one daily reading each afternoon for children with SEN proving amazingly productive.

Development:

- The transformation of the year 1/2 quiet room into a relaxing 'teaching and sensory room' suitable for children with SEN, or any children, needing a quiet moment to themselves

One area above having particular impact on my household is the introduction of girls' football. My daughter in Y5 is incredibly happy now this has been fully integrated in school.

Thanks for reading I hope it's useful and informative. Enjoy the half-term ... Spring is on its way!

Rob Bexon