



New Christ Church Primary School Governors Newsletter to Parents November 2007

Welcome to our first newsletter! As Governors we work in partnership with the teaching staff and are responsible for making decisions about the way the school is run. We thought that it would be useful to write to you once a term informing you of our progress and plans for the future. We hope that you enjoy reading our efforts and find them of some interest!

Best wishes, Nigel.

The Governing Body

Mr Nigel Pounds (Chair)

Mrs Judith Thurlow (Vice-chair)

Mr David Grimes

Miss Michele Bond

Miss Stacey Bowles

Mrs Serena Diment

Dr John Daniel

Mrs Lisa Dean

Mr Graham Kirke

Mr Andrew Klemz

Mrs Lynda Stokes

Mr Stephen Wallis

Fr David West

Ms Maria Soulsby

Mrs Mary Morris (clerk to Governors)

From the Head Teacher...

New Christ Church continues to make good progress towards improving education for all its pupils. Last year, we enjoyed 2 successful inspections and our results last year show continued improvement in English, maths and science. We are determined to become the best school in Reading, one where children enjoy learning, are happy and safe and experience a broad education.

External Agencies collect attainment data at 3 points in a primary child's life: at the end of their Foundation Stage (FSP), at Key Stage 1 (end of Y2) and at Key Stage 2 (end of Y6). It is this information, as well as visits to the school, which is used by Ofsted and the Local Authority to make judgements of a school's performance.

We are not able to publish the results at this point, as it has yet to be checked and verified. These results will be published to you later in the term. But we can tell you what we believe the results will tell us all about the school's performance.

At the end of the Foundation Stage, children are judged according to whether they achieve the 'Benchmark', which reflects Good Development. At New Christ Church, the number of children in the Foundation Stage who have reached the Benchmark has improved year on year, and we have achieved higher levels than the Local Authority average for the past 3 years. We know that we are doing well in ensuring our youngest children make good progress in their first year of school.

At Key Stage 1, it is expected that most children will achieve Level 2 in English, maths and science. In Key Stage 1 last year, our priority was reading - we want every child in our school to be a reader; reading is the most important skill in terms of ensuring future success at school and in life. 95% of our children achieved a Level 2 in Reading, with the vast majority achieving Level 2B. We are delighted with these results, and are confident that this will ensure continued good progress during KS2. For both reading and maths, we have had good year on year improvements for 3 years.

At Key Stage 2, average attainment is Level 4. We are judged according to the numbers of children who attain Level 4 and Level 5, and the progress children have made during KS2. At KS2, we are expecting to see a rise in maths from the previous year, and for our English and Science results to be more or less the same as previous years. Level 5 results in English have significantly risen and are above the local and national averages. Interestingly, our writing results were better than our reading; this may be because our children weren't ready for the test format, rather than not reading at the expected level - we need to work on this in the coming year. Those children who have spent 7 years at NCC did particularly well, with many of them achieving the higher Level 5.

Who are We?

Nigel Pounds: *Chair of Governors. I am 42 years of age and (other than a few years in France and the West Country) have lived in Reading all of my life. I am married with two young daughters, one of whom attends the school. I am actively involved in the Church and work for the Civil Service.*

Judith Thurlow: *I have been a Foundation Governor at New Christ Church for almost two years. I taught German at Reading University for almost thirty years until I took early retirement four years ago. Since then I have continued my interest in education through involvement in adult literacy and by becoming a school governor. As a regular member of the congregation at Christ Church I particularly welcome the opportunity to share in the life of the school.*

David Grimes: *I have lived in Reading for about 16 years and am a lecturer in Meteorology at the University of Reading. I have one son at New Christ Church (Patrick) in Year 5. I am on the Governing Body and Curriculum Committee as a parent governor and have taken on the role of overseeing the maths teaching within the school.*

Michele Bond: *I am a 42 year old full-time working mum of a lively year 3 boy who attends NCC. I have just started the role as a parent Governor which I am looking forward to developing new skills with enthusiasm and commitment, having the opportunity of gaining a much better insight in the aspects of the workings of a school and hopefully fulfilling an useful role as a parent representative. Already in the short time of being involved in NCC my eyes have been opened and a new respect has been formed for all the staff and associates of NCC as there is a lot more going on than I could ever have imagined. Named Governor for Child Protection.*

Stacey Bowles: *I have worked at NCC since September 2006 and became the Deputy Head Teacher at the start of this academic year. I am the nominated Teaching Staff Governor.*

Serena Diment: *I am 39 years old and have one daughter in Year 4/5 and a son who I am at home with at the moment. I am a new Parent Governor. I also belong to the Staffing committee, which I am enjoying very much.*

John Daniel: *It gives me great satisfaction to support Maria and her team knowing well that they are on a mission to build and shape the lives of our little ones. I work with specialised software for a living but keep my core interests alive by working with charities in India and Burma. I am the NCC representative for Aspire 2 (the WEC Charity)*

Lisa Dean: *I have two children at NCC in Years 3 and 4 and am one of the newer Parent Governors. I am also a member of the Friends' Committee.*

Graham Kirke: *I have worked at the school since the Fresh Start in 2000 and am currently employed as the Caretaker. I am also a bit of a computer whiz so helps out the staff whenever I can!*

Andy Klemz: *Foundation Governor. I have been a Parent Governor of NCC for 5yrs, with 2 Children, Jonathan and Davey at New Christchurch. Working as a Chartered Architect, I have helped deliver most of the recent projects to improve the fabric and environment of the School. I chair the Finance and General Purposes Committee, working with other Governors and School Management Team to provide the safest and best learning environment for our children, and the long term financial stability to ensure we have the resources to provide the best Teaching possible.*

Lynda Stokes: *I am the Bursar at NCC. I have 5 children; currently with two of them still at school attending Theale Green Community School. I was a parent governor at their primary school and am now a staff governor at NCC. I have just completed the Certificate in School Business Management course and my job is to support the teaching and learning by managing the finances and premises. I ensure the budget is allocated, spent and monitored appropriately and that the school buildings and grounds are maintained to make the environment a place where Teachers can teach and Pupils can learn.*

Stephen Wallis: *I was appointed to represent the LEA on the Governing Body in 2000 and served as Chair of Governors from September 2005 to September 2007. My role, along with all Governors, has been to offer support to the Head Teacher and School and to act as a 'critical friend'. In addition I have represented the School as Trustee, and Chair, of the Aspire 2 Charity from its inception to September 2007.*

Fr David West: *As long as I have been in Reading, since 1995, I have had a link with NCC trying, in various ways, to help make our school a happy place for children and grown-ups alike. It is a wonderful privilege for me to be a member of the NCC family!*

Maria Soulsby: *I am the Head Teacher and have been at NCC since the Fresh Start in 2000. I've always enjoyed working in this community, taking great pride in the achievements of the children and the school as a whole.*

Committees

There are several committees which support the work of the school. We are in the process of re-allocating committee membership. There are 3 main committees which meet several times during the school year; current membership of these are:

| <u>Finance & General Purposes</u> | <u>Curriculum</u> | <u>Staffing/Personnel</u> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Mr Andy Klemz | Mr Nigel Pounds | Mrs Serena Diment |
| Ms Maria Soulsby | Mr David Grimes | Mr Stephen Wallis |
| Mr Graham Kirke | Mrs Judith Thurlow | Fr David West |
| Mr Stephen Wallis | Ms Maria Soulsby | Mrs Judith Thurlow |
| Mrs Lynda Stokes | Fr David West | Ms Maria Soulsby |
| | Mrs Lisa Dean | Dr John Daniel |
| | Ms Stacey Bowles | |

Other committees include: Admissions, Admissions Appeals, Pay, Staff Discipline/Staff Discipline Appeals, Pupil Discipline/Pupil Discipline Appeals. These committees meet infrequently.

Governors Reports:

Maths at NCC—David Grimes

There is no denying that performance in Maths has not been one of the high points at New Christ Church over the last few years. Figures for Key Stage 2 tests show that over the past few years, attainment in maths has not been as high as that in English and Science. While test results aren't the most important aspect of education, they are useful in pointing up areas in which improvements can be made. In the last year, Miss Bowles has taken on the task of trying to identify problems in maths learning and coming up with a strategy to address these issues.

One of the challenges that staff at New Christ Church face is the unusually high turnover of children. Last year, only 50% of the children finishing Year 6 had been at New Christ Church since Reception, with 20% joining the school in Year 5. Children coming into the school may take time to adjust to their new environment and this can depress results. Similarly, there has been an unusually high turnover of staff in the last two or three years and this has undoubtedly had a negative effect. But why should changes in staff and pupils have more of an effect on maths than other subjects? Well, maths more than other subjects builds over time. To understand what is being taught now you need to have a good grasp of what has gone before. If one or two things are missed, they can come back to cause problems later. This is much more true of maths than some of the other academic subjects.

A third problem area identified by Miss Bowles is a lack of continuity in teaching methods between one year and the next. While the approaches of individual teachers may be perfectly good in themselves, if methods and rules change from one year to the next, the children may become confused and lose confidence. Of course, this difficulty has been exacerbated by the turnover in staff just mentioned.

What is being done to address these issues? Miss Bowles has been working with the other staff members to ensure that a consistent system of maths teaching exists throughout the school. The same methods of teaching particular topics will be used by all teachers throughout the school. Also, a clear record of the topics covered by a class will go with them to the next year's teacher.

As an additional step towards improvement, a maths teaching consultant was brought in for a one day workshop. Feedback from the teachers was very positive; she inspired them and provided some useful practical ideas which will be followed up in the next year.

Of course, parents can also help in improving their children's maths. But this is an area which many parents themselves have difficulty. Methods of teaching have changed a lot in recent years (certainly since I was at school) and many parents are confused about current ideas on teaching multiplication, division etc. So what can we as parents do? Some ideas include: come to the drop-in sessions offered by the school, ask your child to explain what they are doing in maths (this will help you gauge their understanding), play games at home (board games are great for counting), get your child to pay for things in the shop and check the change, ask your child to name and describe the shapes they see out and about, ask your child to guess how far/long/wide/narrow the road/pavement/height of a person.

Literacy—Nigel Pounds

The main focus for Literacy over the past few years has been writing. The staff have received specific training to support their work in improving writing skills across the school. We are pleased to see that there is evidence of improvements in some aspects. In the coming year, staff are going to focus more on sentences, particularly punctuation; we also need to improve spelling and handwriting. In order to do this, we are introducing a new scheme for spelling, and a new approach to handwriting - children with good handwriting will be able to write in pen, and those with excellent handwriting and spelling will be awarded a special fountain pen.

We continue to drive forward our aim to ensure every child is a reader in our school. KS1 children will continue to bring home Story Sacks which will encourage them to read with people at home. We introduced a new reading scheme last year to Years 2,3,4 and 5; this has had a phenomenal impact in ensuring good progress in reading; the scheme will be introduced to Years 1 and 2 during the next year. Those parents who watched the Channel 4 programmes about reading during half term will recognise the scheme we are now using—devised by Ruth Miskin, called Read Write Inc. It is essential that all children read regularly at home - please help the teachers in helping your child.

Following the big move last summer, we have now re-organised the library and established an electronic borrowing system. There are a few loose ends to tie up, and once these are completed, the library will be back to full working order and children will visit on a weekly basis.

Buildings—Andy Klemz

The original school Buildings date from the Victorian Era (1868). Substantial changes both in the internal layout and extensions have been undertaken over the last 10 years as part of the 'fresh start' funded initiative. Over the last 5 years, Governors have implemented a structured Capital program (utilising the balance of 'fresh start' monies) to address the following concerns:

DDA Access - Access is now possible for disabled pupils, parents, staff and carers to all admin and classroom areas. A new ramp was constructed to the Main Entrance, and toilet accommodation was refurbished to full DDA standards.

Early Years - Internal reconfiguration to extend Early Years classbase to facilitate 'learning through play' areas. To provide an all weather facility, external covered areas were provided to R1 and Courtyard areas.

Main Hall- Usable area increased by relocation of storage areas to accommodate more children

Classroom Environment—The redecoration of all Teaching areas, and replacement of classroom ceilings and lightning has enhanced the School Learning environment.

Computers— All Teaching areas have been provided with White Boards, Wireless Internet with access to portable notebook computers.

Playground—Playground equipment, play marking etc has been replaced. New seating/shelter provided. Secure enclosures provided for Bins and recycling

Special Educational Needs—Judith Thurlow

New Christ Church has every reason to be proud of the provision it makes for children with special needs and the results it achieves. In the recent Ofsted report the school was graded 'good' in this category and the report comments that 'pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because of the good quality individual attention they get'.

In September 2006, Mrs Jan West was appointed as Inclusion Manager and assumed overall responsibility for Special Needs Provision. The school operates an inclusive policy and welcomes children with learning difficulties, provided resources allow. In the last year, there were 32 children on the Special Needs Register, approximately 25% of the total number of pupils in the school, and well above average. Of these there was a high concentration in Year 6, where almost half the pupils had learning difficulties. This does not include children who have English as an additional language, unless they have educational needs.

Any child who appears to be struggling and to have a greater difficulty in learning than would normally be expected is quickly identified and his/her needs assessed. Sometimes the situation can be quickly rectified with individual attention over a short space of time. Where this does not result in significant improvement, then the child is placed on the Special Needs Register and whole system comes into operation. The children with the most complex difficulties are those with a statement. These children receive individual help for a variable number of hours a week, depending on the provision made in the statement. Parents are consulted, the Head Teacher is involved in discussions and an Individual Education Plan is drawn up to cater for the specific needs of the child. Where appropriate, help is drawn from outside agencies. Last year 6 children had a statement. Other children on the register with less serious difficulties receive help at the level of School Action and School Action Plus. School Action means that children receive extra support from teachers and teaching assistants and special materials may be used. In the case of children who receive help at the level of School Action Plus, the school will seek advice and support from outside agencies, an educational psychologist, for example, or the medical or welfare services, as well as providing extra individual attention from school staff. Again the Head Teacher will be involved as appropriate. Last Year there were 20 children receiving help at the level of School Action and 6 at School Action Plus.

The progress of children on the Special Needs Register is carefully monitored and the register constantly kept under review. A record is kept of all those who come into school to help the children and they are asked to make a report on each visit. In all cases parents are kept informed and invited to discuss their child's progress and the kinds of steps necessary to address their problems.

Understandably, as the Ofsted report comments, the school 'has rightly focused on giving extra help to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with English as an additional language' and has achieved commendable results, but this has perhaps been at the expense of the more able pupils who also have special needs. The school recognises that it must redress the balance and is giving urgent thought to ways in which it can challenge and provide more effectively for the more able pupils.

Church and Community—Judith Thurlow

A visitor to Christ Church may be surprised by what appears to be - and indeed is - a large, colourful piece of jigsaw puzzle on or near the chancel step. It shows a group of children standing in front of the logo of Christ Church School, enlarged to form the background. The other piece of the jigsaw is to be found in the school and depicts the congregation standing in front of the church door. The two pieces fit together to symbolise the unity between church and school. That the church keeps the piece with the children and the school the piece showing the congregation illustrates the way each plays a role in the life of the other.

The relationship between church and school is harmonious and productive. Father David visits the school on a weekly basis to take assembly, he helps with RE and at present is discussing with the head teacher the possibility of a course for year six to introduce them to the Eucharist. This may result in a special service for those who are interested. Members of the congregation continue to act as Foundation and parent governors and are welcomed into the school on a variety of occasions. In turn the children are proud of their church. They are encouraged to attend the regular family service with their parents and play a role by reading the lessons. As a result of the intervention of Mervyn Williams, the choir master, who also visits the school on a regular basis to help with singing, a number of girls (where are the boys?) sing in the choir. With their obvious eagerness and commitment they have won the hearts of the congregation. The whole school comes to church to celebrate the key festivals of the Christian year as well as the end of the academic year when the school says good-bye to those who are leaving. School and church join together to raise money for Oxfam (at Christmas) and the Karuneipuri orphanage (in Lent). During Advent toys are collected at a special service for children who will be spending Christmas in the women's refuge. The school continues to work with other church schools in the area to the benefit of all concerned. This term the school is offering a free course to enable children and their parents to learn key ICT skills side by side. Perhaps the highlight of the past year was the visit from the new Bishop of Oxford. On the day his appointment was announced one of his first engagements in his new role was at New Christ Church where he talked to the children and staff. The school was immensely proud to have been selected to welcome the Bishop.