

# All Saints' CEVCP School



## Governor Newsletter – Summer 2015

### Getting bigger and better!

Well it is actually happening! Suffolk started its journey back to two tier education in 2007 and from September we will finally get to keep our first set of Year 5 pupils. Our two new classrooms are on schedule and nearly completed and everything is in place to ensure that the school is ready to meet the needs of children in Upper Key Stage 2.

As with all significant change, I know that some parents have concerns that All Saints' won't be the same with more and older pupils. This worry is only natural and there is a balance to be struck between preserving the 'Outstanding' model that we have whilst being different enough to cater for children up to age eleven. I have no doubt though, that the school is up to the task due to the strength of its ethos. This is rooted in understanding the needs of each individual child and meeting them with high quality teaching and an enriched and diverse curriculum.

Last year, All Saints' faced perhaps the biggest changes in its recent history with two staff including our Senior Teacher leaving plus further maternity leave. When you think how quickly Ms Kidd and Miss Duffety have settled in and how effectively Mrs Kemp has moved up to become Senior Teacher you should have great confidence in the resilience and adaptability of the school.

Of course, as ever, Mrs Lamb has been instrumental behind the scenes ensuring that the school moves forwards seamlessly, embracing these changes as opportunities for further improvement. Mrs Lamb and all of the staff are looking forward to the challenges and rewards that Willow and Elder Classes will bring.

### Welcome and Congratulations

We were very pleased when Miss Jo Bennett agreed to join All Saints' to teach our Year 5s. As well as a strong academic background she also brings a love of the environment and literature that will complement and enhance what we can offer pupils. I am sure that under Mrs Kemp's wing she will emerge as another excellent addition to our teaching staff just as Miss Duffety has this year. We already have very strong Teaching Assistants (TAs) in Key Stage 2. Mrs Bigg and Mrs Hickford are Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) and with Mrs Plummer moving up to Year 5 they will become an even more impressive team.

Congratulations to Mrs Goodchild who is expecting her first child in September and welcome to Mrs Simpson who will be helping to cover Oak Class alongside Mrs Bolton whilst she is on maternity leave. They will be ably supported by our new TA Mrs Gibbs and we are very confident that with Ms Kidd's leadership we will have a very strong team in Key Stage 1. Mrs Strawson is also joining part-time to supplement our TA support to more vulnerable pupils in Ash Class alongside Mrs Palmer who already specialises in this area and will be increasing her hours.

Our best wishes also go out to Miss Marnes who is getting married over the summer. When the new Mrs Marsden returns I am sure we won't notice any difference in the excellent early years provision she and Mrs Schofield, our other HLTA provide!

### Changes in Education

This year the school has had to cope with considerable changes in the education landscape as well as carrying out the general business of teaching the children! Everyone involved in education is well used to the constant tinkering by successive governments but the last year has seen more than usual.

This has been the first year of the new national curriculum which involved a significant amount of planning as well as additional work to plug the gaps where children are now supposed to have covered particular subjects earlier. We also have a new Special Educational Needs Code of Practice that has redefined classifications for SEN children.

Perhaps the most challenging change has been the removal of national curriculum 'levels' for assessing children's attainment. This has led to our introduction of a new system for tracking children's progress and considerable work from staff to understand and adapt to the new criteria. The good news is that our new system gives us a much more detailed understanding of each child and how we can help them to thrive.

## **The Last Year**

There have been many notable achievements in the last year and some fantastic enrichment activities on subjects like Japan, other cultures in different countries, harvest, maths and problem solving, Nepal, Children in Need, dinosaurs, life long ago and water! The Christmas plays go from strength to strength and now we have one for each Key Stage, they provide an opportunity for all children to shine more.

The school's reputation has grown further with Mrs Lamb receiving a constant stream of visitors to learn from what we do. Mrs Lamb has also supported a number of other schools through her work as a Challenge Partner for the Local Authority. Mrs Lamb's work with other schools significantly enhances our own self-evaluation and opportunities to bring good practice from elsewhere back to All Saint's. All lesson observations show teaching to be at least 'Good' and generally 'Outstanding' and in addition to Mrs Lamb, we have used two external advisors to verify these findings as well as the quality of assessment, marking and feedback. Mrs Goodchild's assessments of Ash Class children have also been externally moderated by the Local Authority and found to be spot on!

Unless you are involved in school life, it is not always obvious how much work teachers put in outside of lesson time; planning, preparing, marking and recording. There is a huge amount of effort involved in producing hours of 'outstanding' learning opportunities for the children every day. It is heartening to know that this endeavour has been successful with all children making at least 'expected progress' this year and many exceeding it.

The contribution of our skilled Teaching Assistants should also be recognised here as a valued part of the team not forgetting Mrs Eady and Mrs Walker who you may not see as often as they are not attached to particular classes. We now have more after school clubs than ever thanks to Mrs Plummer and Breakfast Club with Mrs Bigg and Mrs Hickford is incredibly popular with children and highly valued by parents. Also we should not underestimate the input from Mrs Copping, her kitchen team and our happy band of Midday Supervisors who help lunchtimes run smoothly as well as Ms Ryan and Mrs Heighes in the school office, carrying out the administrative functions that keep the school going.

The school has had a major upgrade to its ICT infrastructure with a new server and high speed wireless network. This means that we are now ready to connect up to the fibre optic broadband that has arrived in the village and after the summer holidays we will see tablets starting to be used more in the learning environment as well as the existing laptops. The school website has also proved very popular with parents, in particular the class pages. It is our ambition to get older pupils more involved in running it in the future which will be exciting. We also hope to give parents the ability to pay for lunches, clubs and trips online in the near future.

The 'Learning Behaviours' are now truly embedded in all aspects of school life and the children regularly refer to them to identify how to move their learning forwards. Silver Assemblies have also helped celebrate pupils' achievements and the idea of growth mindsets is helping them to become better learners. We now have elected School Ambassadors and look forward to Eddie and Aurelia contributing to further improvements on behalf of their peers.

Of course we now have our new building to house Willow and Elder classes and the Local Authority have also agreed to fund extending the playground from the outdoor classroom to the front of the Buttercup Building. By the time you come back in September this should be completed.

Work extending the pavement towards The Swan was due to begin once the holidays started but may be delayed due to technical issues with drainage on one side and purchasing the strip of land on the other. We will keep you posted on the outcome.

## **School Finance**

I am pleased to say that the school finances are still looking healthy despite the slightly gloomy outlook for education funding indicated by the new government. Unlike some schools, we have managed to finance our share of the additional building work from existing reserves as we've been expecting it for some time. We have recently carried out a three year budget planning exercise that gives us a picture of how the budgets will look once things have settled down with our new year groups.

As with all budgets, managing school finances is about balancing income and expenditure. Income is largely dictated by how many pupils we have and we know that the Chancellor has stated that the amount we get per pupil will remain 'flat' throughout this parliament. Expenditure on the other hand will be subject to inflationary pressures and although these are unlikely to be high, with income being static, all schools will face challenges. This tension between income and expenditure is illustrated clearly when thinking about class sizes. Too big and teacher-time per pupil is diluted but too small and you can't afford a teacher and you have to mix year groups.

There is a 'Fairer Funding' movement gathering pace to try and persuade the Department of Education to allocate funding more equitably across the country. For many years, schools in urban areas have received significantly more money per pupil than those in more rural Local Authorities. Suffolk along with a number of other counties are lobbying our MPs and the minister responsible and there are signs that their arguments are being heard.

## **Volunteers**

The school wouldn't be what it is without so many volunteers who give up their time freely to help us improve the experiences your children have at All Saints'. There are too many to mention individually but special thanks should go to Mrs Norris for her work in the school garden, Mrs Macdonald for Japanese day and Mrs Strawson, Mrs Mitchell, Mrs Turner, Mrs Gibbs, Mrs Osborne and Mr Noble-Jamieson. Also of course, the Parent Group and who can forget the fabulous barn dance in October which Sharon, Nicole, Jo and the usual suspects organised so well along with the Christmas Fair and all of the other events.

On behalf of the Governing Body and the staff I would like to thank them all for their hard work.

## **Attendance**

As I am sure you are all aware, the school has placed much more emphasis on attendance this year. This is due to changes in national and local government policy but also because last year's figures put us in the bottom 20% of all schools nationally. There is a huge body of evidence that shows how even small amounts of absence impact negatively on how well children do at school and the governing body fully supports the school's efforts to improve attendance even though they haven't been universally popular.

Mrs Lamb has put considerable effort into looking at each child individually and writing to all parents but has still had to issue some penalty notices for unauthorised absence. Of course if children are too ill to come to school then there is nothing that can be done but our attendance figures have shot up from 95.2% to 97%. That may not seem like much but it's nearly 3½ days more in school per year for every single child at All Saints'. If they kept it up that's over half a term more school for every child before they get to GCSEs!

Please help us to keep the attendance figures high. It really isn't about trying to make the school look better or meet targets; it's about your children's future.

## **Our Governing Body**

The Governing Body hasn't been exempt from the changing educational landscape and we've had to re-constitute under revised legislation with the intention of making us more efficient and appointments more skills-based. There is a new category of Co-opted Governor which can be anyone "who in the opinion of the governing body have the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school".

We do have a vacancy for one of these governors and so if anyone is interested please get in touch using [governors@allsaintsprimary.org](mailto:governors@allsaintsprimary.org). The minimum commitment is to be able to attend two evening meetings per term starting at 6:15pm and to be able to go into school for at least a couple of hours each term to observe a particular aspect of school life. You don't need to have experience in education as plenty of training is available; it's more about having the desire, skills and time to help improve outcomes for children.

For those of you who would like more detail on what we do, we are a public body and so the minutes of all of the main meetings are available in the school Reception.

## **Parent Survey**

Thank you to everyone who took the time to answer the parent survey. We carried it out later this term so parents had a chance to read school reports first. This has given us less time to analyse the results but overall they present a very positive picture of how you see and value the school.

There are some lovely comments about how much the school and all of the staff care about our children's wellbeing as well as providing great learning opportunities for all of them. How happy, well behaved and inspired the children are and how well the staff know them and their individual needs. Then there is the general warm, calm, family, nurturing environment and how positive everyone is about what can be achieved.

There is also some very useful feedback. The clear message is about sport/PE and how parents would like to see more provision in this area, particularly as we take on older children. Providing a balanced curriculum is very important to the school but there are only a limited number of hours in the school day and so more time for any subject inevitably means less for another. There are also competing demands for resources particularly in science and IT at the upper end of the school. Finding people to come to Lawshall after school for an hour to run a club at a price parents can afford is also difficult even though Mrs Plummer has significantly expanded what we offer.

Consequently, there isn't a quick, easy answer and the school will have to think hard about how we can increase the profile of sport without negatively impacting on other areas. This isn't beyond us though and there are already plans to improve the playground facilities once our building work has finished. There may well be an increased role parents or volunteers can play in any solution as well. You can expect to hear more in the autumn term.

The full results of the survey will be posted on the noticeboard at the side of school that you walk past in the mornings. For those of you that don't drop children off we can email you a copy if you contact us at the address above.

All that remains is to reiterate the governing body's thanks to everyone involved in making All Saints' such as fantastic school, especially the pupils who make it all worthwhile!

With all best wishes

Richard Harding  
**Chair of Governors**