

Governor's Newsletter to Parents
Spring Term 2020

One of the great pleasures of being involved with a Primary School is to watch young families grow, and whilst this is usually amongst our pupils' families, we are in the happy position of having three of our teachers expecting new arrivals. Mr Filby, Mrs Ashcroft and Mrs Batchelor are awaiting their second child, and we wish them all the very best as they prepare to take well deserved Maternity and Paternity Leave to relax (!) and bring three new people into the world. It'll be lovely to meet the new arrivals in the months ahead. Mr Filby's two weeks Paternity Leave will be around Easter, and plans are already in place to ensure continuity for Year 6 as their SATs approach. Mrs Ashcroft will be beginning her Maternity Leave in May and plans to return in December, and Mrs Batchelor will be away from school from June this year, with a planned return in June 2021.

The longer Maternity Leave periods give the school an opportunity to re-assess our staffing and resources, and to review and enhance our succession planning. The ethos at Clapham Terrace, encouraged by the Governing Board and driven by Mrs Miles and the Senior Leaders, is to ensure the highest quality teaching for the pupils by maximising the number of adults in the classroom every day. The Senior Leadership team was restructured two years ago to allow our two Assistant Heads, Mrs Clarkson (who has responsibility for Pastoral Care – Inclusion, SEND and Behaviour) and Mrs Ashcroft (responsible for Teaching and Learning, Curriculum and Assessment) to also spend a good deal of their working weeks teaching in the classroom, and indeed Mrs Miles teaches every week as well.

Mrs Clarke (responsible for Early Years) and Mr Whiting (Maths lead) make up the balance of the Senior Leaders (and both of course teach their own year groups) - and it is the depth of leadership throughout school, amongst all teachers, TAs and pupils, that gives me the confidence to say that Clapham will use the changes to staffing in the year ahead as an opportunity to revise, improve and add even more resilience to the education the children receive. Mrs Miles recently discussed these plans with the Governors, and I am sure you will be as happy with the proposals as we were.

As it happens, there was no need for Mrs Batchelor to become pregnant to gain a mention in this newsletter – I was keen to draw attention to the focus led by her that the school has developed towards teaching of our pupils for whom English is not necessarily their first language (known as EAL pupils – English as an Additional Language). We are extremely fortunate at Clapham to have families from incredibly varied backgrounds and cultures - amongst many benefits, it gives a huge number of opportunities to enrich all pupils' learning in the classroom.

Mrs Batchelor has been very successfully leading the EAL provision for the school, whilst a dedicated Governor, Phil Robbins, works with her and holds responsibility for EAL pupils and their families, and monitoring the school's use of funding in this area. To confirm the success we believe the school has in this area, we are in the process of applying for the EAL Quality Mark, an independently assessed award that audits a school's actions in the area of

EAL teaching and learning. I have no doubt we will do well in this assessment; any success will be a great reward and send-off for Mrs Batchelor.

You will not be surprised when I say that finance remains incredibly tight within education. Our ethos of having the maximum number of adults teaching every day is expensive, but we believe it to be the best strategy for ensuring a high-quality education within the classroom. However, all involved with Clapham Terrace believe that a good education includes a rich and varied curriculum that goes outside of the classroom – and it is the HSA that provides much of the money that allows the School to provide this to all pupils. I would urge you to continue to support the volunteers on the HSA in all they do for the School, it really is incredibly important if we are to continue to give all children the amazing experience they currently receive.

Of course, as we work towards providing the best education we can, we are still awaiting our follow up OFSTED inspection. I'm sure many of you are a little confused as to why we are expecting them back after we hosted them just over a year ago, so I will quickly try and explain! At our inspection over 6 years ago, Clapham was rated as Good. When OFSTED revisit 'Good' schools, they only come for one day (a 'Section 8' inspection). As it is such a short visit, the category of a school cannot be adjusted on the basis of a 1 day, Section 8, assessment. The Inspectors saw evidence in December 2018 that they thought might make Clapham worthy of an Outstanding rating but were not allowed to make that decision. Clapham is now in line for a 2 day 'Section 5' inspection that will delve deeply into all areas of school – Quality of Teaching, Leadership, Early Years etc – and OFSTED will then decide whether or not to award that very challenging 'Outstanding' mark. Unfortunately, we do not know when this will be exactly, but it is very likely to be before the summer this year. Watch this space - and please record your views on school at the OFSTED Parent View website.

I know you have had a letter from school outlining our actions in response to the possible threats posed by the Coronavirus. I would like to back up all Mrs Miles said in that letter and thank her for her actions – an emphasis on basic hygiene skills such as handwashing is, at the very least, a useful reminder for all children that will have healthy side effects even if, as hoped, the virus runs its course without affecting us unduly. Please take seriously all advice from Government and School, and be aware of the potential for damaging rumours, especially online. In return the school is committed to giving you honest information as quickly as possible.

With all that is going on at school, do not forget that the highest priority for us all is the safety of all of the children in all aspects of their life. I was delighted to attend, and see the very positive reaction to, Jonny Hunt's presentation to parents of the 'All about Me' programme. The feedback from those of you that attended was incredibly positive – 100% of (59) respondents found the presentation 'Excellent' or 'Good', and 100% also agreed that the school had communicated the programme effectively. The Governors and I are committed to the scheme, and like many of you, found Jonny to be an excellent advocate for such an important part of the curriculum.

Jonny spends most of his days visiting schools in Warwickshire, and was hugely impressed with Clapham Terrace – as he took the time to write to Mrs Miles to compliment the pupils, parents and staff I thought you might like to read a couple of his quotes;

"As you know I visit many schools both locally and around the country in my role - when you walk into a school you get a feel for the place and it was truly a pleasure to spend the day at Clapham Terrace."

"During the day I never heard a single child speak unkindly to another. Every single child I saw looked happy, enthusiastic and keen to be in their lessons. The children looked and sounded happy - joyful even."

"It is lovely to see a school that has a real community family feel - it was honestly a pleasure to work with your parents, staff and see your children."

Says it all really, and I think that's a good place to finish a slightly longer Newsletter than usual! I will try and return to brevity next time – until then, enjoy the return of Spring and I hope to see you all around school very soon.

Regards

Dan Johnston
Chair of Governors
Clapham Terrace Primary School and Nursery