



Ravensmead Primary School

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No.5 NEWSLETTER

23rd March 2017

Dear Parents/Carers

Parents Evening & Presentation from Mrs Hingley new Headteacher at Sir Thomas Boughey High School – Wednesday 26th April 2017

Tomorrow, Friday March 24th, you should receive a letter regarding Parents Evening on the above date. On this occasion we welcome Mrs J Hingley who has recently been appointed as the Headteacher at Sir Thomas Boughey High School. We have always enjoyed positive relationships with our local high school and Mrs Hingley would like the opportunity to share with you the changes that she has made over recent weeks, planned changes for the future and how she and her team of staff and governors have already started the task of addressing issues recorded in their recent Ofsted Inspection Report. You may not know that our Year 6 children, for several years now, have thoroughly enjoyed attending the High School and undertaken a range of activities on a Friday afternoon throughout the year. Mrs Hingley would like to speak to our current year 5 parents but clearly, all parents would be welcome to attend. Mrs Hingley will talk from 6pm until approximately 6.30 in Mrs Webb's classroom. You will, therefore, need to arrange your appointments around these times if you wish to attend this important presentation. We would ask you to indicate on the Parents Evening reply slip whether or not you would like to attend this presentation.

Attendance Coffee Morning – Tuesday 28th March 9am – 9.30am Led by the School's Education Welfare Worker, Claire Butters

Claire Butters would like to welcome any parents/carers to this informal Coffee Morning, however she would very much like to meet with all parents who have taken a term time holiday during this academic year or indeed any parents who are considering it in the future. Claire will explain the current legal situation and the known impact upon pupils' learning. We hope also to have the School Nurse in attendance, but she now has a much wider remit and therefore may not be able to attend. If this is the case we will be able to direct you to her and the support she may be able to offer if your child has unfortunately suffered from significant illness during this academic year.

Those families whose child's attendance is less than 90% for whatever reason and, therefore, regarded as "persistent absentees" will already have received their individual invites to the Coffee Morning or appointment later in the morning.

Pupil Absence

Can I remind you that the school policy is that on the first day of absence and any subsequent days you phone school by 9.20am to inform us that your child is too poorly to attend school. The Education Welfare Service have asked us to request evidence of a visit to the doctor, hospital, dentist etc upon your child's return. Please do not be offended if we need to remind you when your child returns to school.

Fairer Funding and School Budgets

You will recall that we text you yesterday to remind you that the Fairer Funding Consultation closed yesterday at 5pm.

It is fair to say that all schools will face a very difficult future in terms of their Budgets both for the next academic year and the years ahead unless Government policy and funding changes significantly. We will now attempt to explain just some of the issues faced by all schools and Ravensmead in particular. The text below has been agreed by Mr Stephen Swatton, our Chair of Governors and Mrs Tracey Wilde, our Vice Chair (both very experienced governors) and myself, David Bell as Headteacher.

As we informed you yesterday, the Consultation over Fairer Funding for Schools closed at 5pm last night. We will attempt in this letter to give you some understanding of the current financial pressures facing all schools whilst at the same time attempting to provide only facts and direct quotes.

For many years Staffordshire County Council have been appealing for a Fairer Funding system for education across England. In fact, Staffordshire was one of the poorest funded Local Authorities in the country and the variation in levels of funding nationwide has historically been quite marked. Clearly without additional funding, redistribution based upon the new formula would mean "winners and losers". From Staffordshire's low position in the funding table one would have hoped that it would be a winner. The proposals at this time, however, do not make this clear.

Justin Greening, the Secretary of State for Education has said "the current funding system..... is unfair, untransparent and out of date. Similar schools in local areas receive very different levels of funding, with little or no justification. Underfunded schools do not have access to the same opportunities to do the best for their children, and it is harder for them to attract the best teachers and to afford the right support".

The National Governors Association Chief Executive, Emma Knights, stated "everybody pretty much agrees that the principle of the formula is right".

A report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies called the proposals "broadly sensible" but warned of "significant winners and losers". "Implementing this reform at a time when there is already considerable pressure on school budgets will inevitably be difficult".

The funding formula is only one part of a potentially very difficult financial climate for all schools. The Government has stated that they have protected school budgets since 2010. There are, however, a number of inflationary and other pressures on other school budgets. These have included increased costs for schools in terms of National Insurance and Superannuation contributions and new Apprenticeship Levy, increased staffing costs and an expectation in some areas that schools will now be required to purchase some services previously provided by the Local Authority.

The National Audit Office report of December 2016 stated that “schools would have to find £3billion in savings by 2019/20, amounting to cuts of 8%”, the Government responding said that its plan “included protections until 2019/20 to ensure that no schools will lose more than 6% of their Budgets in real terms”.

Although the National Governors Association supports the Fairer Funding Formula proposed by the Government, a survey for the BBC completed by 4000 governors indicated serious concerns across the country with many governing boards struggling to plan balanced budgets without significant cuts in staffing, curriculum or its wider provision. An appeal from 3000 headteachers was forwarded to the Department for Education recently, asking them to have “a rethink”.

The www.schoolcuts.org.uk website gives some indication of potential cuts without changes to current plans. You may well be surprised by what you find on this website. Miss Knights from the NGA also stated that the new formula had shown up a shortfall “in the basic building block to educate a child. So actually we are saying we need more per pupil in every school across England and that, of course, is a different issue. That’s about the amount of money we need rather than how we distribute it across the country”.

In addition to the uncertainties around the proposed new funding formula and the predicted shortfall in school budgets schools can face their own specific budgetary issues. Parents may be unaware that schools are largely funded upon the number of pupils in their school, therefore when larger cohorts leave school to be replaced by slightly smaller cohorts in the bottom of the school this adds further pressure to the school’s budget and therefore provision. **A significant part of school budgets is known as “Pupil Premium Funding”, arrangements may change in the future but at this time schools cannot claim this money for families who may qualify for Free School Meals unless they apply for them. This is quite separate from the Universal Free School Meals provided by the Government for Reception and Key Stage 1 children. We would therefore appeal again if you think that your child may qualify, regardless of their year group, please contact the School Office in confidence and we will complete the application with you.**

At Ravensmead we are not immune to these pressures, our Governing Board have had detailed plans to prepare for these known challenges for several years. In this way they have been able to minimise change but we can tell you that governors have been faced with many tough decisions this year and, in common with all schools, current known projections indicate that this will be no easier in the future. For example, Governors have recently agreed that they cannot afford to subsidise Residentials and, therefore, it may be that these cannot take place during the 2017/18 academic year and possibly into the future. In addition for this year a small number of temporary Teaching Assistant positions have not been renewed from September 2017. You will, of course, be aware of many other examples of schools where more dramatic cuts are being planned

The current situation remains uncertain and it is likely that we will contact you again regarding the Budget and potential changes to provision as we receive more information from the Department for Education.

D Bell, Headteacher

S Swatton, Chair of Governors

T Wilde, Vice Chair of Governors

School Council Easter Discos – Friday 31st March – Look out for letter tomorrow

Friends of Ravensmead Easter Bake Off – Monday 3rd April

You will shortly receive some more information about this Friends of Ravensmead event.

Reading

This week is Assessment week in school and one of the assessments is for your child's reading, both as a standardised score and a reading age and this is likely to be shared and discussed with you at Parents Evening. There is a great deal of evidence to say that parents modelling reading themselves and regularly sharing and discussing literature with their child at home can sometimes be the most effective support for your child learning to read but, more than that, for them to develop a love of reading. I would, therefore, once again continue to urge you to read at least 4 times a week with your child, not just to earn them a raffle ticket!, but for the joy of the activity.

Equipment for School

In an age-appropriate way we are constantly trying to encourage our children to become more independent. As children progress through the school they themselves should take greater responsibility for their equipment. They should, for example, ensure that at all times they have got their PE kit available in school, if they bring sandwiches to school they remember them on the day and, significantly, if they are in year 3 or year 4 they know that on a Tuesday they will need their instrument and/or their swimming kit. There are many other examples we could list but can I ask you to work with us to encourage your child to take increasing responsibility for the equipment required for school.

Use of School Car Park – Only Parents Dropping off/Collecting from Care Club

Unfortunately many people have reported to me, both staff and parents themselves, that they are concerned about safety on the school car park. For your information there is insufficient parking for staff themselves. Working with the Care Club, we have now said that parents delivering children to them in the morning **should not use the car park after 8.15am** and should only use it at very **slow speed** and with great care before then. Equally, when collecting later in the day great care should be taken. It may be necessary, in common with most schools, to stipulate in the future that only staff use the car park. Reminder that parents **should not use the car park** to pick up after school clubs or during any evening function.

During Health & Safety audits it has been discussed that some cars are driving too fast in and out of the car park and also significantly, at times visitors are parking outside the marked bays meaning that emergency vehicles could not access parts of the school. This is a serious potential risk.

Can I thank you for your continued support in avoiding parking, dropping off or turning anywhere near the school entrance and voice my appreciation for those parents who are willing to walk 132 of my strides from the Football Club to the school.

Mr D Bell

Headteacher