

Newsletter from the governing body – summer 2022

Dear parents and carers

We are reaching the end of the school year – and what a year it has been! – and as a governing body we wanted to share with you some of the highlights for our school and its pupils.

As governors, our role is to take strategic decisions for Eleanor Palmer in line with the vision, ethos and values of our school. In doing so, we hold the head teachers to account for educational outcomes and ensure the use of school resources is sound, proper and effective. What this looks like day to day is that each of us takes an interest in one or more key areas for the school such as finance, or the policies on - for example - pay or staffing, safeguarding of children or the curriculum or special needs. Through our regular meetings with the leadership team, the use of external experts, information from surveys and data and regular monitoring, our aim is to be informed and effective 'critical friends' to the school. Our photos are up opposite the fish, we try to have a presence at all the school events (look out for our badges!) and we are always happy to have a word. (See the school website for details on contacting us.)

We began the school year with the effects of COVID-19 very much in mind. We wondered how the autumn and winter would unfold and - importantly - how the children would respond in the longer term to the disruption of their education through the pandemic. The school and its new leadership under the Co-Heads, Natalie and Sally, and deputy head teacher, Rosie, were determined that Eleanor Palmer should prioritise reinstating – and developing – the excellent and inclusive education we are so proud of, supported by the EP enriched curriculum of events, trips, visits and experts.

We end the year with excellent outcomes from the national tests for reading, writing and maths (SATs) in both Year 6 and Year 2, phonics in Year 1, and the Multiplication check in Year 4. Eleanor Palmer has maintained and in most cases improved on pre-COVID outcomes. For example, the school ranks third in Camden for Key Stage 1 and 2 results, exceeding the national average. This is testament to the tireless efforts and focus of the entire teaching team, leadership and, of course, our pupils.

Success was also seen across the curriculum and community. Highlights for pupils include amazing success across the Juniors in the National Engineering Awards, numerous sporting, artistic and musical achievements, and new partnerships with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and The Place.

The year was marked by the welcome return of many EP traditions – sometimes flexed to prioritise outdoor gatherings – such as the CBC party, and the summer concert. Moreover, there are some new traditions to treasure such as the Fun Run. Thanks, as always, are due to the staff and to parents and especially our dedicated PTA team for organising and running these events. They contribute so much to Eleanor Palmer's great sense of community and to enriching the many and varied educational experiences of our pupils through the fundraising efforts of 'Keep It EP'. The governing body supported the head teachers in the re-launch of the crucial

Keep It EP funding initiative in the light of the challenging national funding context and we want to extend our thanks to parents and carers for all their contributions.

As usual, we are enclosing the results of the annual parents survey with this newsletter. The governing body discussed the results at our recent meeting, and reflected on the messages we received. The headlines are that parents are overwhelmingly satisfied with the leadership and teaching at the school and feel that their child is happy and safe here. This is a great outcome for our new head teachers who have responded to the challenges of this year with courage and vision.

There are two areas, however, where the results see a slight fall below the last pre-COVID year of 2019 - in perceptions of pupils' progress and support for their learning needs. It may be that this continues the slight feeling of disconnect and desire for feedback that was picked up in 2021 and is an important message for us. This will be a focus for the school in the next academic year. We want all parents to feel they have a good picture of their child's progress.

Finally, the governing body would like to thank Susie Yaffe (teacher for eight years) and Jane Gillie (strings teacher for eighteen years!) for all they have contributed to the school and wish them well for their next endeavours.

We wish you all a happy summer break.

Jen Allan and the EPS governing body

Parent Questionnaire 2022

We received responses from 99 out of our 175 families. This is a slight reduction in responses from previous years and we will seek to improve on the level of returns from parents in 2023.

Highlights

Once again, parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive in their assessment of the school. Overall, 100% are happy with their child's experience, they are confident that the school is led and managed effectively (98%) and that teaching is good (99%). They agree that their child is safe (99%) and that their child enjoys school (100%).

When reading the results, compared to 2019 (pre-COVID), the school is performing better or on par in all areas except around the perception of children's progress and support for learning.

There are five areas where the school did not perform as well as last year. The biggest drop amounted to a concern around their children's progress. This year 91% of respondents agreed that their children were making enough progress at the school, compared to 97% in 2021 and 95% in 2019. There was also a drop from 94% (2021) to 88% (2022) in agreement that the school meets my child's particular needs.

This year saw a slight improvement in parent perception of inclusivity as no parent disagreed that the school works to be inclusive of children of all abilities and backgrounds (vs 3% of respondents disagreeing in 2021). This was a question we added in 2021.

When parents disagreed, we asked them to elaborate in text boxes. This was a very useful exercise, and we have discussed the feedback in our committee and full governing body meeting.

Key points

The key points discussed at the July full Governing Body meeting included:

- improving communication with parents and carers on their child's progress (and what parents and carers can do to support their child's learning) including how this is managed at regular parent/staff meetings;
- management of behaviour to ensure a positive learning environment and wellbeing for all children in a class;
- ongoing review of policy on snacks and the balance of 'extras';
- working towards greater diversity in the staff, which is an important long-term goal for EP, reflecting a wider challenge in Camden and nationally.

Through this challenging year, school staff have again won parents' overwhelming appreciation and deserve congratulations for pulling together and offering a return to a real "EP" education.

2. Summary table: all figures are percentages (%)

	2022			2021			2020			2019		
	Agree	Disagree	N/A	Agree	Disagree	N/A	Agree	Disagree	N/A	Agree	Disagree	N/A
My child enjoys school	100	0	0	99	1	0	100	0	0	95	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	99	1	0	99	1	0	100	0	0	98	0	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	94	6	0	96	4	0	95	3	2	95	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	91	8	1	97	2	1	97	3	1	95	4	1
The teaching is good at this school	99	0	1	99	1	0	99	1	0	99	0	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	94	6	0	97	3	0	96	3	1	99	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	92	6	2	96	4	0	99	1	1	92	7	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future	90	5	5	92	1	8	88	1	11	92	2	6
The school meets my child's particular needs	88	5	7	94	3	3	93	1	6	92	3	5
The school works to be inclusive of children of all abilities and backgrounds	96	0	4	95	3	2	(new Q in 2021)					
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	80	7	13	82	5	13	77	7	16	78	10	12
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	88	5	7	89	5	5	89	2	9	82	7	11
The school takes account of pupils' views	85	1	14	94	1	5	87	1	12	85	1	14
The range of extracurricular activities is good	N/A this year			Due to Covid-19			77	16	7	81	15	5
The school is led and managed effectively	98	0	2	100	0	0	99	1	1	98	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	100	0	2	99	1	0	99	1	0	99	1	0