

ELEANOR PALMER GOVERNOR NEWSLETTER - SUMMER 2012

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been a particularly great year at the school and I would like to thank Kate and her team for making Eleanor Palmer the outstanding, inspirational and happy school that it is - Ofsted confirmed our achievements in the Autumn term last year and we should all be very proud.

We sadly say goodbye to two teachers this year – Hannah King and Hannah D'Angelo who leave us due to relocation out of London – and I know you'll join me in thanking them for their contribution to our school and wishing them well for the future. We also say goodbye to Lauren McLoughlin who has trained here and takes up a teaching post at nearby St Johns Upper Holloway and Hatty Bennett, teaching assistant in Reception. We welcome Natalie Stevenson as our new Year 5 teacher - a face from the past, as she trained here at Eleanor Palmer 7 years ago - who will join us from September.

I attach to this letter the results of the parent questionnaire that was sent out last month – I hope you will find the results and accompanying commentary of interest: we are always open to the views of parents if you have any further comments.

This year our special focus, outside of curriculum, staffing and resourcing of the school, was on the Rights Respecting School agenda set out by UNICEF. A variety of activity went on in the classrooms and many of you will have attended the wonderful evening event hosted by the children – we have heard this week that we have achieved Level One! The assessor spent the day here on Monday and most of his time was spent talking to various groups of children. My experience of talking to the children was that this has a really positive impact on broadening their understanding of their social and physical environment (from drafting the 'Rules of Play' for the island, to the Classroom Charters, our Day for Change and participating in the School Council liaising with their classes over decision making) and on their role in respecting the rights of other children both within school and globally.

In last year's letter I warned of impending budget cuts, the new system for charging for Nursery places and that our school based Local Authority Playcentre would be cut by Camden from September 2012. To update you: although the cuts are still on the cards, we have plans that balance our budgets across the next 3 years and the cuts do not look like they will bite too heavily into our limited discretionary spend (on resources, visitors, premises works); the new Nursery funding model is up and running and our Nursery is full for September and; a not for profit social enterprise provider, P3, has been contracted to continue to run our Playcentre! There have been updates in the orange newsletter and I hope that those that want to use it will soon be signed up for the start of next year. See Sarah or Tania in the office or register tonight at Parents' Evening.

The school continues to challenge itself to further improve and next year we will be continuing our focus on ensuring all pupils in the school are able to excel, whatever their background or needs. Particularly we will be looking to expand our horizons and partnering with other schools to try to achieve 'teaching school' status – an opportunity for our outstanding teachers and leaders to support the development of other schools. We are also looking to revamp and revitalize our IT – both the equipment and the curriculum around it and we will also work to achieve RRSA Level 2.

The Governing Body has lost Wajid Shafiq - a parent governor who comes to the end of his term this year. I'd like to pass my thanks to Wajid whose contribution will be greatly missed. We will be holding parent elections after the Summer break – if you are interested in contributing to the future of our school through challenge and support and have the commitment, time and flexibility to be a Governor please do stand! It is a rewarding role.

There is a governor notice board by the fish pond and we are all contactable via the school office (if you wish your comments to be raised on a personal basis please do put them in a sealed envelope marked for our attention). I would like to take this opportunity to thank all parents and carers for their support in making the school a great community to be part of and to wish you all a wonderful summer break!

Sarah Hodgetts -Chair of Governors

Eleanor Palmer Primary School – Parent Questionnaire 2011 Results

There were 70 completed returns this year compared with 72 in 2011.

The table below summarises the results of the closed questions, as percentages of the completed returns for the relevant year. The questions are the same as last year and are those that are recommended by OFSTED as part of a school's self-assessment.

The results are overwhelmingly positive – parents continue to be very pleased with the way the school is led and managed and with the quality of the teaching. This was also reflected in the comments made by parents on the back of the questionnaire. The key themes within the free comments also continue to focus on the importance of the community feel of the school and its friendly and supportive environment.

In addition to the statistics in the table below there were many varied comments from parents. These are summarized below with additional response and commentary (*in italics*) from the Governing Body which parents may wish to note or comment further upon.

Individual attributed comments are not published here, as respondents have not given permission for us to make public their views, but a short list indicative of the types of comments are listed. There is also a short response to a selection of comments that were different to those made in previous years or where comments were in areas where significant activity was taking place or clarification could be made.

	2012			2011			2010		
	AGREE	DISAGREE	N/A	AGREE	DISAGREE	N/A	AGREE	DISAGREE	NA
My child enjoys school	97	1	0	99	1	0	97	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	100	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	96	4	0	86	10	4	95	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	94	4	2	92	8	0	97	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	97	3	0	99	1	0	97	1	2
The school helps me support my child's learning	92	6	2	92	8	0	94	6	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	94	5	1	93	7	0	91	5	4
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future(for example changing year group, changing school, experience of life beyond school)	86	1	10	85	7	8	82	4	14
The school meets my child's particular needs	89	8	3	85	14	1	92	1	6
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	88	10	2	78	14	8	83	11	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	90	6	4	85	9	6	85	6	9
The school takes account of pupil views	90	5	5	88	3	9	88	5	8
The range of extra curricular activities is good	88	10	2	81	18	1	87	9	4
The school is led and managed effectively	95	5	0	98	1	1	99	1	0
Overall I am happy with my child's experience	93	6	1	94	6		Not in 2010 questionnaire		

Things we really like:

- Thoughtfulness with which the whole school is managed
- Range of topics covered
- Ethos
- Involvement of parents
- Extra-curricular activities (*although see below!*)
- Friendships
- Text message updates
- Maths teaching
- Communication from staff
- Level of ambition for children
- Sense of community
- Inclusivity of the school
- Environment promotes well being
- Size of the school
- Environment that promotes learning
- Energy of the staff
- Culture of learning
- Broad Curriculum
- 'Planting Promise'
- Village feel!

Picking up on some of these positive comments...

- Community feel/ supportive environment

One of our five core aims as a school is to build good relationships amongst all of our school community, both adults and children, as this is central to our pupils' success

- Inclusivity of the school

We deliberately don't have a hard and fast policy for selection of children for performances, events or competitions. We expect that every child will have an opportunity to appear in a play, compete in competition and play an instrument in a concert and although at times being 'one of the best' will play a part in selection, we'll also balance this with backing enthusiasm and creating opportunities. On this basis, we endeavor to ensure that everyone in any class gets to 'have a go' during their school career – and this goes a long way to make our school feel inclusive.

- Broad Curriculum

Learning is centered around termly topics– making sure that the topics are broad and engaging and enable our mixed ability classes to get the most out of any subject – whether it's sciences work around the Greeks or creative writing on the Second World war.

The 'what could be improved' comments, in the main listed once only, were:

- No separate SENCO co-ordinator
- More extracurricular activity
- More opportunity to speak to teachers
- Tougher on bullying (including parents bullying each other and children)
- Holiday club!
- More opportunities for the girls in 'boy heavy' classes
- Follow through from teachers as children move up a year
- More cultural events – and a comment that these shouldn't always be Christian or Muslim
- Taking homework more seriously
- More notice for working parents (about what was not specified)
- School dinners
- More drama/art/music (art commented on by 3 respondents)

- Should be more academic
- Reduce congestion and change system at Nursery entrance
- Stop asking for money!
- More learning based after school clubs
- Better lap tops or i-pads?
- More availability for school books to take home (Yr 5 parent)
- Reduce congestion around Year 1 entrance
- More varied communication channels to parents – e-mail?
- More focus on the 'in between' children
- Don't always pick the usual suspects
- Uniform?
- Halal option for Muslim children – even if the parents had to pay more

Picking up on some of these areas for development:

- More cultural events

Eid has fallen in the summer holidays for the last few years we have not had our Annual Eid Party. We must do this again. It is very much led by our Muslim parents so if any parents of any other faiths or cultures would like to support us in having a celebration please come forward! There is also strong demand to repeat our brilliant African Night – watch this space.

- No separate SENCO co-ordinator

It is a deliberate policy decision that Kate Frod is our SENCO: so that inclusion is at the heart of the school and that we have someone well connected and strong in a position to network with all the external agencies. Kate chairs termly reviews of all SEN children, with parents where external agencies are involved, and, alongside teaching staff, decides on levels and styles of support. What Kate never does is directly work with children: this is done by staff such as Annie Fair and Hannah D'Angelo along with our excellent support staff. Next year Louise Wykes and Fiona Crean will front line this 'hands on' work managing support staff. Every school has a different approach but our model ensures SEN teaching staff aren't spending too much time away from children in meetings and doing paperwork.

- More communication channels with parents

There are three one to one parents' evenings each year as well as an early September 'Meet the Teacher' evening. All teachers are available before and after school – with some warning they can always put aside time to talk to parents and carers about whatever is on their mind. In the lower years yellow reading books continue to be a daily way to communicate with the teachers and TAs. All teachers also have an e-mail address on which you can contact them – and where you would like to do so please do ask them for it, but please remember that they are classroom based for the working day so they may not see or reply to your e-mail immediately. It is always best to talk them at drop off or pick up to arrange a short slot to talk an issue through properly.

- Nursery congestion at drop off/pick up

We don't have a solution yet but accept that it is an issue. Suggestions gratefully received!