

July 16th 2015

Governors' Summer Newsletter

Dear Parents and Carers,

After an incredibly busy year, it is important to stop and take stock of all the fantastic achievements that the hard work of the Eleanor Palmer community has resulted in. With a trip to the palace (well done Miss Flood!), numerous sporting achievements, two new residentials, medals for maths, inspirational artistic endeavours and performances, and much much more, it can be easy to forget just how much has happened since last September. Thank you to everyone for playing a part in these successes.

Although it can often seem like it has been longer, this is just our second year as a Teaching School. In this year, we have really embedded our role in the Camden community as a school that will provide outstanding education not just to our own pupils but, by sharing best practice, can also contribute positively to education across the borough and beyond.

We have continued to work with Challenge Partners, a national network of schools who work to support each other, something that is of huge benefit to us. After visiting us in February, their highly respected members confirmed what we were all sure of – Eleanor Palmer is an outstanding school. The report made for great reading, including the observation that “there is a WOW factor the moment you enter the school.”

Another partnership that has been extremely fruitful has been our year working with the Unicorn Theatre. Our broad and balanced curriculum ensures we will never lose sight of the importance of creativity and the arts to all children's development and progress, and this partnership has reinforced that. Thank you to Nancy Cumming for leading on this partnership and for making sure every year was able to be involved.

We were sad to say goodbye to Anna McGrory at Christmas, but are also pleased to be able to extend a huge congratulations to Bethany Elliot and Rosie Thomson on a fantastic first year of teaching. They have achieved a huge amount in a relatively short time and we are looking forward to seeing them develop and grow further within the Eleanor Palmer family. Thank you also to Coach Martin for taking our sporting achievements to new heights – our trophy collection is testament to the hard work of everyone involved!

Your thoughts and feedback on life at Eleanor Palmer are incredibly important to us. Thank you to everyone who completed this year's parent survey – please see the results attached. As many of you will know, we use the same questions each year so we can assess how we are doing over time – please do take the time to read through the summary provided. The governors will be looking carefully at the results of the survey to ensure we can build on all those aspects you feel are running successfully and to ensure we address all those areas you feel could be better. A huge thank you to those parents involved with the PTA for pulling off yet another fantastic Summer Fair, as well as all the other events that they have run throughout the year.

We have also carried out a staff survey for the second year running and, once again, the results were very positive. For example, 100% of staff confirmed that Eleanor Palmer inspires them to do the best job they can and 100% feel proud to work here. There are improvements on last year's results and we still compare very favourably to the results of the same questionnaire completed by other public sector organisations.

Finally, some great news! Camden have given us the go ahead to develop a new science block and have awarded us a substantial budget with which to do it. We will send out more information on the build and relevant timeframes as the project gets going. It is no secret that we are entering hard financial times in terms of school funding – we will all see the effects of this over the next academic year – so we feel incredibly fortunate to have secured this capital at this time.

My first year as Chair of Governors has been incredibly interesting and I would like to say thank you to all those who have reached out to me at Parents' Evenings and all those who have been in touch. I hope to meet many more of you next year. If you would like to ask the governors any questions, please don't hesitate to get in contact via governors@eleanorpalmer.camden.sch.uk.

With all best wishes for a fantastic summer,

Alice Barling Gasson

Chair of Governors

Parent Questionnaire 2015

(The figures shown are the % of responses that fell into each category)

	2015			2014			2013		
	AGREE	DISAGREE	N/A	AGREE	DISAGREE	N/A	AGREE	DISAGREE	N/A
My child enjoys school	97	3	0	94	4	2	96	3	0
The school keeps my child safe	97	3	0	98	1	1	99	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	93	7	0	94	4	2	94	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	96	4	0	95	0	4	98	2	0
The teaching is good at this school	96	3	1	99	0	1	99	0	1
The school helps me support my child's learning	94	6	0	93	6	1	95	4	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	96	1	3	93	4	3	89	5	5
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future	86	6	8	85	4	8	91	4	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	87	7	6	85	10	4	88	6	6
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	74	13	13	82	10	9	84	10	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	80	8	12	88	7	4	87	10	3
The school takes account of pupil views	81	6	13	88	4	7	87	3	10
The range of extra curricular activities is good	80	11	9	79	12	7	86	10	4
The school is led and managed effectively	97	3	0	98	0	2	98	2	0
Overall I am happy with my child's experience	96	4	0	97	1	2	99	2	0

We had a total of 70 respondents which is disappointingly down on last year. We believe that the main reason for this was that governors spent less time handing out the survey and chasing responses. This was because of an error in planning and steps have already been taken to ensure that that this is remedied next year. As always, please do not hesitate to get in touch via the email address at the bottom of this page if you have any suggestions or feedback at any point throughout the school year.

The table above combines the two degrees of agreement or disagreement available on the survey – this is more relevant to the strongly agree/agree categories simply because, as with previous years, there are overwhelmingly more of these. The column “N/A” in the table overleaf includes not just the N/A on the original survey but also those few items that were left blank.

The ‘outstanding’ threshold for Ofsted is 85% agreement with each statement. This year, as you will see from the table, we had a number of statements that saw either an increase in agreement or no disagreement at all. We were particularly pleased to see that 97% of respondents agreed with the incredibly important statement ‘*My child enjoys school*’. Whilst the vast majority have fantastic responses such as this, there were four statements that received less than 85% agreement and we will be taking steps to ensure that these areas are addressed.

Firstly, there was significantly less agreement to the statement ‘*The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour*’. Agreement with this statement is down 8% from last year. There was a significant increase in those stating they did not have an opinion on this statement which we presume to mean they have had no experience of it – which is good! As a governing body, we will be looking at ways that we can ensure all parents are confident in the strategies for dealing with behaviour employed across the school. Any changes or developments will always be in-line with the school’s ethos which does not support the highly visible systems of sanctions that you sometimes see in other schools e.g. behaviour charts on the wall, public ‘traffic light’ systems. There is an INSET day for staff in September that will focus on bullying and we have every faith in the ability of staff to deal with incidents in the best way for all involved. However, should you have a specific incident that you feel hasn’t been dealt with effectively, please do talk to Miss Flood. None of the negative respondents detailed a specific incident or trend so as yet, we are not aware of any patterns or trends.

The other statement that has received less than 85% agreement for two years in a row is ‘*The range of extra-curricular activities is good*’. Agreement levels were slightly up from last year (79% up to 80%) so we will aim to continue this increase next year by reviewing the activities on offer to make sure they reflect the needs of the children. As with previous years, we do feel that staff are absolutely at capacity with the number of activities they can provide at the moment, whilst also maintaining the high standards we have come to expect in the other areas of work they need to prioritise, such as daily marking of work and planning the next day’s learning. We also still feel that bringing in (often expensive) private providers goes against the school ethos of inclusivity of all, so this is unlikely to be a route that we go down, although we are always open to suggestions. As well as in-school activities, the school’s location means we are fortunate enough to enjoy access to a wide

range of community activities and opportunities – please do refer to the incredibly helpful calendar put together by Angela earlier in the year and sent home with the orange newsletter.

The other two statements that have slipped below the 85% agreement threshold for the first time this year are:

- *'The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns.'*

This was down from 88% explicit agreement to 80%, with disagreement up by 1% and those who did not have an opinion on the statement up considerably by 8%. Again, we presume no opinion means this statement has not been tested. We will be looking at ways to ensure that all parents feel they have opportunities to feed into school life throughout the year.

- *'The school takes account of pupil views.'*

Agreement was down from 88% to 81%. Again, the number of respondents who didn't have an opinion was up by a notable 6%. We will continue to make sure the School Council is a key part of school life – despite upcoming budget cuts potentially reducing staff capacity, we are determined not to let important things like this slip.

It was great to see such a huge range of comments providing extra narrative and context to the numbers. All comments have been looked at closely by the Leadership Team and the Governors. As with last year, the comments on what you like about Eleanor Palmer really focused on the quality of teaching, the community feel, the friendliness and the support and nurturing aspects of the school. A number of people highlighted the wide range of trips and activities, and it was noted that there is a 'sheer force & enthusiasm in everything from lessons to concerts and trips'.

There were several comments that provided useful context to the responses about extra-curricular activities which we will refer to when reviewing the current offer, so thank you for these. Another area that many respondents provided comments about was the catering at lunch time. This is an area commented on regularly in the annual surveys. To reassure, we will continue to work with the caterers to ensure that the options available to children are both nutritious and appealing; the healthy options of the salad bar and the fruit option for pudding will always remain on the menu.

Whilst the staff and leadership team should remain your first port of call for any enquiries about school life, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the governors if there is any aspect of the survey you would like our specific feedback or input on – governors@eleanorpalmer.camden.sch.uk.