

July 2023

Memo to parents.

By now you will have seen the outstanding year 6 SATs results, which this year were truly exceptional. The governors attribute this continued record of achievement to three things: the leadership provided by Ms Connolly; the quality of teaching and learning delivered by Mrs Tweedale together with the support of Mrs Askew, Ms Goodger, Ms Lane and Mrs Erdagon, and thirdly; the support and guidance the children have received from all the staff throughout their time at Little Hadham. Congratulations to all our year 6 children and their parents happiness and success in their new schools. We are proud of you.

At our last governors' meeting of this year, we reviewed the performance data for every year group. It is very pleasing that across the school the children are achieving really well. What is also really impressive and key to what makes Little Hadham different and special is that, alongside academic achievement, the support each of the children receives is truly inspiring. At Little Hadham, children are enabled to flourish as individuals and there is a real sense that they are actively encouraged and supported to be themselves. The breadth and range of activities on offer to them is tremendous. Observing how all the children, including those with more challenging needs, are nurtured is an aspect of the school parents and visitors frequently highlight.

As Ms Connolly said in her latest newsletter, the achievements of the children are a testament to the staff and you, the parents. Much of the praise as well needs to go to the children who have done themselves proud. In her newsletter, Ms Connolly managed to praise almost everyone, but one key person was not mentioned, although of course much of the quality of Little Hadham is the result of her leadership. On behalf of the governors, congratulations to her and everyone involved.

I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate the staff and children on the recent exhibition of Art and Technology work. Every classroom was buzzing, and the range and quality of work on show was a striking demonstration of the breadth of what is provided at Little Hadham. I was impressed to see children visiting classrooms other than their own and excitedly discussing the art work they saw.

For several years, Mrs Sassis has been the author and leader of two Erasmus programmes whereby schools across Europe collaborate together. In addition to online exchanges between all the pupils involved, the teachers have been able to visit the six schools in each programme to share ideas and experiences. Most recently, four of our year 6 pupils joined twenty international pupils in Italy. Sadly, following Brexit, Britain is no longer able to be part of the Erasmus scheme. However, Mrs Sassis is currently exploring alternative projects, to enable Little Hadham's links with schools in other countries to continue. Her work has greatly enriched the curriculum at Little Hadham. Long may it continue.

Since I last wrote to you, there have been a number of site developments including, at last, about progress on restoring the school field.

We have very recently been informed that finance has been agreed by the County Council for a second contractor to begin work. A huge thank you to Irene Ruane who was instrumental in organising a petition and all the parents and others who signed it. I have no doubt that it had a marked effect on the approach of the County Council.

On Monday evening last week, the field was sprayed in preparation for work to begin in earnest next week. This will involve stripping the surface, removing stones, and then adding topsoil and sand. Using a GPS system to guide the machinery, the field will be levelled and re-seeded. New fencing will be installed to the far-left side of the field, and the sloped banking sown with wildflowers. We are continuing to negotiate about the provision of rabbit proof fencing. If all goes well, which is in part, of course, dependent on the weather, the new field should hopefully be in use in the second half of next term.

It has also been confirmed that work to improve the playground and the car park will take place during the holidays. Those of you who park on the playground will no doubt be aware that the surface is in very poor condition. This work will involve patching and levelling several areas, including the removal of the tree stumps. The hedge will be removed with new fencing and gates installed between the car park and the playground. One outcome of this will be a wider car park. The work will also include the removal of tree stumps and resurfacing in the area to the left of the car park entrance.

In common with all schools, the funding we receive has declined steadily in real terms over many years. Fortunately, our school is in a better position than many others, but funding is still tight. We have therefore been exploring ways to save money, not least by reviewing where we buy various goods and services. One of a few examples of this is that we have revised our contract for refuse collection so that we now have one recycling bin, whilst simultaneously reducing those we had for general waste from three to two. We have also reduced the number of times the bins are emptied. In a full year this will save us £1,250.

Additional funds are always extremely welcome, so congratulations to the Friends and all of you who support them. This year, the Friends have given funding towards coaches to the pantomime, contributed towards photocopying costs, and provided new iPads; all together a total of £6,260. The recent, very successful Colour Run, in itself a great social event, raised a magnificent £3,300. In addition, the Friends recently successfully bid for a grant of £2,000 from Stansted Airport. This will be used to provide new goalposts once the field is back in action. Currently a successful application to the Tesco's Community Grant Fund will raise between £500 and £1,500, depending on how many blue tokens we all put into the container at the local store. So far it's going well, so please encourage everyone you know to drop tokens in whenever they shop at the Bishops Park Tesco.

The Farmers Market also continues to be a real success. In addition to being a great way for our school to engage with people in the local and wider community, the market has contributed over £3,000 to school funds this year. All the fundraising activities involve a lot of commitment and hard work towards providing resources for the children - so congratulations and thanks to all involved.

This has been another very active year for the governing body.

The governing body is made up of:

- 2 elected parents
- the Head Teacher
- 1 elected member of staff
- 1 governor appointed by the Local Authority
- 7 co-opted governors.
- 1 associate governor

Co-opted and associate governors are appointed by the governing body and are people who, in the opinion of the governors, have the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school. More information about the governors can be found on the website.

The full Governing Board meets at least twice each term and we have two committees who also meet twice termly to consider Curriculum & Standards and Resources in more detail - so in total 18 meetings a year. Ms Connolly and I meet at least weekly.

In addition, the governors arrange targeted term-time day time visits that look at specific areas of activity linked to the school's vision or improvement plan. Governors also meet in smaller working groups to consider specific topics or to meet statutory needs.

Governors are volunteers and receive no payment for what they do although we can claim expenses. No governor at our school has claimed expenses in the last three years. Most of the work of a Governing Board is not confidential. Minutes of our meetings can be accessed via the school office.

This year three governors stood down. We would like to thank Sam Askew, Rob Brown and Ray James for their considerable contribution. We are pleased that Ray will continue to provide his expertise on specific issues. We are also losing our clerk following her promotion at the school where she works. Naomi Murray has been a real asset and we shall miss her.

We would also like to add our thanks and very best wishes to Mrs Erswell on her well - earned retirement. Among the countless ways she has contributed to the success of Little Hadham, she has been a huge help to me and the governors.

Lastly, on behalf of the governors, I wish you all a happy, peaceful and very enjoyable summer.

Keith Hutt
Chair of Governors