Governors’ Update

Welcome to the 2010 Governors’ Update, which is sent out halfway through the school year as a follow up to the Annual Report and Annual Parents’ Meeting held back in November 2009. The Update gives us a chance to tell you about some of the recent developments in school. We hope you will find the various items in this issue of interest.

Curriculum Developments

Literacy

Improving the children’s skills in Literacy continues to be a major focus throughout the school. Every child from Y1 to Y6 has individual writing targets which are monitored and updated regularly. Much emphasis is placed on the four elements of “Big Writing”: Vocabulary (Wow Words), Connectives, Openers and Punctuation, and there are displays in every classroom. In the Star there are regular slots for “Talking Homework” to encourage the children to extend their vocabulary and to discuss a particular topic or question with their families and friends. “Word of the Week” also hopes to develop the children’s skills in writing interesting and grammatically correct sentences.

Teaching Literacy through other subjects allows the children to apply their knowledge to every aspect of the curriculum. Creativity is also high on the agenda. In October the Image Musical Theatre performed “Wind in the Willows”, inspiring a great deal of writing, drama and artwork. In January the entire school travelled to the Gordon Craig Theatre to see the pantomime “Aladdin”. This formed the basis of work on pantomime and China, culminating in a spectacular Assembly where children and adults dressed up as pantomime characters.

In all the work we do at school, the children are encouraged to see the importance and relevance of good Literacy skills in everyday life.

Victoria Penty, Literacy Coordinator

International School Award

The School is undertaking several major international activities this year, to reflect our status as an International School Award holder and to gain re-accreditation by the British Council this year. These activities include:

1. International Worship for Christian festivals - Harvest, Christmas, and Easter - with the focus on songs and traditions from around the world
2. A Whole School Focus on China and Chinese New Year
3. International Fund Raising for Khandel Light - a locally based Charity that works to improve the lives of families in India.
4. A Whole School African Art Exhibition and Concert in the Summer term
5. All children from Year 1 onwards learning a modern foreign language
6. A penfriend and email exchange with our French partner school in Brittany for all classes
7. Inclusion of an international/global dimension across the curriculum and for all classes

Nadia Stanbridge, International Co-ordinator

SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning).

We continue to develop children’s social, emotional and behavioural skills throughout the curriculum. These key skills underpin almost all aspects of school, home and community life, including effective learning and getting on with other people.

Science Week 2010 (March 15th-19th)

Although Science is no longer part of the SATs tests at KS2, the subject is alive and well in school, especially thanks to Helen Talbot’s preparation and promotion of Science Week which will provide fun, exciting and enthusiastic promotion of Science as a whole school activity.

Pupils, staff, parents and external contacts (e.g. Big Wheel Theatre Company) will be involved in varied activities to integrate a number of other subjects – writing, reading, maths, geography and history. Activities will also contribute towards our accreditation as an ‘EcoSchool’.
The objectives of Science Week are:

- Provide all children with interactive learning opportunities in a fun, competitive environment (children to be arranged by Houses).
- Provide Gifted & Talented children the opportunity to extend their science knowledge and understanding.
- To enable parents to participate alongside pupils.
- To promote science within the school, and to promote the school within the community.

Planned activities include:

- Science Festival Workshop
- Albert Einstein Day - Wednesday 17th March
- Science Presentations/Demonstrations
- Mad Science History of Science Show (whole school), followed by 30 minutes sound workshop for Year 5
- Big Wheel Theatre – Grid Lock - how your transport choices affect the world (links with Safer Routes to School organisation).

Sports developments in school

Maureen Miller writes: we have been awarded the ActiveMark for the 3rd year running, as we are delivering 2 hours of high quality curriculum PE to all year groups, offering after/before sports clubs, taking part in competitive sports and participating in local sports activities.

We entered 2 teams in the Tag Rugby tournament held before Christmas. Our B team won the competition and the A team finished 2nd. The B team will now represent South Cambs in the finals in March. We entered our first Hockey competition in February and came 2nd. Our boys’ and girls’ football teams compete in the local school league. The A team took part in the “On the way to Wembley” competition last September, but sadly did not get through to the next round.

We have two netball teams competing in the local school league. Many thanks to Claire Targett and Jane Potterill for their help with running the club. Year 6 took part in Bassingbourn Village College Dance Show: a fantastic opportunity for the children. We entered a Cross Country team in the Schools Partnership competition held on Royston Heath. The winning boy and girl were both from Steeple Morden School. We will be taking part in the Royston Fun Run again this year and later this term the children will be involved with the County cross country competition in St Neots. We have entered the County Athletics Championships at St Ives and the mixed and girls Kwik Cricket Festivals in the summer. Our Year 6 Sports Leaders are doing a fantastic job in running break- and lunch-time clubs. We had the County hockey coach Will Thomsett and County athletic coach James Brennand in school and a gym coach is hopefully coming in next term. We are very fortunate to be part of the Schools Partnership and in having Matt Budd from Bassingbourn Village College as our Sports advisor. The P E dept there have told me that Steeple children are very talented, always keen to take part and are a credit to our school.

We are always looking for further sporting challenges, hopefully a tennis tournament and an orienteering competition. We are also looking forward to the opening of the school swimming pool, and our own 3k fun run in the summer. To enable the school to take part in sporting events we often need help with transport. In order to help, you need to join our Voluntary Helpers list, which is simple, but it can take some time for the checks to be processed, so please join now to avoid disappointment in the future. Forms are available from the School Office.

KS2 SATs results 2009

Last years Year 6 pupils achieved excellent results in their KS2 SATs tests. Compared with all other Cambridgeshire primary schools who report their results, we are:
• 3rd in the County for Average Points Score (the total score achieved by the pupils in all subjects, divided by the number of pupils eligible to take the tests).
• Joint 6th for Aggregate Points Score (which measures the number of children achieving the expected Level 4 in Maths, English and Science)
• Joint 13th for Contextual Value Added Score (which measures pupils’ progress between KS1 and KS2). More details can be found at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/education/09/school_tables/primary_schools/html/873.stm

School Council Minutes

Issues raised by the children are shared with governors through the School Council minutes. Each class has 2 elected representatives on the Council; everyone gets the chance to serve for half a term. A small budget is available. This year’s issues have included:
• Building a sandpit on the school field
• Discussing the anti bullying code
• Supply of pens for the outside whiteboard
• Switch Off fortnight, with eco monitors in each class
• Operation Christmas Child, with the Council reps giving a presentation in assembly

Swimming Pool / SMASH building update

The latest news on the swimming pool is that we have selected a contractor, who will start work during the Easter holidays, if not before. The work should be completed by 31st of May 2010. The design plans are currently displayed in the school entrance area, including a photo from the contractor of similar pools. The PTA and Autumn Ball Committee have raised the money to cover the costs of the new pool. Richard Lloyd and the Governing Body are extremely grateful to everyone who has helped raise the money needed to build this facility to the benefit of all pupils.

The plans for the new SMASH building are developing, with advice from County. It is expected that an application for planning permission will be submitted very shortly. Watch this space!

Issues from the Annual Parents’ Meeting (4th November, 2009)

About 30 parents, staff and governors attended the APM. The evening began with a presentation on E-Safety. There are 4 areas of risk: Content, Contact, Commerce and Culture. Parents felt that peer pressure was an issue and misinterpretation of messages when not speaking face to face. Keeping children safe on line is covered in the ‘Know It All’ CD Rom which was given to parents at the end of the meeting*. The school takes responsibility too: the children are taught to use technology appropriately, within a framework of relevant practices, such as the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Cambridgeshire e-safety strategy. The school also has a BECTA accredited Internet Service Provider and web filtering system. *More copies are available free of charge from the school

Responses to parents’ questions

As some children are concerned about school trips in Years 5 and 6 (particularly the trip to France) could the school host a sleepover for Year 4 children?

Various options have been looked at but if children need preparation for a residential trip, it was felt that sleepovers arranged at home with friends or relations would be the best preparation. All comments regarding the French Trip have been favourable. The Leavers’ Questionnaire completed by Year 6 children identified the French Trip as a highlight of their time at school. Parents were consulted regarding the pros and cons of extending the French Trip to 5 days - there were only 6 or 7 replies: all in favour of extending the trip. The trip is a challenge to
many children but results in a great sense of achievement. 

The Medicine Policy states that all medicines must be kept in a locked cupboard. Is this a legal requirement? This can cause problems if antibiotics need to be stored in a fridge.

The current policy is based on a County model policy. Staff can refuse to administer medication, so it is up to their goodwill. It was explained that different medication, needing less frequent doses, could be requested from the GP. Also, the DOH (Department of Health) advise GPs to prescribe 3 doses of antibiotics for school age children (wherever possible) so they can be given before and after school, and at bedtime.

The side gate (next to the kitchen) is often open - should it be locked?

The gate is never locked but it should be shut. The site is not secure, but there is a plan for greater security in the future. The children are not allowed past this gate at playtime.

Full minutes of the APM 2009 are available from the School.

**Update on the 2009/10 School Development Plan**

The School Development Plan is a strategic planning document, covering all of the school's present activities, but also includes some longer term objectives. Some priorities in the Plan are:

- Raise achievement and improve standards, especially pupils' writing skills by continuing to develop their ability to express their ideas clearly and well in written form, whilst ensuring spelling and punctuation are accurate
- Develop the distinctive nature of our school. One way to achieve this is to adopt our new school logo (see the wall plaque outside the front entrance), which will soon appear on all school stationery.
- Develop use of ICT/work towards BECTA award
- Update website - our new website is to be launched at the Parent Consultation meetings in March 2010.
- Improve safety at front of school - Safer Routes to School funding.
- Introduce and develop the role of sports, music, collective worship & gardening leaders
- Develop the use of school houses
- Continue developing a welcoming and stimulating learning environment
- Maintain accreditation as an International School and Healthy School, and gain Active Mark 2010.

**Governing Body News**

Since last years Update, Ian Mackenzie, Andy Holt and Gilly McKee stepped down from their terms of office as Local Authority, Parent and Foundation Governor respectively. They were all thanked for their contributions. In their place, we are delighted to welcome Julian Gilbert, Debbie Morris and Alisa Lopez Alcock. This means we now have a full complement of 16 governors. There are 6 Governing Body Committees - Personnel, Finance, Curriculum, ICT (Information and Communications Technology), Estates and Communications - which meet twice a term, and report back to the full Governing Body. Membership of the full Governing Body is listed on our website.

**School funding….. can you help us??**

As we are a church school, we can claim back from the tax man an extra 28% of the money you give us for school trips ~ but only if you give us permission to do so. Since we started the scheme, we have claimed over £11,200, but only 60% of our parents are registered to help the school in this way. If all parents agreed to sign up, the School would gain over £3,000 a year, which could be spent on more computers or extra library books or additional hours for a teaching assistant each week or ....?? All you need to do is to complete and return a Gift Aid form.

If you would like more information, please ask Justine Henderson, our Bursar.