

# GOVERNOR NEWSLETTER

## A huge thank you!

On behalf of the Board of Governors, welcome to this Governors' newsletter - our first for a number of years. We hope that this will provide a little more information about the role of governors in the life of the school and provide some insight into just some of the wonderful work that has been carried out by staff this year behind the scenes.

I would like to say a huge THANK YOU to Mr Bowman, Mr Commander, Mr Potter and all of the staff in the school. While in many ways this year has felt 'normal' (and what a relief that is), in reality it has been far from it for staff with significant ongoing pressures due to Covid or its after-effects. We are very grateful to all of the staff for the way that you have managed these difficulties.

There is much to celebrate in the way of academic achievements including fantastic SATs results. However, school is not just about those academic results and as governors and parents we have immensely enjoyed the wonderful plays, music performances, imaginative storytelling, poetry, forest school adventures, a return to outings and residential trips this year. These are all made possible due to the hard work and dedication of our wonderful school staff who make Southville the special place that it is.

The end of the school year is also always a time for farewells. We wish each of the members of staff and all of the families and children leaving the school for new adventures the very best of luck for the future. You will all be missed!

For everyone else, we hope that you have a happy and safe summer and look forward to seeing you back in September.

Jen Gibson  
Chair of Governors



## School Development Priorities

Every year the governors agree a number of areas to be treated as school development priorities. Governors monitor progress in these specific areas over the course of the year and we were delighted this year to be able to get back into school for our monitoring visits - a huge perk of the role!

Here we report a little of what we have seen over the course of the year - the staff have achieved an incredible amount!

### Play

It has been fantastic to see how OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) has started to transform playtime for pupils on both sites through the provision of loose parts, enabling so much more creative play.

On our most recent visit, children used the provision to make elaborate flying cars, spaceships and boats at Merrywood, and a very imaginative and busy food shop at Myrtle and some really impressive dens!

We were also impressed at the range of activities happening in the quiet space at Myrtle guided by Toni Wharton: chess, comic making, lego and card games were all underway as well as offering a peaceful space for children to relax and chat in.

We have enjoyed watching play opportunities evolve over the course of this year and are very grateful to Mr Potter in particular for his passion and hard work in making this happen.





## Phonics and Reading

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A huge amount of work has taken place this year, especially by Miss Armstrong and Mr Commander, to introduce a new validated synthetic phonics programme into school called Little Wandle, supported by the purchase of a huge number of fully decodeable books chosen for being inclusive, well-illustrated and engaging.

Children in Merrywood have benefited from a new structure to reading lessons, with three dedicated sessions each week. The impact of this has been rapid progress, with children being exposed to a challenging range of words.

Additional books have also been purchased for use at Myrtle, to ensure that all children have access to reading book to take home in line with their reading level.

Of course we can't mention reading without also celebrating the opening of the new library at Myrtle, which has been carefully stocked with inviting new books. Huge thanks to everyone that contributed to this, the PTA for the fundraising efforts and Dr Flaecher, the School Business Manager, for her project management. A number of governors took great pleasure in attending the opening to see the children's enthusiasm and hear them sharing their brilliant poems about the magic of reading on World Book Day.

## The Learning Environment

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Governors have had the pleasure of visits to both sites to learn more about plans to optimise the internal environment for the children. A key issue is ensuring the environments are fully inclusive and accessible by all.

The school aims to ensure classrooms are set up to optimise learning, while other spaces are properly purposed for other activities such as nurture spaces, breakout and intervention spaces, music lessons, cooking, IT, and after school clubs. Making the classrooms calmer is a key focus - watch out for hessian backed display boards across both sites (which make a huge difference), and noise cancelling panels in the Merrywood hall. Staff will be working really hard before the new year starts to optimise their classroom environments so that all children have the best chance to focus and learn; we look forward to seeing the impact that this has in the coming year.

## Writing

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This year, we have enjoyed meeting with and learning from Miss Edwards and Mr Commander in connection with the school's focus on writing across KS1 and KS2, as well as looking at a selection of the children's books from across the school. A new writing framework was introduced in term 4 which aims to provide more structure to support children in developing their writing skills and more time for sharing ideas, as well as giving children plenty of freedom to write creatively.

## School Finances

While the school does face financial pressures, as everyone does, with increasing prices, the school finished the 2021/22 financial year with a healthy surplus, which will enable continued investment in the school next year.

Building improvements will be taking place over the summer and in the next academic year, for example in the learning environment at Merrywood with new acoustic panels in the school hall, decoration and classroom furniture.

Parents will hopefully find communication, payments and parents evening bookings much easier due to the introduction of two new apps.

## Schools Bill

Those of you that follow the news in the education sector can't have missed the Government's promise that all schools will be academies by 2030. Southville is a local authority maintained school with no plans at present to change status. Governors are following the progress of the Government's proposals with interest and will be proactive in considering all of the available options with the best interests of the children and staff in mind at all times.

## Parent Survey

Thank you very much for each of the 220 responses that we received to the parent survey this term. We are in the process of analysing the responses and the constructive feedback received will help the Senior Leadership Team and governors consider priorities for the next year in September. We were very pleased to see that the overwhelming majority of parents are very happy with their children's experiences of school.



## Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

A new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement is taking shape, with the new school values at its core. The Equalities Objectives are also being finalised and we look forward to sharing these with you in the near future.

It has been great to hear about the different things the children have been learning about, discussing and celebrating in school. The diversity of the book offering has also expanded with the newly stocked libraries on both sites, and the phonics books used for the Little Wandle scheme, which were specifically selected to ensure they are more diverse and inclusive. Inclusion will be a key theme running through school development plans for the next academic year.

Mrs Moody, the school's Designated Teacher for Looked after Children, and Previously Adopted Children has also done a huge amount of work this year to make Southville an Adoption Friendly school introducing a new policy and continuing work to ensure that school staff are trauma informed.

## School Values

The journey to identifying the new school values of Connection, Courage, Imagination and Care has been one of the most interesting pieces of work for governors this year. We have had fascinating discussions around learning that could be taken from the African philosophy of Ubuntu, among others, and have taken time to reflect on what is (and could be) special about Southville Primary, as identified from input from children, parents and staff.

We look forward to now ensuring that our school vision, policies and school development priorities fully reflect these values in the coming year. We are very grateful to Mr Bowman for the imagination, energy and enthusiasm he has poured into this project this year.