



OVERSTONE COMBINED SCHOOL

GOVERNORS' NEWSLETTER July 2017

Welcome to the regular newsletter produced by the Governors at Overstone. This is designed to provide parents and carers with information about our work and current priorities.

End of an era!

The final week of the summer term is always a bittersweet time as we say goodbye to Year 6 pupils and sometimes members of staff as well. This year brings significant change as we say goodbye and good luck to Mrs France and Mrs Sim.

Mrs France has been an amazing Headteacher, always putting the children at the heart of what she does. As Overstone is a Foundation school, she has had to engage with a huge range of operational issues and has developed a high level of financial competence and buildings expertise. All the decisions she has made as Headteacher have been with the intention of securing the very best outcomes for all the children.

Mrs Sim is the longest serving teacher at Overstone and has made an enormous contribution to the life of the school both as a class teacher and Deputy Headteacher. So many children have benefited from her outstanding teaching and colleagues have learned much from her. Overstone has been fortunate indeed to have both Mrs Sim and Mrs France here for so long.

Governors do understand that parents, carers and children may be feeling a little unsettled by the staff changes but we are confident that the new Leadership Team will continue the fantastic work done by Mrs France and Mrs Sim. We look forward to welcoming Mr Bowskill as the school's new Headteacher in September; he has spent a lot of time at Overstone this term getting to know everyone and having handover discussions with Mrs France. He will be ably supported by Mr McArthur as Deputy Headteacher, while Mr Williams and Mrs Bendall will also be taking up leadership roles as Key Stage 1 Leader and Early Years Leader respectively. We are sure that the new team will do the school proud.

Both staff and governors are also very conscious that some parents and carers are anxious about the introduction of mixed age classes in Years 1 and 2 in the next school year. We hope that the recent open meeting provided some reassurance. Mr Bowskill and Mr Williams will be monitoring the arrangements closely and will ensure there is early feedback to and regular communication with parents/carers.

School funding

Alongside other Buckinghamshire Headteachers, Mrs France wrote to Overstone parents and carers last term to draw your attention to serious concerns about the ongoing funding crisis in schools. It has proved very difficult to balance the school's budget for 2017-18 and we will not be able to maintain the investment in improvements to the school environment this year. The Governing Body's Finance Committee has spent a lot of time this term reviewing the school's financial plans; we are very grateful to Mrs Toosey for her work in this area which has enabled us to make informed decisions.

We do have some excellent news on the school's infrastructure though: Bucks County Council has agreed to fund the replacement of the boilers. Work should begin at the end of the summer and last around six weeks. Bucks County Council will also be refurbishing the toilets in the KS1 and KS2 areas. These projects have been made possible by Mrs Toosey's effective liaison with Bucks and we are very grateful for this.

Extra-curricular clubs and activities

Governors are always impressed by the range of extra-curricular clubs and activities on offer to Overstone pupils. Unlike many primary schools, it is the school's policy not to charge pupils for attending clubs after school and at lunchtime. It is only possible to maintain this through the goodwill of both teaching and non-teaching staff who give up many hours of their time to run these activities. We are sure that parents and carers join us in thanking all the school staff for their efforts this year.

However, the current funding situation outlined above may mean that the school has to consider charging for at least some of the activities that take place outside the school day. Finance Committee has been considering various ways to increase the school's income (as well as reducing its costs) and this may be a path that we will reluctantly have to follow in future.

School Development Plan 2017-18

Developing and improving the school is a constant process. The Headteacher leads this process, working closely with school staff and governors. Governors and staff met last term to review progress on the key areas in the School Development Plan for 2016-17 and to consider additional objectives for future improvement. In view of the forthcoming change of the Headteacher, the timescale for drawing up the Plan has been extended this year. Staff have recently held discussions with the incoming Headteacher to prioritise development objectives for 2017-18. The School Development Plan will be considered by the Governing Body at its next meeting in September.

Open Evening and Community Information Fair: 29 June

We were delighted to meet so many parents and carers at this event on Thursday 29 June. It is now a well-established fixture on the school calendar and offers both current and prospective parents the chance to look around all areas of the school. Thank you to the staff for their support of the event, to the PTA for the lovely refreshments and the representatives of community groups who came in to talk to visitors.

The Governors would also like to thank the members of the PTA for their incredible fund-raising efforts throughout the year. This has allowed staff and pupils to benefit from facilities that would just not be possible from the school's budget and you really have made a tremendous difference to the life of the school.

Feedback

We hope that you have found this interesting. The next Governors' newsletter will be issued in the second half of the Autumn term. Do let us have any feedback via the school office or the school e-mail address (admin@overstone-wing.bucks.sch.uk).

We wish you all a wonderful summer holiday! Best wishes to Year 6 pupils as they move on to new schools, and, as well as Mrs France and Mrs Sim, to Mrs Hutton, Miss Rolls and Mr Dixon as they leave the school for new adventures.