



Newsletter

SPRING 2017 – NUMBER 3 – WEDNESDAY 8TH FEBRUARY 2017

Dear Parents and Carers

Nursery good news

We are very pleased indeed to have been successful in a grant application for an additional nursery building on our site. This will mean that we can offer thirty hours, teacher-led provision per week for 3 and 4 year olds in our nursery FREE to those parents who meet the government's criteria. This is often called "free childcare" but at Whipton it will be much more than that. To be eligible:

- Your child will be aged 3 or 4 when the scheme starts
- Both parents must be working - or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family
- Each parent earns, on average, a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage
- Each parent must have an annual income of less than £100,000

Look out for more information soon and in the meantime, spread the word!

School budgets

We were very lucky with the nursery funding. You might have heard on the news that despite government assurances about educational funding, schools in Devon are being really squeezed this year. Schools receive most of their funding based on the number of pupils they have on roll. In Devon, we receive about £290 per pupil less than the average school across the country. For Devon, this equates to about £25.5 million. As a federation, we receive £132,240 less each year than an average school of our size elsewhere in the UK. This year, I am going to have to look seriously at the costs across the federation at a time when we should be spending more, not less, to make our schools the best they can be. You can help by lobbying your local representatives; it really helps. Below, I have listed the names and contact details/methods of the relevant people and provided five facts. Personalised responses are better than templates, so I'd really appreciate it if you look the time to contact one or all of these people.

- Ben Bradshaw, MP: www.benbradshaw.co.uk

- Stephen Brimble, councillor: cllr.stephen.brimble@exeter.gov.uk
- Peter Edwards, councillor: cllr.peter.edwards@exeter.gov.uk
- Emma Morse: cllr.emma.morse@exeter.gov.uk

Devon School-Funding Facts

1. Devon is and has been for a long time, a member of the F40 group: one of the 40 lowest funded local authorities in the UK.
2. In the ten best funded local authorities, schools are given £6,297 per pupil. In Devon this is £4346, a difference of £1951. If Whipton was funded at the higher rate, we could receive an additional £889,656 into our budget.
3. To fund special needs and disabilities, Devon County Council has taken out £33 per pupil from every school budget. For us, that is a loss of £15048.
4. Schools have had to soak up increased staffing costs for pension contributions, national insurance contributions and pay rises. We have had to do this with smaller budgets.
5. In order to attract more pupils, which in turn will attract more funding, we need to ensure the physical environment of our schools is of the highest quality. We are in a significant minority of schools in Exeter who have received no significant capital funding from government or DCC in the past twenty years.

Junior Library Update

Mrs Wareham has been working hard with the School Library Service and parent volunteers Melanie Woods, Paula Moore, Christine Symes & Fran McBride to get the Junior School Library ready for our launch of accelerated reader after half term. Between now and the launch, all children in KS2 will be doing an online reading assessment to allocate them a book band. They will then be free to read books which match their reading ability and interest level. More details to follow after half term.

More over the page →

The march of the nanny state...

Well, not exactly. Schools are always in a difficult position when it comes to advising parents about what is best for their children and my rule of thumb is to only get involved if a parent wants help or if I feel a child is unsafe. Advising parents on what computer games their children should be playing is certainly a grey area. What I would say to you, though, is that I wouldn't let a child of mine anywhere near games such as Grand Theft Auto, Gears of War, Call of Duty and the like. The reason I bring this up is that recently, we have overheard children as young as eight saying that they play these games, often unsupervised. Like I said, I can only advise, but in my personal view the casual glorification of violence, often against women and "innocent people" using increasingly realistic graphics is harmful to children. We can't complain about how some men treat some women and how violence is increasingly used to solve problems in our world, if we don't shield our children from this sort of stuff. If you have these games in your house and play them as an adult, then you'll know what I mean. If you have the games in your house and you are not sure if your children play them, then it might be good to check.

School Dinners

We will continue to encourage you to have a school dinner with us, and Mrs West our kitchen manager is continually trying out new recipes. You might think that packed lunches are cheaper than school meals, but this isn't always the case. We also need to consider the nutritional value of the food. Have a look at the Change for Life website hosted by the NHS. It points out our nations issues with food nutrition and obesity. It's not only thought provoking, but gives some good ideas: www.nhs.uk/change4life

Water-bottles

Hydration at school is an important thing. We have the same approach to water on both school sites: we want each child to have a named water-bottle in school. That way, children can have access to water when they need it (water only, not squash or juice) and ensure good hygiene. In the infants, if a child does not have a water-bottle, they will be given a cup and in the juniors, they will drink from the outside fountains at break-time only. Our models, Ruby and Jack are seen here demonstrating what good water-bottle use looks like!

Correct email addresses and telephone numbers

This is just a general reminder to make sure that you let the school offices know every time you change your email address and/or telephone number. We still have people saying they don't get texts or emails and we find out that we still have the old one on our system. We want to make it easy to be in touch.

Behaviour policy

We are a week and a half in to our new behaviour policy and I thought I would update you on how it is going. You will recall what I said in my last newsletter: we will be cracking down on behaviour that causes unhappiness in the playground and spoils children's learning in the classroom. We are serious about this: all your children should feel happy and safe at school and enjoy their lessons. On the whole, I am pleased with children's responses to the new policy. They understand the warning system and are keen not to be given a warning. For the few children who haven't got this message, we have met with parents and introduced behaviour report cards. This has been the case for five children so far and I really hope the number doesn't get beyond that. Our commitment to you is that we will know your children really well, be respectful of them, be fair and provide them with good quality learning experiences. If we get this right, hopefully you will support us in our drive to ensure that the behaviour across both schools is continually excellent. The policy is now available for you to see on the Latest News section of our website.

