



Mill Water School

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Governors Newsletter - Spring Term 2017

Safeguarding

Governors have received additional training this past half term from Julie Cornwell. Julie is a social work professional as well as being Mill Water's Safeguarding Governor. One of the topics discussed was the just published Devon Neglect Strategy. The 2015/16 figures for Devon make sobering reading. Of the 714 children who had a Child Protection Plan, neglect was the leading cause in 500 of them, that is 70%. The national figure for this period, where CPP's quote neglect as the leading cause, is 46%.

We also spoke about Child Sexual Exploitation, Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage, all topics that have been given strong storylines in EastEnders, Coronation Street and Call the Midwife recently.

Mill Water is a listening school. Our staff are very well attuned to the needs and behaviours of our pupils. However, we are not complacent in thinking that such things could not happen here. The reality of life with vulnerable children and young people is that issues around safeguarding do arise. It is our aim that early intervention and close working with families and professionals will lead to quick resolutions.

Funding

You will have heard that the Government's attempts to rebalance the national funding formula for schools is causing considerable controversy across the country. Large city schools are expecting the biggest cuts, whereas shire counties are anticipating the biggest increases.

The Chancellor's spring budget contained funding for 100 plus new free schools. £216 million was allocated for repairs to existing school buildings. In addition the DfE is allocating £215 million to councils to help them improve provision for pupils with SEN. Local Authorities can spend the cash to increase capacity in both mainstream and special schools.

Mill Water Governors are awaiting the outcome of Devon Local Authority's reassessment of the funding split between its Special Schools. Governors are asking for a fairer share of existing funds to reflect the more complex needs of pupils now coming into our school.

Twilight Training

Tuesday evenings in February and March have seen staff attending a series of workshops based around improving communication with pupils across the school. We have had sessions on Total Communication, Attention Autism, Makaton, Intensive Interaction and PECS.

As well as the evening workshops staff have been set a series of reflective challenges to see how this training impacts on their practice and on outcomes for the pupils they work with. Colleagues have been filming interactions within class groups to gather evidence.

Parent, Pupil and Staff Questionnaires

We have undertaken pupil and parent questionnaires this term. It has provided Governors and school leaders with a snapshot of opinions and attitudes. The overwhelming majority of responses were very positive, with many comments recognising the hard work of classroom and admin staff. Where concerns have been raised these are being addressed. Sarah Pickering has returned to the school and is currently undertaking a pastoral role as deputy head with responsible for safeguarding.

The next stage of the process is to conduct a similar questionnaire for staff. All the responses are analysed and will be used to inform both the Self Evaluation Form and the School Development Plan. Both documents are available to read on this website.y

Thank you Jean, welcome Anne

Governors were sorry to say goodbye to Jean Quinn this term. Jean has served as a Mill Water Governor for the past two years. She brought her experience from a career in the diplomatic service and her natural ability to communicate at all levels. Jean's knowledge of HR and her analytical mind were very useful to us. We would like to wish Jean all the very best as she moves on to take up a bigger role in organising the Budleigh music, food and literature festivals.

The Governing Body has been strengthened by the appointment of Anne Wintercran. Anne works for the Cornwall College Group, which administer the running of Bickton College. She leads the Foundation Learning training programme and has long experience of teaching disadvantaged and vulnerable young adults. She brings an understanding of post 16 education to the governors.