

Grendon Underwood Combined School

Report for Parish Council Meeting May 2019

The past year has been a very busy one at school and started last summer with a number of staffing changes. Mr Morrissey, the Headteacher, moved to Broughton Infants at the beginning of the summer term and was replaced temporarily by our Deputy Headteacher, Miss Amy White Jones, together with an Interim Headteacher from North Marston, Cathy Gouldstone. Summer at school is always jam-packed, and this one even more so than usual with the arrival of Ofsted in July. This was the usual cycle of inspection and they hadn't visited for four years, and the school was again awarded a "Good" judgement, having achieved all the targets previously set.

I was appointed to start in September 2019, having previously been a Head teacher at a small school in Oxfordshire, Little Milton, for three years. There are always challenges at schools, however, the staff, children, parents and governors all gave me a great welcome and convinced me that we have exactly the right team in place to go from strength to strength, including working on the goals set by Ofsted last summer. I've been developing, with lots of consultation, a new vision and set of values for the school, based on what we want to offer our children and the strengths we have as a spacious rural primary school.

In particular this academic year we've been focussing hard on maths teaching and learning, purchasing new practical equipment and online programmes, courtesy of our FROGS (Friends of Grendon School). Budget is always stretched and so we were hugely grateful also to the FROGS for buying LED interactive screens for our classrooms this year and for helping to revive our IT suite. Other initiatives include introducing the Daily Mile, which means that children spend an extra 10 minutes daily walking or running around the playground – we're planning some sponsored laps to see how far around the virtual world we could run very shortly!

We've had some wonderful theme weeks at school, including Mental Health Awareness week and Science week. The latter started with a simulated Spacecraft crash on the playground and the children investigated, wrote newspaper articles and then went on to make slime, rockets and even to dehydrate foodstuffs for astronauts. Everyone has also been involved in performances, apart from Years 5 and 6, who are going to work on theirs after half term now that the SATs (Standard Assessments Tests) are finished. We entertained families with "Tinsel and Teatowels" and "It's a Baby!" at Christmas time and, just before Easter with a Roald Dahl inspired production of Little Red Riding Hood – not quite the same as the original!

The Roald Dahl connection to the village of Grendon Underwood is something we have been fostering and now we've developed a partnership with the museum in Great Missenden. This half term the children were invited to enter a uniquely tailored competition just for our school to design book covers to show Matilda aged 30. The six winners will be invited to the museum with their families to see their artwork displayed alongside Quentin Blake's newly commissioned work, so that's a great honour.

Now we find ourselves midway through the final term of this academic year and looking forward to our fete (15th June) and sports day as well as other celebratory events, especially for the children leaving us at the end of Year 6 for secondary schools. We are always looking for opportunities to work with the wider community and would welcome any help or information to forge a closer relationship in future.

Beth McLaren,

Headteacher, May 2019