



Governors' Newsletter 17

Summer Term, July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we come to the end of another school year, I would like to thank you, on behalf of all our governors, for the way in which you have supported our two schools during such a challenging time. The uncertainty that has characterised this school year has demanded a lot of courage, flexibility and generosity from everyone. Your collaboration throughout the year has made it possible for our staff to give the very best to your children whether it was through remote learning or in school. We know that when it was possible for all children to return there was uncertainty for some as well as a great deal of happiness for children who were able to link up with their friends again. It was acknowledged that school is a good place to be and that learning is fun. You will be aware that our schools have taken into account that children needed to be brought back in a gentle and considered way whilst, at the same time, having a full and stimulating curriculum in place. This meant ensuring that children's individual needs were understood.

It has been a pleasure to have them all together again and to see them thrive. Great care will be taken in the year ahead to ensure that this approach continues so that all children can engage fully in their learning and can be proud of what they achieve. We hope you have a healthy, happy and peaceful summer break.

Rosemary Games
Chair of Governors

Wood of Hope



'Mighty oaks from little acorns grow' is a proverb that dates from the 14th century and was used by Chaucer, one of the first authors to write in English.

It was a theme referred to many times during the planting of the 'Wood of Hope' on the fields of both St Michael's and Clover Hill schools.

There were no acorns or seeds planted, but some of the saplings had the narrowest stems and smallest leaves. These were interspersed with 6ft specimen trees and some were showing spring blossom as they were planted in the ground.

It was the first activity in which Governors and other community visitors could participate after the winter lockdown, it was a real joy to watch the children's

enthusiasm as they filled the holes, dug by Mr. Inger and Mr. Atzori, with the sapling, rich soil, water and topped off with a protective layer of bark.

The 'Wood of Hope' has been not just a positive way of addressing climate change and reminding children that being outdoors and enjoying nature is positive for our mental health, but also a remembrance of this time in our children's lives and a representation of their resilience and strength.

They will have planted, cared for and watched as these trees grow from saplings that were as high as their knees into trees taller than houses. It will be a life-long legacy for them.



All Angels' Angels

When originally selecting a name for the Federation of our two schools, it was thought fitting to name it after the little-known second half of the name of the church in Bowthorpe, St. Michael and All Angels.

The Governors would like to pay tribute to all the Angels in St. Michael's Junior and Clover Hill Infant Schools and the surrounding community who over the last 18 months have shown remarkable fortitude, forbearance, hard work, resilience and bravery.

- * **Bowthorpe Community** – The schools exist within a marvellous community with organisations who have worked together and with the schools to support families in need.
- * **Children** – When asked to work from home in difficult circumstances, they did their best. When asked to go back into school in difficult circumstances, they did their best. Neither situation was easy, and yet children rose to the occasion and settled into the new order at school happily.
- * **Carers/Parents** – So much has rested on parents' shoulders, becoming tutors, dealing with restless children indoors, unable to see loved ones and friends. You have survived. Thank you for supporting both schools and your children.
- * **Support Staff** – Office Staff, Teaching Assistants, Pastoral Staff have all worked at home, adjusting their practices and using all the tools that technology can offer them to perform their routine tasks and keep in touch with families. When back in school they could not have daily contact as they used to have with parents and children making their job more difficult. A special thank you to the cleaning and premises staff who have spent many hours making the schools safe places to return to after the lockdown.
- * **Teachers** – Teaching has been one of the outstanding professions during the pandemic. Teachers have been asked repeatedly to put themselves and their families at risk to keep the pupils in their care learning and developing with the most extraordinary restrictions put upon them, they have succeeded with characteristic conscientiousness and dedication. During lockdown they have had to learn how to use technology to not only enhance, but to totally take over the delivery of the curriculum. Returning to school they have had to distance themselves not only from the children, but also from their colleagues and the support network that usually surrounds them in school. All have continued to provide excellent education whilst in the extraordinary isolation of their class bubbles.
- * **Leaders** – The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has shown remarkable leadership. Handling the changing guidance over the past year and a half has been a tangle of red tape and conflicting information. Mrs. McCarney and her team have been making sure that changes are communicated and acted upon, resources have been available and that problems have workable solutions. It has not been easy to keep everyone safe and comfortable in the schools. All the SLT have taken a 'hands on' approach and still have a massive task to make sure that all our children have the best outcomes for the future.

We may be over the peak of the pandemic, but there is much still to do for the community and children of Bowthorpe. It cannot be overstated that the Governors of All Angels' Federation feel proud, privileged and honoured to be associated with its staff, parents, children and the community of Bowthorpe.

Technology and Learning

Technology has played an important part in providing education during the closure of our schools in new and innovative ways, but there must be a discussion around what was good about the use of technology and distance learning in education and how it should be used in the future. It is certain that the growing number of applications and online systems used in school will need supporting with capital expenditure for equipment and training for teaching and support staff.

Governors' initial concerns are that both schools have the capacity to expand their use of technology without compromising the quality of connection to the internet or the availability of hardware for children to use.

In the last 4 months there has been an investigation into the ways in which the Federation can make sure that connection to 'the cloud' and online resources can be more stable and provide the speeds that modern devices require to provide smooth access to the internet across both schools.

On a restricted budget this will not be easy, but there is a plan for improvements to the network and a refresh of hardware for children and staff which will be implemented over the next academic year and beyond.



Norfolk Into Opera Festival



What a way to end the academic year with a festival of Music, Dance and Art led by Into Opera.

The federation have a 2-year residency arranged with this organisation which helps schools break negative cycles in the lives of young people through the intervention of arts and culture. Earlier in the year St. Michael's took part in the Song Cycle, '2020 You Won't Hold Me Back'.

This festival included dance workshops in the playground with Natasha Nahamjani, learning songs and singing with



Patrick Bennett and Dan Moriyamuso and a visit from opera singer Lizzie Holmes plus much more. An experience that these children will never forget. Our own Pip Vigo held Djembe Drumming sessions with the children too.

The Staff and Governors watching were impressed with the enthusiasm and enjoyment the children so obviously showed, but most of all it was inspiring and uplifting to hear the children's singing voices quietened for so long by the pandemic at full volume, belting out the songs taught to them on the day.

The expressions on the pupils' faces were a joy to behold and the occasion so emotional that some onlookers were moved to tears.

The federation's partnership with Into Opera does not end here. It will continue next year with more projects for the children to take part in. The children will have a chance to hear and participate in cultural events that they may never have experienced before. If you would like to know more, follow the link below to the Into Opera website:

<https://www.into-opera.org.uk/a-creative-revolution-in-norwich>



Next Stages

It is usual at this time of year to say goodbye to children moving on to High School and moving from Clover Hill to St Michael's. We wish you all the best and every success as you move into your new schools. You are ready to undertake the new adventure with confidence.

In September we look forward to welcoming the children from Clover Hill and other infant schools into St Michael's with a fresh new open outlook after the pandemic. We will also be saying hello to children moving into Reception and Nursery at Clover Hill, some new and some familiar. Your teachers and support staff are really looking forward to meeting you.

Summer Holidays and Returning to 'Normal' in September

The new academic year 2021-22 brings many challenges to children and staff alike. In the press you will have heard phrases like 'missed education', 'catching up', 'falling behind', 'a lost generation'.

At All Angels' Federation we firmly believe that children have had some different but not unrewarding experiences during lockdown. Long walks looking at nature, spending quality time with their parents, using equipment from the kitchen for science experiments, using what is in the home for learning materials, bike riding and other forms of exercise. In addition to this, a very positive approach to learning in school and remotely. These children may not have had the experiences of pupils in previous years, but that is not to say they were negative or not educational.

The Leadership team are looking at a holistic approach to fully bring the children back to learning, paying attention to their re-adaptation morally, spiritually, physically and academically. They will be looking at the school day to maximise the potential for learning and to use every minute to the best effect.

This is an opportunity to re-examine educational practices and we are sure that our parents know, appreciate and reinforce our approach with their children. Now is the time to fully embrace the five key values of our federation:



Respect - Trust - Perseverance - Hope - Success

All Angels' Governors

Rosemary Games (**Chair of Governors**)

Laurie Bolt (**Vice Chair of Governors**)

Janet Acaster

Jess Davies Grant (Staff Governor CHIS)

Debbie Bunting (Parent Governor)

Linda Johnson

Helen McCarney (**Headteacher**)

David Blake

Brian Earley

Gavin Shiers

Clare Watson (Parent Governor)

David Walker

Feedback - Governors can be contacted by writing or emailing either of the schools in All Angels' Federation, please mark your communication for the attention of the Chair of Governors.

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