



On the 26th September a *Meet the Parents, Governors and Great Tew School Supporters Club (GTSSC)* event was held at school. The event was attended by parents and governors. Mrs. Miles, Head Teacher, Jane Zibarras, Chair of Governors and Sarah Heath, Leader of GTSSC presented on learning, daily life, governance and fundraising at the school. The talks are reproduced here so that parents and carers unable to attend on the 26th can benefit from this insight into life at Great Tew and future plans.

The Governor Bulletin aims to provide a direct communication channel from governors to parents about the school's development priorities and long-term strategic plans. Previous issues can be found on the [Governing Body webpages](#).

LIFE AT GREAT TEW PRIMARY – Developing the whole child – MRS MILES

Mrs. Miles welcomed all to the newly refurbished space in the main school building before describing life in the school, current and future priorities and the wonderful outcomes for the children...

"I would like to take you inside daily life of the school. Some of you come in to school to hear readers and spend time in the classrooms, but for some of you, life behind the classroom doors may seem a bit of a mystery. I thought you might like to hear about what you might see if you took a walk round the school during the school day and peeped into the classrooms at work.

Whilst you may have read stories of gloom and doom in the press, about a shrinking curriculum with children doing nothing except Maths and English, and all creativity squeezed out of the curriculum, we place great emphasis on making learning engaging for the children.

On a visit to the classrooms you'd see children immersed in their learning, an integrated curriculum, where the children's learning is linked across broad science, history or geography themes. We believe that linking the children's learning in this way engages and excites them and helps them make sense of what they are learning.

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Who are the Governors?

Chair: Jane Zibarras, Co-opted Governor

Vice Chair: Naomi Roberts, Parent Governor

Lucy Miles, Headteacher

Peter Collins, Parent Governor (previous Chair)

Viv Bennett, Local Authority Governor (previous Chair)

Hugo Brown, Parent Governor

Una Tibbetts, Co-opted Governor

Lauren Nimmo, Staff Governor

Matt Bull, Associate Member

Angela Murrey, Associate Member

Madeleine Rickard, Clerk

Contact governors via the School Office: office.2104@great-tew.oxon.sch.uk

GREAT TEW SCHOOL SUPPORTERS CLUB (GTSSC)

Contact Sarah Heath or Angela Murrey via the School Office: office.2104@great-tew.oxon.sch.uk

FOR YOUR DIARY:

**Christmas Fair
Saturday 1st Dec**

You might well see a parent or local volunteer in the classrooms, hearing readers, delivering a club, supporting an art lesson. A couple of Summers ago we had a whole school science week where the curriculum was suspended and the children spent the whole week doing science, with trips out of school and a roadshow for all classes, as well as parents who work in the field of science coming in to talk to the children. One of our mothers was welcomed into school to tell the children all about her job as a paediatric doctor; another came to tell them all about life as a vet.

This Summer, we had a whole week devoted to learning about Modern Britain, the Britain beyond leafy Great Tew, all linked to the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle and how the country has changed in the sixty years the queen has been on the throne. During our week on Modern Britain, one of our parents came to tell the children about his family roots in the Caribbean. Another ex-parent came to talk to the older children about what life would be like for a child with a parent in prison.

I know you'd see, because people often comment, children who are polite, friendly, confident – children who look you in the eye and show an interest in what you have to say.

If you were happy to put on your wellies, you might be able to join the children in our wild garden, where their learning is brought to life outdoors. They might be learning science – possibly making sound mobiles, exploring habitats, planting and composting – or perhaps they'd be weaving or sketching, or making a scarecrow.

You'd see a buzz of learning, not children in rows, with children of all abilities, working together, supporting and learning from one another, with their learning being expertly steered by the teachers and teaching assistants, sometimes working in groups, sometimes on their own.

You'd see older children out in the playground being trailed by a group of adoring younger children – really strong relationships being forged that last well beyond primary school days.

Undoubtedly, you'd see evidence of high academic attainment as you looked in the children's books or on the wall. But as well as that you'd see something else. We are educating children for a future as yet unknown; yes, the children need to learn facts and knowledge, but you'd see how much emphasis we place on those other skills so essential to success and happiness in adult life. You'd see children willing and keen to engage in thoughtful discussion, to debate the values we appreciate in one another, children reflecting on their mistakes, debating issues sensitively.

With so much in the media at the moment about mental illness, schools play a key role in teaching children the importance of failure as a part of the learning process not something to be afraid of. I know that as you walked round the classrooms you'd hear children talking about the process of learning, where they found something hard, celebrating mistakes, picking themselves up after a setback, happy to have another go. These skills are increasingly important, and if we can instill them in youngsters from an early age we are giving them essential skills to cope in an increasingly challenging world.

But as we walked round school, most of all I hope you'd bump into one of our Year Six children, most of whom have been with us since Reception, who have journeyed through the school and who model so well what we believe is our core purpose as educators.

As I looked at the end of term at our oldest children, the 11-year olds who've just headed off to secondary school, I felt so proud of the young people they had become. They are confident, kind and spirited, with a great sense of fun but a keen desire to learn and to do the very best they can. They know who they are and where their strengths lie, and they are reflective and honest and can tell you what they need to work on or when they have made wrong decisions.

Academically, they've done the very best they can, but more importantly than that they are emotionally literate and self-assured, with a belief that they can achieve and a desire to do so. They are enthusiastic and optimistic about their future, with the skills and confidence to adapt in an ever-changing world and to make choices. *Cont..,*

They take delight and joy in one another, in the experiences they encounter, and in the natural world around them. Great Tew is tiny, but the children's horizons are certainly not. They are interested in the world they live in, the world beyond Great Tew, and they have an appetite to make a difference and to address the suffering and inequalities in the world around them.

In the end of year Leavers Service, one child told us: *I have had such a brilliant time at Great Tew, I will miss it so much. All my friends here are amazing, they have always been by my side. However, so have the teachers and staff; they have pushed me to achieve the best and they have never let me give up when I was faced with a difficult problem. I never want to leave this school, Great Tew really is great, it has definitely lived up to its name!*

Sometimes, but not in fact that often, when I show people round they are interested in our Ofsted outstanding rating – I always encourage them to look beyond Ofsted at what they see and feel when they come into the classrooms. There are always things to develop, things we want to improve.

Editor's note: Mrs. Miles then went on to read a piece of creative writing from a Year 6 child – the audience was visibly impressed by the power, structure and vocab within the work. One of the school's development priorities in 2017/18 was an improvement in writing outcomes – in their final primary tests (SATS) 50% of Year 6 were judged to be working at Greater Depth, a result well above the national average. Mrs. Miles then described some priorities for the current year, including mental arithmetic, the broader curriculum (with a particular focus on the arts) and enrichment opportunities and development of the outside learning environment (*more on this below*).

Governance & Community – Jane Zibarras, Chair of Governors

Jane gave an overview of governance at the school and how strategically important the school community is to school development and outcomes for the children.

"I would like to explain to you, briefly, how the Governors at Great Tew work to support school improvement and achieve its ambitious goals and also to look at the school within its wider community.

But first let me introduce the governors – there are ten members of our governing body, 3 parent governors, 1 staff governor, 2 co-opted governors, 1 local authority governor and 2 associate members and Mrs Miles as head teacher - and we are supported by Madeleine our very experienced clerk. Parent governors have been elected by the parents and co-opted governors have been invited to join the board by the governors on account of a particular skillset or experience. We regularly review the skills at the table to ensure that we are able to fulfil these three core responsibilities

- **Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction**
- **Hold the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils**
- **Oversee the financial performance of the school**

(funding remains an increasing problem affecting schools throughout the country. The money put into education has simply not kept up with inflation and the extra costs which schools have to bear these days).

You may be interested to know that school governors are the largest volunteer force in the country.

Our governors bring skills and experience, but what underpins everything they do for the school – throughout the year – is a strong commitment to work together to enable every child in the school to reach their potential.

So when Mrs Miles speaks about the priorities for this year such as a focus on mental arithmetic, the broader curriculum (with a particular focus on the arts) and enrichment opportunities *and* development of the outside learning environment – governors are part of the conversation about priorities and then we monitor and report on the progress in these areas throughout the year – this year we will meet 8 times as an FGB. We establish working parties as required – focussed on helping the school to achieve particular objectives. Last year for example, one of our working parties focussed on

the improvement of the learning spaces in this building. Working with staff, needs were assessed, a procurement process established and a schedule of works drawn up.

So that is a little about how we work – I do hope that some of you will consider putting yourselves forward as a governor when the opportunity arises – you can have real impact, make a very real difference and it can be hugely rewarding. Please ask me, any of the current governors, former governors – all will be happy to share their experience.

Now, the school and the opportunities of the children are greatly enhanced and enriched when there is a fully engaged and supportive school community. I'd like to take this opportunity, as Mrs Miles painted a picture of life within the school, to paint a picture of the school within its community.

You [*parents*] play a vital role in that community through your support for your child's education and the school. The skills, experience and time individual parents contribute to the school are key to realising its ambitious goals – we have an extraordinary parent body here at Great Tew. The readers, the bakers, the Christmas lunch chefs, the event organisers, the trip accompaniers, the tie dyers, the potters, the artists, the club helpers, the creator of the pots and hanging baskets which made the school look so beautiful in the summer – all parents and all vital.

The school is part of the Chipping Norton Partnership of Schools, a collection of 11 primary schools and Chippy Secondary, which provides broader learning and sporting experiences and facilities otherwise unavailable to a small rural primary school – Mrs Miles chairs a termly meeting of heads of partnership schools and I chair a termly meeting of partnership governors – we endeavour to make the most of collaborative opportunities within the partnership.

And, the school's network of support extends into the local community in other ways – the Pre-school, the Church with Reverend Ginny, the Great Tew Estate, the many local businesses, including, Amazing Animals at Heythrop, the Falkland Arms (who have helped with this evening), Soho Farmhouse, Aynhoe Park, Hook Norton Brewery, local estate agents and the School Photograph Co, have all supported many aspects of school life including fundraising.

These relationships and collaborations have never been more strategically important as the local authority withdraws services and support from the school, pressure on budgets grows and schools are being asked to do more with less – what do I mean? Well until recently responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of the school buildings rested with the Local Authority – now it is the school's sole responsibility – to maintain the buildings and grounds – with a £5,000 annual budget – which when one considers the demands of a Victorian school building, and particularly its roof, is clearly inadequate.

Now I must leave you on a positive note – there is a real buzz about the school and we are all excited about what can be achieved. If you would like to 'get more involved' please speak to Angela in the School Office, to Mrs Miles, to me."

Update on fundraising from GTSSC – Sarah Heath

"The importance of parent fundraising for Great Tew"

Parent fundraising has been absolutely essential to the development of the school in recent years.

The most notable example of this has been the fundraising for the Key Stage 1 building. The new building cost around £350,000 and, while governor led grant applications secured part funding for this, over £130,000 of the total was raised through incredible parent fundraising and personal donations. The building has transformed the school, so the value and impact of these efforts is clear.

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Recent fundraising

Over the past 18 months, we have seen the fundraising efforts at school go from strength to strength. The summer fete and Christmas fair are now on a much larger scale, and are raising significant sums for the school, thanks to the very hard work of the parents who organise them. Alongside this, we have regular events like the school discos and uniform sales, and then one-off events like the recent Jack Savoretti concert, and, last year, the pie and quiz night.

These events are delivered thanks to the efforts of a wide range of parents from the school and we are extremely grateful for all their support. So far, during 2017 and 2018, an amazing £38,000 has been raised.

How the school is using this money

£5,000	<p>Learning resources & experiences</p> <p>eg library books, classroom resources, focused experiences directly related to curriculum</p>	<p>Some items already purchased (eg Charanga music scheme), others identified</p> <p><i>NB With ongoing pressure on school budgets, it is likely that the school will continue to rely on fundraising to help buy learning resources.</i></p>
£3,000	<p>Music & art resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some already arrived and in use, others still to come • This has already much improved the music offering at the school
£5,000	<p>Refurbishment of main school building</p> <p>NB Matched by a £5,000 parent donation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed over summer 2018 • This has delivered a major improvement to the learning environment for KS2.

Rainy day funding

One very important point to note is that, not all fundraising income can be allocated to new projects. School budgets are very tight and we know that it's only going to get harder to balance the books in the short term. This means that some fundraising – likely to be a minimum of £5,000 pa - will always have to be kept back to provide a buffer for the school in the event of an emergency (unforeseen building repairs, etc), or if budgets become too tight to provide essential curriculum resources.

What's next?

In the short term, there are both smaller and larger scale projects which fundraising can support.

Smaller projects include:

- enrichment events e.g. Book Week, Science Week etc, which benefit all children.
- computer hardware – laptops will need replacing soon!
- C-touch screens for reception and the hall

On a larger scale, now the internal improvements are complete, we can focus on the school's outside space. We are asking three school creative landscape/play companies to draw up costed proposals for enhancing the school's beautiful but challenging grounds. Solutions must have teaching/learning or physical development benefits - whilst of course bearing in mind health and safety, and staff to pupil ratios during break times. Once we have the proposals, we will consult with the parent body to obtain feedback and determine priorities. If anyone would like to be directly involved with this project, please let us know.

How you can get involved with fundraising

Fundraising is coordinated through the Great Tew School Supporters Club. We aim to have 2-3 large scale events each year – usually the Christmas & Summer fairs, and then events like Tea for Tew at Cornbury.

Each event tends to be led by one or two parents, supported by a big team of parent volunteers. We have a system of Supporters Club class reps to let parents know what support is needed for each event (e.g. running a stall, donating cakes, etc.).”

Everyone is welcome to be involved and to put forward new ideas – please speak to Sarah Heath or Angela in the School Office if you have ideas or would like to be involved.