



West Ashtead Primary School

Newsletter Number 10 6th February 2017

What happened to January? It seems to have been and gone just as I was started to get accustomed to it and now we are only 4 get ups until half term. Maybe it's my age, but time does seem to be speeding up.

1. Brian Moses On 17th March we will be visited by the author and poet, Brian Moses. He will be doing a presentation to the school followed by workshops. There is nothing for you to pay as this event is being funded by the school. Brian has been visiting schools for many years (it is rumoured he was once a friend of Shakespeare) and I know the children will enjoy working with him.

2. Year 5 LEGO Workshop Last Monday Brian Egles, from Surrey SATRO (Science and Technology Regional Organisation) came into school to run some workshops for our Year 5 classes. He was using Lego WeDo kits which enabled the children to build working models and then write code to control their movement. Both classes had a great time with this and they will get the chance to do more because thanks to funding from Exxon we have bought 20 WeDo kits and the software so we can teach children about coding. Eventually these kits will be used lower down the school, but for now we need to fill gaps in our older children's learning.

3. Little critters We are getting a steady stream of complaints from parents that their children have caught head lice and would we please do something about it. Actually there is very little we can do as we are not allowed to treat children's hair ourselves. Neither, for that matter can the school nurses. The days of Nitty Nora are well and truly over. It comes down to every family getting into a routine of checking everyone's hair at least weekly – more frequently if any infection is spotted. The fact is that it only takes one family not to do this and a whole class gets affected. Lotions are available from pharmacists but really the best and cheapest treatment is to comb the hair while wet and with conditioner in it with a fined toothed nit comb. Once again, can I refer you to this website which has loads of information and ideas to help you: <http://www.onceaweektakeapeek.com/>

4. Hair and hair wear Staying with the hair theme, in my previous schools there was an accepted rule that all children with long hair would have it tied back so it was clear of the face and shoulders. There was also a rule that children should not wear large bows and ribbons in their hair, but stick to a plain and simple band or clip, ideally in the school's colour. Either those rules have not reached West Ashtead or they did but they have been forgotten because we have lots of children with long hair which is not tied back and covering their faces when they lean forward and an increasing number of girls wearing large brightly coloured bows. If we attached a small electric motor to those bows I think the girls might take off. So, please could you ensure that if your child has long hair it is plaited or tied back and whatever length of hair your child has please keep those pretty bows and ribbons for weekends and holidays and wear something smaller and plainer in school. Please note that this applies to boys as well as girls.

5. Stag Leys A resident of Stag Leys has written to us to complain about the behaviour of some parents who park in this road when dropping off or collecting their children. This is what he has said:

“As a former Governor I always defend the school if I am aware of unjustified comments or criticisms. However I have become aware of the situation in my own road, namely Stag Leys, which reminds me of the number of occasions the subject of parking in Taleworth Road or adjacent roads was raised at Governors meetings.

Following the construction of the A 24 Cycle Path the school took the opportunity to open the gate on to the cycle path to enable students to have access. Presumably it was anticipated that entrance would only be utilised by students who either walked, cycled or scooted to the school. Whether the Governors realised that parents would also take the opportunity to park in Stag Leys and cross the road by way of the traffic lights is a matter of conjecture but it has happened. This has resulted in dangerous and anti-social parking in a very busy residential road which carries a significant amount of commercial traffic besides residents vehicles.

An example of anti-social behaviour yesterday was a female parent sitting in her car with the engine running presumably to keep her warm. A fellow resident mentioned in passing that "Traffic Wardens" appeared one day to issue tickets where vehicles were incorrectly parked. One other point to mention is that Stag Leys has always been subject to all day parking. Occasionally vehicles are parked at the A24 end of the road for days on end without moving. There is one there now.

Why am I writing to you: firstly to enquire whether WAP is monitoring the Stag Leys situation? Secondly to suggest the School in conjunction with Local Councillors should take the initiative by arranging to contact the Stag Leys residents who are currently affected by parents parking their cars twice a day when they bring to or collect their children from school. If the affected residents are happy with the current situation then so be it. If not then an alternative solution needs to be found which might result in the gate in question being permanently closed. Closure would be unfair on students who genuinely make their way to the School in a non-motorised way which includes students who reside in Stag Leys or one of the cul-de-sacs off my road.

I hope that the Governing Body will consider this communication in conjunction with any other correspondence received on the subject.”

As I have written before, the Governors and I have no control or authority over parents and where they choose to park. As a former governor of this school the gentleman should know that. Equally, the fact that the discussions he remembers having regarding parking are still going on suggests there is no easy answer to the problem. It is also relevant to note that Stag Leys is a publically maintained road and as such anyone is free to park there – whether the residents are happy with it or not. That said, it is not unreasonable to expect parents to park considerately, not in front of driveways, not leaving the car engine running for long periods. Those of you who park in Stag Leys are probably all too aware of how some of the residents feel about you parking in their road. Please can I ask you to try not to antagonise them more than you do simply by being there?

6. Netball. Mrs Marchant writes: Last Monday our Netball teams played their first matches this year against The Greville. It was a day of firsts. First match of the season, first match played at West Ashtead on our brand new courts, first time we have had boys in the team and the first time we have managed to beat the Greville in many years!

The A- team’s game was played at a fast pace with end to end action and great defending from both teams but once a couple of goals had been scored West Ashtead settled into a good rhythm, passing accurately and moving quickly down the court. In the end West Ashtead were worthy winners with an impressive score of 9-1. The B-team’s game was a tougher challenge, with The Greville’s players playing to good Netball. We trailed 2-0 after the first quarter, but with a switch of positions we fought back to 2-2. The second half saw some amazing defending but by the end of the 3rd quarter we were trailing 4-3. The final quarter saw us draw level twice before going ahead to win the match 6-5. Both of our teams played fantastically, producing great team play.

7. Thank You! Year 6 have been learning about how light works and how eyes use light to see. To help them with this last Thursday they had an interesting time dissecting fish heads to look at the eyes to identify the different parts and see how they are connected to the brain. Mrs Walsh, who obtained these fish heads from her fishmonger, has asked if I could give a plug to him as he did not charge us anything for them. So, if you are ever in that neck of the woods, please try SR Kay and Sons, 1, High Street, Tadworth. They have been there for 80 years and the business is now being run by the fourth generation of the family. As it happens I taught the present Mr Kay's little sister when she was at primary school in the early '80's. Maria is now in her early 40's, which makes me feel ancient. Anyway, it is a fantastic, proper fish shop which gets its fish fresh from Billingsgate each day and Mrs Walsh and I can thoroughly recommend it!

8. Author visit Our Year 6 children had a great day last Thursday as in addition to the fish activity; in the morning they went to St Johns School to meet the author Sibeal Pounder, author of the Witch Wars books. They learned a lot about the stories and the process the author went through to get from initial idea to published book. Many thanks to Louise Ellis- Barrett, St John's librarian for inviting us.

9. Staffing for residential trips A number of parents have asked for details about which adults will be going on the residential trips next term. We are in the process of sorting this out at the moment and are just waiting for a few people to confirm their availability.

As a general rule I prefer not to take parents, not because there is something to hide, but rather because one of the more valuable parts of these trips is that it gives children a chance to become more independent. It puts them in a situation in which they have to take responsibility for themselves; to be organised and to develop the self-confidence to cope without mum or dad constantly being on hand to bail them out if things go a bit wibbly.

We will be taking some parents with us but in each case it is because there is a particular issue relating to their child's welfare, which makes it preferable for them to provide that rather than us. As soon as we have a complete list of adults for the trips we will let you know who is going. For now I can tell you that Mrs Hall will be going with Years 3 and 6 and I will be going with Years 4 and 5.

And finally...



Have a good week

Rob Hart