



Hipsburn Primary School, Lesbury, ALNWICK, Northumberland. NE66 3PX

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Headteacher Mr Kevin Moloney

Spring Term Update from Governors

Dear Parents,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Hipsburn Primary School Governing Body to advise you of some developments within school. We apologise in advance that this is lengthy but we feel it is important to give you clear and factual background information in order that you can see the direction that the school is moving in.

Background

In our last year as a First school – up to July 2016 - we had separate classrooms for Preschool, Reception and Year 1. Year 2 and younger Year 3s and older Year 3 and Year 4 were taught in two 'split' classes, so we had 4 classrooms for 5 year-groups.

From September 2016 Hipsburn became a primary school, providing education for children aged 2 to 10 years (Preschool through to Year 5.) From September 2017 we will become a fully functioning Primary school, in that there will be children from Preschool through to Year 6 on roll.

Hipsburn has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 21. This means that we aim to accept 21 children per year-group. This figure can, however fluctuate and, for example, a year-group of 16 (5 under PAN) can be offset by another year-group of 26 (5 over PAN).

When calculating any additional classroom space that was required when we became a primary school the Preschool space was discounted. Using the PAN figure of 21 and Northumberland County Council's (NCC's) very prescriptive guideline that 30 children can be taught per classroom (regardless of how this works in real terms), NCC said that it was only necessary to provide one additional classroom in order for Hipsburn to accommodate 7 year-groups (7 year-groups x 21 PAN = 147 children; 147 children/5 classrooms = 29 children per class.) NCC would not counter what they saw as any 'aspirational' requirements from us.

Governors expressed concern at the time that this provision was inadequate and have continued to press for additional space. We have spent a huge amount of time this past year making representations to, and meeting with, various staff from NCC. This culminated in us inviting Dr Andy Johnson, NCC's Director of Education, to visit the school in December to see first-hand how short of space we are and to request that NCC fund the building of another classroom.

During his visit Dr Johnson was sympathetic to our cause, but said that there are many other schools in the county facing similar or even worse problems and made it absolutely clear that Hipsburn was not seen as a priority case because based on our PAN and existing classroom numbers there was no overcrowding and neighbouring first and primary schools had spaces. On this basis no funding of any kind would be forthcoming from NCC.





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Governors absorbed this information and the implications for the school. We felt that it was important to be aspirational and have workable space for the children and staff. Governors have therefore made the decision to 'self-build' a new classroom in time for September 2017. This means that we are providing space beyond our minimum statutory requirement in order to give more flexibility and space for teaching and learning and further improve our school.

New Classroom for September 2017

This past couple of months has seen a huge amount of behind-the-scenes work being undertaken by Governors, especially a small sub-team dedicated to looking at all options.

We are pleased that we can now tell you that we plan to seek permission to build a new classroom next to the one NCC provided last year. It will be a permanent timber structure from a reputable supplier that can be adapted internally to suit our needs, which are: a 56m² classroom, a sanctuary/story area and toilet space. Plans and indicative illustrations will be available soon and will be shared with you. Ground works and installation will hopefully be undertaken during school holidays to avoid disruption during term times.

Class Organisation for September 2017

It is not within the remit of the governing body to determine class organisation and teachers; whilst we can discuss with him this is ultimately Mr Moloney's decision and he will advise of these details separately. However he has agreed that this letter can confirm the following details.

The process has begun to recruit a Key Stage 2 teacher with Year 6 experience, to be appointed for September. A concurrent recruitment exercise is being run to recruit a temporary teacher to cover Mrs Johnson's maternity leave. Announcements about the successful candidates will be made in due course.

We hope that this letter provides you with reassurance. We are certain that Hipsburn will continue to provide a great education for your children and are excited about the future.

Regards,

Allison Wort and Claire Vass

Co-Chairs of Governors - Hipsburn Primary School

