



Governor of the month Report

SEND Governor Jan Thompson

First of all I would like to express my gratitude to every member of staff at Ashton Keynes. They have all made me feel most welcome in their classrooms. It was a very real pleasure to spend time with both pupils and staff and experience the overwhelming "buzz" that seems to permeate throughout the school.

I visited the school for three focus afternoons as part of my role as the Special Needs Governor. During my first visit I spent time in the classrooms, in order that I could witness the range of teaching that takes place every day.

In year 6 the pupils were learning about Islam and creating posters about aspects of the faith. It was really pleasing to see how effectively all the children were expressing their understanding. The range of abilities in the class is wide but every child was productive and clearly enjoying their activity. They were all enthusiastic and very keen to tell me what they were doing. Their task ranged according to ability.

In year 5 the pupils were working on a computer technology task and again the pupils were grouped, but this time according to their individual needs as a member of the group. The class teacher had carefully thought about the personality of each class member and provided opportunities for them to share ideas and take on responsibility. It was lovely to witness. The outcome of the task was impressive with every group completing their film about the environment. I was impressed with the level of cooperation that I saw.

In year 3 the pupils were all learning about keeping healthy and eating a balanced diet. The children were enthusiastic and confident about sharing their ideas.

My visit to KS1 was also a delight. Unfortunately I missed the cooking activity for the year 1 pupils but I was able to chat with the parent leader and helpers, all of whom were very enthusiastic about the afternoon activity. This highlighted to me the high level of parental support and expertise that is present in the school. What a wonderful way to enhance learning by offering so many talents thus enriching the lives of our pupils? I saw further examples of healthy eating and wider opportunities for the children during World Awareness week.

In year 2 the children were enjoying an individual reading session whilst the class teacher was leading a guided reading session. On moving around the classroom it was evident that all the children were motivated and purposeful and thoroughly enjoying the books that they were reading. I saw a wide range of different books from simple picture books to books with chapters and some challenging content. I was most impressed to see the range of ability in the room with all the children confident and happy to read at their own level. This is something that really reflects the culture of the school.

My final visit was to Reception where the children were completing their afternoon's activities. As I joined them on the carpet with the class teacher, I was impressed with their level of enthusiasm and knowledge about their project on butterflies. They were confident to speak about what they had learned and their enthusiasm about the impending hatching of butterflies was contagious. When I visited the school two weeks later and spoke to some of the children during World Awareness Week, they were still very clear about what was going to happen to their butterflies and used terms like chrysalis and hatching with authority and confidence.

My second meeting was with Mrs Laura Phillips, the school Special Needs teacher. Again I was most impressed with her level of knowledge about each child. She has a clear vision for the future of special needs in the school and has numerous systems in place to effectively track all of her groups within the school. It is a very time absorbing role and Mrs Phillips has really embraced all of the challenges that accompany such a busy and important part of school life.

My final visit was for an afternoon during World Awareness Week. As I entered the school I could sense and hear a real buzz of excitement. Every classroom had become a country with the children being immersed in the cultures of Italy, France, China, India, Brazil, Australia and Indonesia on a daily rotational basis. I noticed opportunities to sample foods like Camembert and basil from France and

Italy and also understand some Indian foods were sampled, again thanks to some parents for offering such a great opportunity. Signet, the school caterer, also provided a wide range of exotic fruits for the children to sample to complete their experiences of our diverse world during the day. I saw so many different activities from mask making to using and making shadow puppets. The children were obviously thoroughly enjoying themselves learning, exploring and creating but most importantly working collaboratively. All of the classroom groups were mixed up, some with buddies in year 6 and Reception working together, whilst other year groups were paired eg year 5 and year 1. All of the children were proud of their art and many of them wanted to show me what they had made during their day. One child in particular, who finds classroom life more challenging, had made a fantastic Chinese dragon and his pleasure was evident. I consider that this is where the school has really excelled because every child was fully involved, irrespective of their individual strengths and weaknesses. Addressing individual special needs is not just about enabling a pupil to fully access the curriculum to the best of their ability, but also very much about enhancing the individual as a whole person. This has been most evident during all of my visits this month.

On a final note. I have also been taking a cricket club after school and been so impressed with how the children have approached the sport. The group is fully supportive of every member and I have been delighted to see the progress that they have all made as their confidence has grown.

Jan Thompson