



Mill Water School

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Headteacher's Newsletter – April 2016



Firstly I would like to thank parents and carers for all the support I was given during the school's Headteacher recruitment process, and for the many notes and words of congratulations I was offered afterwards. I look forward to leading the school during the coming months and years, and hope it will be good news to parents and carers to finally have a permanent Headteacher in post. I aim to keep in touch with you by having a monthly newsletter, and you can also find latest news on the school's website, www.millwater.devon.sch.uk. If you need to contact me you can call the school on 01395 568890. If I am not available, please speak to my PA Amelia Tollerton who will be more than happy to assist you.

Sarah Pickering, Headteacher

Fundraising

We have been working hard to continue to raise the profile of Mill Water in the local community, to find new opportunities for our pupils and to raise valuable funds for the school. If you know any organisations or businesses who might be able to offer work placements for our pupils please do let us know so that we can continue to extend the opportunities that are available.

We recently benefitted from Exeter's Big Noise Choir, whose concert on 11th March raised at least £1450 for the school – a huge success, in no small part due to the hard work of The Friends of Mill Water School who helped plan the event and provided fantastic refreshments on the night, and the Sassy Choir and Mill Water Staff Choir who performed together brilliantly.



We have recently also benefitted from fundraising we didn't even know was happening! The Budleigh Male Voice Choir have kindly donated £300, raised at a recent concert – many thanks to them for their generosity. Budleigh Lions also continue to support the school by putting us in touch with local charities and organisations, and we are very grateful for their ongoing support.

The Friends of Mill Water are also continuing their support for the Sensory Orchard Project, which is developing brilliantly under the leadership and supervision of TA Tom Neusinger. We were delighted to receive an award of £10,000 to continue to develop the orchard, thanks to *Awards for All* and the hard work of our Business Manager, Gail Evans.

The orchard was a fantastic space for us to use during the RSPB's *Big Bird Watch*, for which pupils set up a hide and created and maintained a bird feeding area. The children learned about species

diversity, the importance of knowing numbers and the type of birds locally compared to the national picture, and about caring for the creatures in the environment. We have recently been awarded the RSPB's Bronze Wildlife Action Award for improving the environment for birds, wildlife and people, and we hope to go on to achieve the Silver and Gold awards in due course.



bronze

Awarded to:
Mill Water School

This award recognises that you have carried out special tasks to improve the environment for birds, wildlife and people

Signed:

Mike Clarke

Mike Clarke,
RSPB Chief Executive

Date:

22 March 2016



RSPB Wildlife Explorers is the junior membership and RSPB Phoenix is the teenage membership of The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Small copper butterfly by Richard Ravels (rspb-images.com)

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity. England and Wales no. 207076. Scotland no. SC037654. 330 0547-10-11



Having spent a full year here on our Bicton site, and watching the changing of the seasons, we are really beginning to fully appreciate the green spaces around us. Let's hope it's a good summer so we can make the most of our lovely location!



We would like to make space for a book-stall in school, perhaps in our Reception area, where we can sell second-hand or unwanted books throughout the year. If you have any good quality, unwanted or second hand books, we would be grateful if you could please send them into school.

Forthcoming Events

You will have received a note from The Friends of Mill Water about two events that are coming up this term – a Skydive on Sunday 26th June at Dunkeswell Airfield, and a Craft and Table Top Sale on Saturday 14th May at the Public Hall in Budleigh Salterton. For more information, please contact Penny Bain on 07814 431490 or email pennybain220@btinternet.com.

Following the success of our first Christmas Fair in December, we will be joining forces with The Friends of Mill Water again for our first ever Summer Fair later this term. Details will follow soon – watch this space!

Buying and Selling

Do you have any specialist equipment that you no longer need, that you think other parents or carers would be interested in buying? We would like to add a 'buying and selling' section to the newsletter to help parents sell items that others may need. If you have something to sell, please email a photo and a brief description to Amelia Tollerton at atollerton@millwater.devon.sch.uk, and it will be included in the next newsletter.



The school is currently looking for bright, colourful and noisy wind-up toys for specific groups of pupils – if you have any that you no longer need, please do send them in.

Staff changes

At the end of last term we said goodbye to Steve and Sue Allison, both of whom had been at Mill Water for several years. We wish them both the very best of fortune as they move forward onto their new paths.

Theresa Bisson has also stepped down from her post as Special Schools Team Lead but continues to work in the Speech and Language Therapy service within a different team. Ashleigh Paddon will continue to work with Mill Water.



Theresa says: 'I would like to say goodbye and best wishes to all the children, families and staff that I have worked with at Mill Water. Ashleigh will continue to work at Mill Water, and the new Team Lead will be Becky Eastburn, who will be visiting school after Easter.'

New Team Lead Becky Eastburn.

Recruitment

We are currently recruiting for Teaching Assistants to work 10.00am to 2.00pm each day, and for supply Teaching Assistants to work as and when required. Further details can be found at www.devonjobs.gov.uk or by contacting Gail Evans at school.

Attendance

As there is a legal requirement for children to be in school, we are only able to authorise occasional term-time holiday requests in exceptional circumstances. We fully understand that this may be difficult for some families, and are grateful to those parents and carers who have been able to take holidays out of term time.

Communication with Parents

We look forward to unveiling the school's new website over the coming weeks and months. The new site has been designed to be much more interactive to help improve our communication with parents and carers. Admin staff are currently being trained on how to use the new system, and we'll be in touch again when the site is ready to go live.

Thank you to those parents and carers who responded to the School Development Plan consultation. Your views are crucial to the future development of the school, and I plan to continue to gather your thoughts and ideas as the school moves forward.

National Picture

You may have seen or read in the news that the government has announced that all schools are to become academies by 2020. Governors have already discussed this, and have appointed Martin Callaghan to act as strategic lead on this issue. Please be assured that governors will always prioritise acting in the best interests of the school and our pupils, and will take as much time as necessary to gather information and research the available options. We feel hopeful about the process as several institutions have already approached the school with an interest in sharing our SEN expertise and the good practice that they see at Mill Water.

I feel it is also important for parent and carers to be kept informed about current developments and discussions that are taking place between the Department for Education, Devon County Council and special schools. The Department for Education is questioning why special schools are providing full-time sixth-form places when mainstream schools are only able to provide three days per week for students. We are working very closely with Devon County Council to discuss what this might mean for Mill Water's sixth-form, and our priority throughout will be making sure our pupils are able to access appropriate and well thought-out provision. I will contact you again as soon as I have further information about this.

Governing Body

Governors are continuing to monitor the school as it continues on its journey towards an Ofsted judgement of 'Good'. We have been working closely with leaders of education from across the country, including Darryl Morgan, Sean Kretz, Paul Scott and Sue Smith. Their most recent visits have highlighted some of the progress the school has already made:

'What was apparent was the huge amount of thought and planning that has gone into redesigning the manner in which teaching and learning is led and directed. The underlying emphasis was on personalised approaches to challenging learning for each child. Staff were enthusiastic and clearly motivated to ensure that new strategies are both implemented and working for the children.'
(National Leader of Education, September 2015)

'The headteacher has moved the school forward and developed a team that is performing well and has the potential to be amongst the best.' (E-Visit Report, October 2015)

'Students work very well in lessons that are well planned to meet the needs of individuals and their next step in their education journey and head towards external accreditation for their work.' (E-Visit Report, October 2015)

'Governors have a good understanding of the schools and how it operates. They have a wide skill set, interest and passion for the school's success and are aware of the need for continued development.'
(E-Visit Report, October 2015)

'They are well on the way to developing a very successful provision of which they can be confident of judging as good or outstanding.' (National Leader of Education, October 2015)

Governors are always keen to hear your views. If you would like to contact the Governing Body at any time, you can email Amanda Murrell, Clerk to Governors: amurrell@millwater.devon.sch.uk.