



first hand

The Newsletter of Castlethorpe First School

Registering your child

Parents no longer have to register their child with the school as used to be the case many years ago – places must be applied for through Milton Keynes Council. However, an early indication of future numbers helps us with our planning, so the school keeps an informal list of children whose parents have told us that they are likely to apply when their child is old enough. If you would like to know more about the school for your child, or think that you may apply for a place, then please phone Marian Christie, our school secretary on 510342 to let us know, no matter how young your child is.

Thank You

Issue 38 Autumn Term 2009

From the Headteacher

We were really pleased to be able to open on September 6th in the school building after work was completed on the school ceilings. Eleven new foundation stage children joined our school. They have settled into school wonderfully well and it is lovely to see them becoming steadily more confident and independent. Our school numbers are good and we currently have 40 children in school across the 3 year groups. At the beginning of October we held an open afternoon and welcomed many prospective parents in to see the school.

In October the whole school was involved in our now annual conker morning where the children worked together on different activities using conkers: counting, estimating, weighing, measuring, drawing, photographing etc.....

Achievements and Standards:

The Autumn term is always a time to reflect on the achievements of the previous year and we were delighted that our key stage 1 SATs showed that our children had once again achieved above, both the Milton Keynes average, and the National average, in all subject areas. This is a reflection of all the hard work that all the staff put in to make our school's curriculum so exciting and successful.



Curriculum:

This term's curriculum has been based on Renoir's painting: 'The Umbrellas'. This is a national project developed by the National Gallery. The children have been involved in a whole variety of activities including writing poems, making clay baskets, creating a power point presentation and recreating the picture in the playground wearing wellies and holding some very modern umbrellas! Here are just a few of their pieces of writing about rain:

Rain.

I hate the rain!

It's boring, because I have
to stay at home.

I can't go on my bike, scooter
or roller skates.

I have to play with my sister.

I don't like that!

By Jasmine

Rain

When the rain drops on my head
it makes my hair extremely curly.

When the rain drops down it makes
a slight dripping noise. I like jumping
in the soggy puddles. The rain drops
down like a bell. When the rain drops
down it makes me wet but not with
my umbrella!

By Katie

One by one they stood, stated their case and sat down to a round of applause from the villagers. The chair of the closure panel objected to the clapping after the first speaker, so of course the clapping was even louder after that. The objections to closure were so carefully and strategically thought out and the meeting so well executed that the closure panel were at a loss. David, Barney, Charles and the village won the battle and saved the school.

David is very fondly remembered at school as someone who would always fight for the underdog, no matter how trivial the matter, and he never gave up, embracing a challenge. He was very special and surprisingly humble. He gave others praise for a job well done, not taking the credit for himself, and he could easily say sorry and mean it. He continued to visit the school regularly, and was a very welcome and much loved visitor.

David will be sadly missed by the school, but his legacy lives on and those of us now involved in school will carry forward his vision of a village school providing the best possible education for village children.



David Shepherd

It was with great sadness that the school staff and governors heard of the death of David Shepherd on the 8th October. Our thoughts and sympathy are with Barbara and his family at this time.

David's links with the school go back to 1988 when he first became a governor. He was a very strong supporter of the school and was chair of governors for nearly 8 years before finally stepping down in 2001. Many remember his exuberant delivery of the school report at the Parish Council open meetings, or his role as Auctioneer at the FOCS promises auctions, when through his cajoling and encouragement the village raised thousands for the school.

David worked tirelessly to support the school, one of his greatest achievements was when in 1991 David, Barney Glasgow and Charles Clayton, along with the rest of the governors, staff and villagers, took on the local authority over the proposed school closure and won.

The local authority was then Bucks County Council, and there were many trips to Aylesbury to discuss their proposals. Eventually, the closure panel came to a meeting at the village hall, intending to announce the closure of the school. They hadn't reckoned on the tenacity of the villagers to prevent such a closure happening.

David used his previous managerial experience from dealing with the unions and had the meeting already planned out. Villagers were asked to come to the meeting half an hour early, and David and the others explained to the packed hall what was going to happen. No-one was to speak until the end, other than 10 carefully selected and primed representatives of school and village life – past, present and future parents, a JP, the vicar and others were all seated strategically around the hall, with their scripts prepared, and given an order to speak in.

I went out the other day. I saw
it was an extraordinary day!
Cats, dogs and parrots were making
so much noise!
What was going on?
Then it started to rain!
I ran home to mum.
It's time for tea! said mum.
I went out again. It was still raining.
It was adventurous.
I love the rain! I said.
By Daniel

We will be sending some of our work to the National Gallery next week.

North Milton Keynes Sports Partnership:

The partnership has been very successful in increasing the number of children spending 2 hours each week on high quality PE across Milton Keynes. To support this we have been able to use a coach from MK dons this term to work with all the children. The children have really enjoyed this.

After School Clubs:

We continue to work closely with Acorn Nursery and we are offering 2 clubs this term: French and Art and Craft, while our Foundation children settle into school routines.

FOCS:

The Friends of Castlethorpe School work tirelessly to raise money for our school which helps fund school visits, special events for the children and helps us to buy larger items of equipment. A huge thanks to them from us all.

Christmas:

With December just around the corner we have begun rehearsals for our Christmas nativity 'Christmas with the Aliens'. Performances are in the church on Monday 14th December at 6.30pm and Tuesday 15th December at 2pm. There is also a dress rehearsal on Monday 14th December at 11 am. Please come along if you are able.

Julie Baldwin
Interim Headteacher

From FOCS

The school saw its first ever Leavers Party – what an event, not sure whether it was enjoyed more by the children or their parents though!!! I know towards the end of the evening it was difficult for the children to get on to the giant slide due to the queue of mums and dads!!!! A good time was had by all and this is most certainly an event we would like to organise again next year.

Sunday 18th October saw the Spooky Party Disco for all the children with a prize being given to the best dressed boy and girl. There were some really scary children around!

The time has come for a good old sort out in preparation for Bags 2 School. Bags will be popped through letter boxes and in book bags soon with a collection due on the 29th & 30th November – we look forward to helping you declutter!

FOCS is organising a Disco in the village hall in January. An opportunity to catch up and enjoy a glass of wine or 2 and a great chance to have a knees up. The event will be advertised locally and open to family and friends. Keep your eyes open for more information nearer the date.

Natalie Westwood
FOCS Chairperson

From the Chair...

It's been five very busy and at times challenging months since I last had to write my piece for First Hand. The end of the summer term, with its fantastic Leaver's party now seems a dim and distant memory. The challenge over the summer holidays to get the work completed on the school ceilings is also fading, although I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those involved in helping governors and staff



ensure that the children were able to start back in the building on Sept 6th. I was on holiday at the time and it was good to hear of the local community pulling together to get things done. My personal thanks also go to Steve Clayton who had agreed to act as vice chair over the summer with no idea of what he was letting himself in for!

There have been several changes on the governing body since the summer as well. At the full governors meeting at the beginning of October, Steve Clayton took over as chair and I became vice-chair. However, since then, due to unforeseen circumstances, he decided that he would have to step down as a governor. Michele Glasgow and Lianne Flach have also taken the difficult decision to step down from governors due to other commitments. All three have given a great deal of time, energy and expertise to the school and we are extremely grateful to them for their commitment.

Chris Ayles was already an associate governor, so she has now stepped into Michele's role as one of our two local authority appointed governors. Lianne and Steve were parent governors, and with Tony Rice's term of office coming to an end this month, we had 3 parent governor vacancies. Bearing in mind how much arm twisting it sometimes takes, we were delighted to get 3 nominations, and we now welcome Gavin McDermott, Sharon Hedinburgh and Sam Musannif to the governing body.

So this term, governors have and will be focussed on many aspects of school life. The interim headship comes to an end in July next year, so we have started the process of head teacher recruitment. We have looked at our policies and updated and readopted many of them. Some of us have had training on Fronter, the new learning platform, about which we will no doubt tell you more in the future. We've looked at our self evaluation, the school profile and the school development plan. And as always, we're constantly looking for ways in which we can build on the success of Castlethorpe school and move it ever closer to becoming an "Outstanding" school.

Catharine Turner,
Acting Chair of Governors