

Our School Head Teacher's Update

Over the three years since our last OFSTED inspection, where we achieved a 'good' outcome our school has moved in an ever more positive direction. Over the last 3 years our Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 SATS results have been better than North Yorkshire Local Authority and National figures. We have also successfully renewed our Basic Skills Quality Mark which focusses on the teaching of reading, writing and maths in school and have also been awarded Healthy School Status.

One of the highlights of the school year is the Christmas production and the children always rise to the occasion, performing with confidence, clarity and overall enjoyment. This year's production of A Midwife Crisis was especially good considering the small number of actors and actresses we can pick from. We have enjoyed playing a larger role in the community by organising Harvest Festival, Christmas Carol services and of course Easter services at the church. With the support of Reverend Camilla and her husband, Chris, we will have even better services in the future. For the Macmillan Coffee morning, this year, we were all invited to attend a coffee morning in the local pub which was quite an adventure for some of our children.

Our school also benefits from a very active Friends of Melsonby School PTA group. They have organised, extremely successful, annual Duck Races and Christmas Fairs. In fact, the last Christmas Fair had a Santa's Grotto and ante-room that you would be hard pushed to find in any department store. The Friends assist the school financially by making contributions towards the whole school pantomime, whole school Christmas party, whole school trips and many other events and activities.

Our school is quite unique in that we attend whole school swimming sessions for two terms a year and the availability of competitive sport is wide and varied. Just last year we were helped out with some PE kit by Mr David Dixon who purchased gum shields and shin pads for our hockey team who were doing well in Inter Schools Hockey Tournament, at the time. Although our staff are qualified to teach PE we have the assistance of PE teachers from Richmond School to teach specialist areas of PE. The children also enjoy a two yearly residential trip with pupils from Barton and Ravensworth; these trips always turn out to provide many happy memories for our children in Years 5 and 6. As part of our annual events school sports afternoon has always been popular with both the pupils and parents alike. We always encourage an ethos of 'do your best but remember to lose, or indeed win graciously.

The school follows the National Curriculum of which we are legally obliged to but we do make topics and lessons as creative and interesting as possible. For example, for our weekly music lessons we use the Wider Opportunities Scheme which allows all the children to learn how to play, and practice with real musical instruments and through this the pupils learn how to read and compose music. We have organised some super whole school and class trips to the Jorvik Centre and Railway Museum, to name but two; always linking trips to our curriculum and / or topic.

Over the last term we have had a shared head agreement, in place, with North and South Cowton Community Primary School. This has proved to be very fruitful as it reduces the financial burden on the school of staff salaries; it has allowed us opportunities for the children to start working with each other on joint school projects and hopefully it will reduce the cost of purchasing of resources if some of the costs can be split between both schools.

Over the last two and a half years we have marketed the school in numerous ways including: a 3000 leaflet mail drop including surrounding villages, 9 Day Nurseries in Darlington, numerous estate agents and property developers in and around Darlington. We have left leaflets with the Hive on Catterick Garrison and I believe Katharine, our chair of governors, even managed to collar the commanding officer with some leaflets and an ear – bending. Marketing material has also been left

with supermarkets and hospitals. We have had a banner placed at Richmond Pool as well as advertising in the Primary Times and Catterick Garrison Gazette. Class 1 have organised popular Stay and Play sessions and we have visited many nurseries over the last couple of years. We are looking at trying to increase the information shown on our Facebook page and Mandy Mason has kindly volunteered to take over the administration of the page. We are also looking at having a complete re-vamp of the school website which is continually monitored of being monitored by governors to ensure all information and content is up to date.

Successful schools do not just have high quality teachers to make them what they are they are also reliant on other key members of staff such Julie Rush our administration assistant of many years; Sarah, our school cook has been instrumental in delivering some very high quality food for our children at lunchtimes but always goes the extra mile for our wonderful Community Lunches including the Christmas lunch. Thanks to the sterling work of Miss Bates, Mrs Cousins, Miss Sansom and sports coaches we operate a successful and popular Before and After School provision.

The school also plays its hugely important role within the community by opening its doors to many community groups such as Baby and Toddlers, Lingotot, the Women's Institute to name but three.

We are very lucky at Melsonby with all of the people who have volunteered to help us over the years and continue to do so now. For example: we currently have Mr Denton who leads singing practice across the school; Mr Henderson who teaches music in class 1; Mrs Stansfield who supports some of the older children in Class 2; Jane Thompson who listens to readers in Class 1 and Phil Martin who is looking to support us in our new video club. There have been many volunteers over the years and we are very grateful to them all.