

Dear Families,

The office staff are here to help and are happy to do so. I have noticed that they spend a lot of time responding to requests, passing messages, taking children to class etc. Can I please ask that we all try to work together to help them work efficiently.

Can we try to arrive on time and bring all the children's belongings in one go.

**Please use parentmail to report an absence rather than phoning- if you would like help to do this please come in and ask.**

if you are making arrangements for someone different to collect your child please try wherever possible to do so in advance and let staff know in the morning (obviously we know things come up...)

Many thanks

### Coming up...

**Woodgrange Children in Need Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November Donate at least £1 and dress up as a character from a Disney film.** (We do not want you going to the Disney store and spending loads of money on a new outfit... use your imagination and donate the cash to a good cause!!!!)



### PTA - CHRISTMAS/GREETING CARD DESIGNS

Any orders should be returned by Wednesday 13th November to the School Office.

CALL FOR RECIPES FOR OUR PTA COOK BOOK

So far we have broccoli pasta, rainbow pasta, puttanesca, arrabiata, classic pancakes, american pancakes, pesto pasta, vanilla cookies, chicken and squash stew, energy bites...

WHAT ELSE DO YOU AND YOUR KIDS LOVE COOKING AND EATING?

Please send your recipes to [kathrin\\_reid@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrin_reid@yahoo.com)

### **Safer School Streets**

Road closures from Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November

Healthy school streets: cleaner air, safer roads, less congestion, more walking, a safer and more pleasant start and end to the school day.

From Monday the 11<sup>th</sup> November our Healthy School Street will start. This means that the roads around Woodgrange and Godwin will be closed to traffic at school drop-off and pick-up time.

If you normally drive your child to school, you will not be able to drive along closed sections of Sebert Road, Cranmer Road, and Godwin Road. Signs will be up, and you should check these carefully to make sure you do not get a ticket.

If you are able to walk, cycle or get public transport to school, we would like to encourage you to do so. If you cannot avoid driving, you will need to plan a route that avoids the closures, park in an appropriate space on an open road, and walk your child into school.

There is a launch event on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November 8.30 – 9.30am in Woodgrange Playground, with Dr Bike, hot drinks, activities, and more. Please come and join us and celebrate that we are one of the very first school street closures in Newham.

Included in this newsletter is a follow up message from the Governing Board.

Have a great weekend Sarah & Staff

Hello,

The governors sent a newsletter on 4<sup>th</sup> October and we asked you some questions. Here is a summary of the 70+ responses we received. If you missed the newsletter on Parentmail, you can find it on the website at:

<https://woodgrange.newham.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Woodgrange-School-Governors-newsletter-Summer-2019.pdf>

Thank you to all who managed to respond giving us lots of information about your views and what you notice matters to the children. We acknowledge your time and effort.

The two biggest themes were: 1) The school chickens are really important to many of the children; and 2) Parents say play and exploration are encouraged throughout the school and are the basis for the children's learning.

### **Learning through play and exploration**

Parents in **nursery and reception** said there are varied opportunities for play and exploration both indoors and outdoors which encourage learning and their child is excited about them.

In **Year 1** school is found to be friendly and children have settled happily in key stage 1. Parents see children continuing to learn and develop through play and exploration with lots of resources to facilitate this both indoors and outdoors. Learning is more focused and children are explaining things to parents in detail. The toys and the chickens in the woodland area and the sandpit have helped the children to use their imagination during play.

Parents with previous experience of older siblings in year 1 and 2 said that children do a lot of exploring now and learning is more play-focused.

**Year 2** parents had noticed a cheerful, friendly and active environment last year in year 1 which has extended into year 2. Some said their child has less opportunity for play and exploration, especially outdoors, now they are in year 2 and would like more.

### **Governors wanted to know if children were happy to keep trying and risk making mistakes.**

In nursery and reception about two thirds of parents said children were happy to keep trying. Several parents noticed that their child still felt bad if they made a mistake or needed a lot of encouragement to take that risk. A couple noticed that their child loved it when he/she cracked something after trying and making mistakes along the way. Many parents in year one said their child was willing to keep trying and risk making mistakes, and some noted that school supports them to do that. Some children have been talking at home about being a 'tough tortoise' and a 'go for it gorilla', two of the labels Woodgrange have adopted to explain the Learning Powers Approach. Several parents noted that their child still stops trying if she/he doesn't succeed or makes a mistake. A parent said more feedback from the teacher on their child's willingness to try and to make mistakes would be welcome and the brief chats possible before school starts did not give her/him enough to go on. One parent said his/her child seemed embarrassed to make mistakes and wondered if this was his personality. We don't think so! And we noticed this: no year 2 parents who responded thought their child was unwilling to keep trying or risk mistakes at school, unless perhaps if the challenge was way too hard. We think that is fair enough. That is brilliant progress and the question we have for the teachers is: What will encourage all children to take action if they keep trying and don't succeed? Do they say "I haven't a clue now, give me a hint"?

### **What the children have been curious about**

You told us many things that your children have been curious about, not least the wonder of life as they observe the chickens. The children want to know more, a lot more, about the chickens and how they live. Many of you said the children are at an age of burgeoning independence, awareness and curiosity. You said they ask questions about the world around them: why it rains, what things are made of, the environment, pollution, other countries, women's rights, bug life, the solar system, friends' names, the cycle of the sun and moon each day, the passage of time (in history and through the day), Antarctica and penguins, nature, recycling, families of animals, heaven.

They are intrigued by how to ride a bike, assemble furniture, write number and letter formations, read, decode symbols, make food, sew, craft and do sports. It is clear many children from nursery through to year two care deeply about their environment and animal habitats and are passionate about stopping litter and pollution. Children have talked about their activities at school, including the play kitchen, wet play, the sandpit, football, drawing, writing

numbers or letters, drums, using building materials and of course collecting eggs and feeding the chickens. A child loved that their class had to identify the character of a book by things being left in the room... half eaten cake etc.

Teachers might like to hear that many children have been talking at home about how letters combine to make sounds or about how they are enjoying the toys and reading and writing at school. Some parents noted their children like books more and more.

**A further question was: It doesn't always feel good being in the middle of the learning pit. Have you noticed your child feeling confused or unhappy? What happened?**

Most of you who responded to this question said you had not noticed your child feeling unhappy about being confused. Some thought overtiredness made children unhappy sometimes. A couple of parents noticed that their child might say they were bored perhaps to avoid the issue. Some pointed out that when teaching goes too fast for their child at that time, their child felt unhappily confused and responded with anger or frustration. That makes perfect sense and we will ask school about how they detect that. Also, one parent said that it mattered to their child whether she was learning as fast as other children but she was less concerned about it by year 2. Another parent welcomed the emphasis on the class celebrating a child's attitude to learning, e.g. go for it gorilla, rather than him or her getting lots of things right.

One child said at home she was too shy to ask for a harder challenge. It is excellent that she wanted this and could tell her parent. The next step will be making that request to the teacher. Can you speak to the teacher?

**Are boys and girls treated the same or differently at Woodgrange?**

Nursery parents who responded all thought that boys and girls are treated the same and one noted that nursery had challenged a gender stereotype that their child picked up elsewhere. Not all reception parents had seen enough to really know yet but almost all of them said they are treated the same so far. One child had picked up a message from peers that trousers are for boys, not girls. Lots of year one parents said school treats both the same though one parent said: "Differently, unconsciously, i know this is trying to change which is great..." Some parents called for more action to challenge gender divisions in sports at playtime and to address peer pressure about clothes.

**The newsletter**

The parents who responded said the governors' newsletter was useful and helped them understand the school's aims and how to support them at home.

We received lots of suggested topics for the Parent Governor Focus Groups at 6pm 14<sup>th</sup> and 9am 15<sup>th</sup> November, thank you. We will be in touch with an agenda soon.

**Learning pit**

Some of you asked what was meant by the 'learning pit'. Governors included this idea in the newsletter (with a cartoon) because it helped us to understand a sign of good learning that we might otherwise miss or even mistake for a problem: confusion. When we watch teaching and learning we are tempted to look for everyone understanding all parts of the lesson all of the time. What if deep learning does not look like that? The idea illustrated by a 'learning pit' is that the brain gets more and more confused if it starts to truly grapple with a problem, before finding the solution. This feels like falling into a pit and not knowing, for a while, how to get out, before climbing out having cracked it. You might think that sounds miserable or you might think it sounds fun. Wouldn't it be kind to jump in and rescue the children? Good question. We say not because the learning pit is a gift to the brain: the brain gets deeper knowledge, grows its thinking skills and gets confidence that it can grapple with problems and find solutions.

This is a great theory, but we need to check it is working for the children in practice, which is what prompted some of our questions.

Thank you for your answers. Our request is to continue to share what you notice with teachers, school leaders and governors.

**Suggestions for a topic for the parent governor focus group were:**

- resilience and mental health
- Meeting individual needs
- What happens when a child needs extra support for their progress in learning at school

- Homework and information on learning in class
- Wider curriculum/enrichment/creative
- Food/health/sustainability