

Yorke Mead Primary School

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Smart Money
Award 2023



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Dear Parents and Carers,

We are very close to the end of another academic year at Yorke Mead. Sometimes the years just seem to rush by, and it is hard to distinguish one from another, but 2024/5 is a special year in the history of the school, the year in which Yorke Mead achieved an “Outstanding” assessment from Ofsted.

In fact, if you read the Ofsted Inspector’s report, and we are sure you will all want to find a moment to look at it again (see the Statutory Information section on the Yorke Mead website), you will see the word “Outstanding” no less than five times, just to emphasise that Yorke Mead is outstanding in all aspects of its work. The previous Ofsted inspection, from September 2023, also recognised that the school was outstanding but did not have the power to grant the revised status; it is worth re-reading that report too, as it contains many positive insights about how well the school goes about its work. Ofsted has had a lot of criticism in recent times, but both our recent inspections have been intensive but constructive experiences for the staff, and the jubilant atmosphere in the staff room after the last inspection was a joy to behold. We can admit that a few tears came to our eyes!

So, 12 November 2024 is a landmark date in Yorke Mead’s just over 50 years of existence. From our viewpoint, as Governors, Ofsted’s outstanding verdict on the school was a long overdue recognition of the tremendous work done by all the staff. Governors are regular visitors to the classrooms and playgrounds, and we have been aware for many years of the strong culture of setting high standards and continuous improvement that pervades everything the school does. We make a general visit to school every term, and individual governors also come in to meet staff and discuss key aspects of the school’s work, what we call “link governor” visits, that lead to reports and discussions at meetings of the Governing Body. So we have a very good picture of how the school operates. It is always a delight to walk around in Yorke Mead, not least because of the excellent behaviour of the children, who are always polite and interested in what we are doing.

The Governors feel privileged to be a part of the Yorke Mead community and to do whatever we can to support the continuing success of the school. Both the recent Ofsted reports have recognised the strength of our community. We could cite many parts of both reports on this count, but just consider this quote from November 2024: “Parents, staff and governors are very proud of their school and how it prepares pupils exceptionally well for both future learning and life in modern Britain.”. Ofsted made it clear that parents and carers played an important part in our achievement of outstanding through the many positive comments

they received about the school and, of course, many parents and carers contribute to school life in many other ways. So, "Outstanding" was a great team effort, and, as governors, we would like to send a big "thank you" to all staff, parents and carers for making this possible.


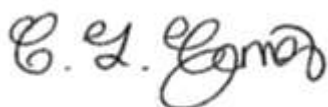
Attaining outstanding status is, of course, a great benchmark, but it is also a constant challenge to maintain these high standards and, thinking ahead, to adapt to exploit new opportunities and overcome new obstacles. A recent briefing from Herts County Council described some of these likely developments, as we look forward to 2025/6. Budgets are getting ever tighter at all levels, from central Government downwards. Yorke Mead is a well-managed school, but rising costs and increasing demands will require close monitoring to ensure we remain in the black. New technology will present both opportunities and challenges; artificial intelligence is a new tool that may offer chances to save time and improve efficiency, but the introduction of new technology must be undertaken with great care given the risks to safeguarding children, data protection, and even school systems being hacked! Reform of support for children with special needs will also be the subject of wholesale reform, both nationally and within Hertfordshire; we expect major developments to start taking place during the Autumn. So, resting on our laurels will not be an option!

As ever, we are most grateful to Friends of Yorke Mead for the invaluable support they give to the school, supporting events, school trips and organising fundraising which enables the acquisition of facilities we would not otherwise be able to afford. New members are always welcome so please join up if you haven't signed up already, they can be contacted at FOYM@yorkemead.herts.sch.uk

At the end of the school year we have to say goodbye to our oldest pupils in Year 6, who will move on to secondary schools. We wish them all the best of luck in starting at their new schools in September and hope they have enjoyed their years at Yorke Mead. We are also saying farewell to some members of staff: Miss Shayler, Miss Hills and Miss Doherty-Hunt, and we wish them well on their next steps.

Finally, we have an additional challenge this Summer, coping with the heat. Climate change is a great subject to engage the children on, they are often the most conscious of environmental matters amongst us, but the harsh reality is, as the Met Office says, we must accept that what we call heatwaves, actually normal temperatures in many parts of the world, will be an increasing feature of our summers. So, planning ahead, school will need to be prepared to adapt to maintain teaching and learning in an environment we might have called sub-tropical a few decades ago. As for now, well, at time of writing, cooler weather seems to be spreading across the UK, but please make sure you all stay cool in the coming weeks.

Thanks again to everyone, all staff, parents and carers, and, of course, your children, for making this such a memorable year for Yorke Mead, and we look forward to working with you again in September.



Charlotte Gomes and Derek Marshall
Co-Chairs of Governors