



**Smart Money
Award 2023**



Yorke Mead Primary School

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Dear Parents and Carers,

We are racing towards the end of another academic year at Yorke Mead. Time just flies by, as it seems only a short while since we were writing to you at the end of the calendar year. But a lot has changed in the meantime, notably the weather! Looking at the Met Office website, it shows that a temperature of -12.5C was recorded in East Anglia in January this year, whereas on 26 June, in the recent heatwave, a record temperature of +37.7C was registered in the same region. These are places not a million miles away from Croxley!

It is very British to complain about the weather, but there are now genuine grounds for feeling that uncertainty and extremes are more common than in the past. During the last few months it seemed like jumpers, raincoats/umbrellas and factor 50 sun cream were all required within a relatively short timescale. This must be an added pressure for parents and carers, trying to make sure that children have the right clothing and accessories for the changing climate, especially when it changes during one day, but it has also been a real challenge for the school, particularly seeking to keep its pupils cool enough to concentrate on their work when temperatures climb into the 30sC. As you know, Sports Day had to be postponed because of the extreme heat; we all want our children outside enjoying the fresh air and the abundant green spaces that surround Yorke Mead, but in Summer Term we need to take extra care that they can stay cool and safe from the hot sun.

As Governors, we have to recognise that the heatwave challenge is only likely to become tougher to manage as years go by; climate experts believe our summers are going to gradually get hotter, and we will need to consult with the local authority on ensuring that the school's working environment remains acceptable for pupils and

staff. We also need to help our children understand the lifestyle and policy issues that climate change is forcing us to address, and which are almost certainly going to become much more pressing matters in their lifetimes, so global warming and its implications for our daily lives, and those living in other parts of the world, even more exposed to extreme weather, are now firmly part of the school's curriculum.

It is not only our climate that is now subject to frequent change. Rather unexpectedly, we are getting a new Prime Minister. Well, we don't comment on political affairs in these letters, but this change at the top of Government is important to our school for two reasons. Firstly, the new PM is a strong advocate of devolution, that is, giving more power to local authorities, and in 2028 we are due to get a new unitary authority and, probably, a new Mayor of Hertfordshire. We don't yet know how power will be distributed in the new structure, but it is likely that these new bodies will have an increased say in how our schools are run. Watch this space. Secondly, the current Government, with Bridget Phillipson leading as Secretary of State for Education, has shown itself very keen to reform our education system. The Government's White Paper, "Every child achieving and thriving", published in February, represents the biggest schools change programme for at least a decade. This is not the place to describe all the proposals, but two things stand out: a long-term plan to radically change the support for children with special needs, and the Government's wish that all schools should join a multi-academy trust, possibly run by a local authority. These measures do not affect the school's planning for the next academic year, and may well not impact Yorke Mead until the 2030s but we can assure you that the Governors will be monitoring developments closely and will inform you when changes could affect the school.

Talking of change, this year your children will have noticed a big change in the way playtimes are delivered. As Governors, we whole heartedly support and value the positive benefits that play has on our children's social, emotional and educational lives. We thank all staff, parents and children for the way in which they have embraced this new change for our children, and we are excited to see how the project develops. If anyone has anything they would like to donate, please see the school newsletter for the key items needed. The Governors are planning to visit in September to see OPAL play in action first hand and we cannot wait!

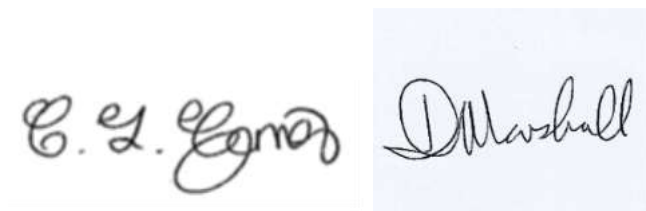
So, as ever, a rapidly changing world, with many issues the Governors need to keep an eye on, but meanwhile Yorke Mead remains an outstanding school and there are many things to be positive about. Despite the falling birth-rate and gloomy forecasts of school rolls, we have more or less a full headcount, which is a great credit to those who market the school on open days, including the volunteer pupils, and also to all the staff who work so hard day in, day out to maintain the school's high standards and excellent reputation. We are also grateful to the many parents and carers who spread the good word about Yorke Mead in our community. Our school also continues to go

from strength to even greater strength in its sporting achievements: one day soon we may need an even bigger cabinet for all those prizes! Finally, we must say a big thank you to Friends of Yorke Mead for the invaluable help they provide to the school, supporting events, school trips and organising fundraising activities which allow the purchase of facilities that would otherwise be beyond our means. FOYM are always keen to get more members, so if you haven't done so already, please join: you can contact them on FOYM@yorkemead.herts.sch.uk.

The end of the school year always means saying goodbye to our oldest cohort of pupils, Year 6, and we wish them all the best of luck in starting at their new schools in the Autumn term. We are also saying farewell to Miss Buckman, who has been our SENCO this year and wish her well in her travels.

Thanks to everyone involved at Yorke Mead for your efforts to make this a successful school year and we wish you all a very enjoyable summer break. There is constant talk of further heat waves but hopefully we might be able to relax in a more traditional British summer of sunshine and showers. If the big heat should return during the holidays, make sure that you stay cool wherever you go!

Kind regards

The image shows two handwritten signatures side-by-side. The signature on the left is 'C. G. Gomes' and the signature on the right is 'D Marshall'. Both are written in a cursive, handwritten style.

Charlotte Gomes and Derek Marshall

Co-Chairs of Governors