



# YORKE MEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL GOVERNOR NEWSLETTER



**July 2021**

Dear Parents, Carers and Staff of Yorke Mead,

When we wrote to you at the end of the last school year, we suggested that it might have been the most challenging year in Yorke Mead's history. You will surely agree with us that the year just coming to an end has outdone it by some margin!

All of us, in our own ways, have faced a year of anxiety and uncertainty, and of unusual constraints on our lives. Who would have thought a year ago that we would have to endure a further two lockdowns, not to mention those other novel and sometimes confusing restrictions such as "the rule of six", the three tiers and then the four tiers. The launch of the vaccination programme has brought a sense of hope for the future but, as we write, a trip to the supermarket still requires wearing a mask and social distancing, and a trip to the seaside seems like a risky adventure that might be better put off for a least a month or two; in other words, we are far from out of the woods, and we are all waiting apprehensively to hear if the latest variant of the virus is petering out and if restrictions will finally be removed for the summer.

Throughout this troubled year our school has been busier than ever, even when it has been closed to children except those of essential workers, plus some vulnerable children. As you know, in a pandemic you have to think carefully before you do anything involving people outside of your immediate family group. For the school, managing the wellbeing of groups of children, staff, parents and carers dropping off and picking up, and other essential visitors to the school, has required meticulous planning and tremendous awareness and discipline to make sure rules are observed and everyone kept as safe as they can be in these challenging circumstances. Everybody working at Yorke Mead deserves great credit for having managed these exceptional and demanding situations calmly and efficiently.



Teachers have faced additional challenges because we have entered the world of remote learning, one which is almost certainly here to stay with us in some form; they have had to absorb quickly the additional skills needed to keep children learning whilst at home, rather than a group gathered in a classroom. Many children may have been used to being online and found it easier to adjust to the new ways, but all have worked together to show that educational progress can be made despite being in a lockdown. We have been able to see that every day on the Twitter and Facebook accounts of the school, showing many excellent pieces of work by the children. Finally, there has been the fresh challenge for everyone since March, when all children came back to school, of trying to get back to normal, or "the new normal" as it has been described; of assessing each child's level of progress after lockdown and working out how to fill gaps and get pupils back on track as soon as possible. This is



important work, vital to the children's future development, and needs time and patience.

How has Yorke Mead coped during these exceptional circumstances? Well, as Governors, we believe the school has coped magnificently, but don't just take our word for it; here is what the independent report by the Hertfordshire Improvement Partner said, after the inspection of the school on 11/12 May:

*"The staff had to manage online learning and so, overall, this was a major effort for the school. All staff should be commended for their professionalism and resilience during this time."*



About getting back to normal:

*"The school has responded outstandingly well to the needs of the children on their return to school. There are comprehensive plans in place to support children's well-being and to identify and plug gaps in learning as a result of the lockdown."*

On the school's approach to developing children, what we call "the Yorke Mead way":

*"The way the school goes about developing pupils' character is exceptional and worth sharing as a model for best practice with other schools."*

And, finally, on the school's leaders:

*"Leadership and management are outstanding. Senior leaders are passionate about ensuring the children in their care receive the best possible start to their education."*

As experienced Governors, we know how hard it is to keep a school running smoothly even in the best of times. The last year feels more like it has been the worst of times, and we believe Ms Pollard and her senior team have responded brilliantly to the challenges they have faced, as is reflected by the independent inspector giving the school such a positive report. It is also a tribute to all the staff who have continued to deliver high quality teaching and administrative support despite the undue pressures of the pandemic.

The end of the school year always means saying goodbye to our oldest cohort of pupils, and we regret that their last year at Yorke Mead has been such a difficult one, but we wish them all well for starting their new schools next term. In fact, we have all had a very tough year, parents, carers, staff and pupils, and we hope that you will all have some happier and peaceful times ahead in July and August and then let's hope we can all plan for a return to normal life by the time we come back to school in September.

Thanks to everyone involved at Yorke Mead for your efforts throughout this demanding school year and have a very good summer break.

Charlotte and Derek  
Co-Chairs of Governors

