

Newnham Croft Primary School

Chedworth Street Cambridge CB3 9JF Tel 01223 508737
office@newnhamcroft.cambs.sch.uk www.newnhamcroft.cambs.sch.uk
Interim Headteacher: Mr E Ferguson



19/10/22

Dear parents/carers,

In response to the Parent Survey that many of you completed in June, the governors and school leaders would like to thank you all for sharing your experiences and thoughts concerning Newnham Croft. It is a vital part of the process of school development to hear the many disparate voices that make up our community and for those opinions to then feed into our future strategic and operational planning.

The majority of responses to the various questions were positive or very positive, and we were grateful to see that over nine out of ten parents would happily recommend the school to another parent. Thank you very much for your support of the school.

That said, there were some downward trends in some of the data compared to previous years and we would like to let you know what steps we have taken to address and prioritise these as we move through the year.

There were two areas of greatest concern. Firstly, the percentage of parents who said their child felt safe and happy had dropped in 2022. Although over 90% of parents agreed with the statements, this percentage was lower than it had been previously. Secondly, and very probably partly to blame for the afore-mentioned decline, the percentage of parents agreeing with the statement that "the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved" had dropped to 82% - a significant fall over previous years.

Perceptions of safety, happiness and behaviour are such vital foundations for successful learning. Without the reassuring boundaries of good behaviour, a child's mind will not be able to fully focus on the skills and knowledge being taught. Although staff had had discussions about the deterioration in expectations of behaviour, it is something that can only be remedied with a concerted whole-school approach. As a result, we have taken simple steps already this term in order to get things back on track, such as expectations of lining up quietly and sensibly when the morning bell goes and listening in silence to the music or speaker during assemblies. The clarity of these expectations has already had an impact on the atmosphere of the school, with visitors commenting on the calmer and more focused feeling in the classrooms. We have also had assemblies that have focused on how to move around the school, how to treat each other and, more importantly, why we choose to behave in these ways.

Another area we are looking to improve on is in the way parents and their children feel the school deals with bullying and unkindness. It is clear from the survey that, where possible, we need to be more transparent about the actions we take when dealing with reports of these kinds. Previously, we have felt it unhelpful to broadcast the measures we take, but this has led to an information vacuum and the perception that nothing is being done. Obviously, we cannot divulge personal information or outcomes, but we can certainly be more reassuring about how seriously we take a child behaving unkindly and the unhappiness that this causes. A vital part of our ability to deal effectively with issues in school is for children to report any incidents to a member of staff as soon as they happen. We have done a significant amount of work over the last few weeks in assemblies and PSHE lessons to help children to identify a trusted adult in school and our PSHE lead, Mrs Turner, has been opening her classroom at lunchtimes on Mondays to children who would like a safe space to talk. We understand that children are sometimes


reluctant (or, on rare occasions, too intimidated) to speak to a school adult, but it is so much more difficult to ascertain what has actually happened, and sort the problem, if we do not hear about the incident until some days later. Please do encourage your child to tell a member of staff if something happens that makes them unhappy.

Communication was also an area that some parents found to be unsatisfactory and we very much acknowledge that there were issues last year. We have tried to refine the communications being sent out (it can feel like it's raining emails sometimes - especially if you have a child in secondary school as well) by including as many attachments as possible in the school newsletter. Hopefully, parents are finding this approach more focused and less intrusive. We would like to remind parents that class teachers and teaching assistants are available in the mornings and at the end of the day to answer any questions or concerns you have. If further help/support is needed, then speaking with Mrs Bracey or Mrs Scott in the office, or one of the leadership team, as appropriate, would be the next step. We value your feedback as we strive to improve communication with families, so please do let us know if you feel there is more we can do.

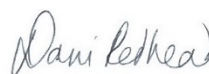
Finally, several replies in the survey alluded to doubts about the effectiveness of how the school is being managed and led. This is something we were aware of before the survey came out and acknowledged as needing attention. The governors have worked extremely hard over the past year to support the school in this area and to ensure that we are clear about what good management and leadership looks like. While improvement will always be continuous, we would hope that there have been noticeable steps forward in this area since the summer. Significant work on developing an exciting and well-constructed school curriculum, and providing our teachers with effective support to enable them to deliver it, took place over the summer. We are looking forward to embedding this in the school over the coming terms. This term we have also significantly tightened up on ensuring the timings of the day are happening punctually; meetings, assemblies and events occur as planned and with sufficient advance warning for parents; and that parents' concerns/emails are being dealt with in a timely manner. Looking further ahead, governors will be advertising for a permanent headteacher for Newnham Croft towards the end of this term, with interviews to be held the week beginning 16th January. We look forward to sharing the outcomes of the selection process in due course.

Once again, we would like to thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts about Newnham Croft and we hope that we have addressed those areas that required work. All of the staff and governors at school share the desire to ensure that Newnham Croft is a wonderful, positive place for all our children and your input has helped us in that mission. There will be another parent survey towards the end of the academic year, but please do not wait until then to raise any issues - the sooner we are aware of concerns, the more effectively we are able to deal with them.

Yours faithfully



Eddie Ferguson
Interim Headteacher



Dr Dani Redhead
Chair of Governors