

# Prince of Wales Primary School



Friendly interaction during a computing lesson



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On arrival at Prince of Wales in September 2012, Jan Bless noticed a wide range of challenges that needed to be addressed, including pupil behaviour, the quality of teaching and aspects of leadership. With a willing and trusting school community and two open-minded deputies with 50 years of shared experience, Prince of Wales has transformed into a school which is valued and praised both within and beyond the local area.

During my first staff meeting, I focused predominantly on the importance of building positive relationships with pupils and their families. I explained my plan for improvement, inspired by the London Olympics, that every pupil could be a "Gold Medal" Learner. Another key task was to identify emerging leaders who shared my vision. The next step involved a staff restructure and a middle leadership programme.

New assistant head teachers (AHTs) emerged from within the existing team and through careful recruitment. This leadership team had a varied skills set, ranging from finance, inclusion, data, training, communicating with parents and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Their ability to problem solve and commitment to improve pupils' learning experiences allowed me to focus on other strategic matters, including a five-year school expansion programme. Recruiting additional outstanding subject leaders moved the bar higher. Gradually, the competencies of good leadership cascaded down to all staff, with the core purpose of improving outcomes for all pupils.

Issues around behaviour and attitudes to learning were the most pressing concerns. Over the last ten years, the needs of the local community had become

## FACTS ABOUT PRINCE OF WALES PRIMARY SCHOOL

- » Head teacher: Jan Bless
- » Founded in 1950
- » Based in Enfield, London
- » State primary school
- » Working with Westminster University and SACRE, on developing an RE programme of study, contributed to the recognition of Alevism as a religion in Britain in 2015
- » Prince of Wales won the Enfield in Bloom gold medal in 2017 for the second time
- » [www.princeofwales.enfield.sch.uk](http://www.princeofwales.enfield.sch.uk)

“Over the last ten years, the needs of the local community had become more challenging and the school had adopted a reactive approach”

more challenging and the school had adopted a reactive approach. A range of initiatives built around a new positive behaviour strategy were introduced that supported pupils in making informed choices.

- » Pupils, staff and parents jointly devised shared principles for our school community. These were exemplified in our Learners Values – listen, excellence, attitude, respect, negotiate, enjoy, responsibility and support. These values were communicated at every opportunity, such as during assemblies, meetings, through the school website and in our weekly newsletter.
- » Initially focused on the Olympic and Paralympic values, a two-year programme of values was introduced that incorporated British values. In the weekly achievement assembly, pupils look forward to a ceremony, unique to the school, where selected pupils are awarded with an engraved baton. These batons are passed on every week to the next *Gold Medal Learners*.
- » Five years of leading two thought-provoking assemblies every week have been an integral pillar to the initiation of our ethos for a shared-values culture. They can talk about resilience, that learning is hard and

that mistakes must be made in order to make progress.

- » A new Headteacher award system was introduced where pupils could earn a pencil, star, wristband, book or a cinema ticket after 20 days of ‘staying on Gold’. All pupils start the day with their names on a large gold medal. Simply by following all the school rules and values and allowing learning to take place, pupils earn a tick if they remain there by the end of the day. A simple traffic light system is triggered when behaviour does not meet our standards. A range of sanctions may then be invoked.
- » Replacing the cloakrooms with intervention spaces offered new areas for small group work and installing lockers outside the classrooms maximised lesson time and reduced lost property.
- » Various climbing structures were installed for each key stage in order to stimulate physical development and as a source of enjoyment. Playleaders received training on a how to engage the children.
- » The profile of year 6 pupils was raised by identifying positive role models such as a Head Girl, Boy and school prefects, while allowing pupils to earn black uniform jumpers for commendable behaviour.
- » CCTV cameras were installed in strategic places around the playground and in corridors. Since then, pupils regulate their choices better as there are clear consequences to their behaviour.
- » We have turned very high mobility into an opportunity and strength. Pupils are used to forging new friendships and pass on our values and expectations. A lot of thought goes into changing all classes each year so that there is a balance of abilities and needs.

Relationships and communication are key to success





Left: Baton Ceremony  
Right: Annual school community picnic

A relevant and exciting curriculum reflects the community we serve and engages pupils. Reading takes centre stage and The Power of Reading is key to much of the learning. Opportunities are seized to enhance learning such as local archaeological digs, Royal Opera House visits or the Women's Cricket World Cup at Lords. We offer a rich outdoor curriculum through our school grounds and utilise our local environment and London itself.

Good relationships with our families are vital. Our school community is a kaleidoscope of different backgrounds, experiences and expectations and this has at times presented significant challenges. As a school we understand that there are sometimes substantial barriers to learning and knowing our families is crucial.

There are an increasing number of vulnerable families who require different forms of support. The school provides services such as Place 2 Be, music therapy, a sensory room, learning mentors and a Parent Support Advisor. Parents can attend ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) or parenting classes and have access to a wide range of children's centre services.

Through regular workshops such as phonics, bar modelling or reading, we demonstrate to parents how they can help at home. We now have new and active parent governors, a reborn Friends' association and well-attended Parent Forum.

Staff development has evolved over the past years. The focus has shifted from what a good lesson looks like to effective questioning, giving relevant feedback and more recently to teacher efficacy and Lesson Study.

Staff have worked very hard to improve the school and regular inspection visits confirmed we were on the right track. Good partnerships with the governors and LA improvement service offered the right amount of support and challenge. Identifying talented people whom I can trust and delegate to has been an essential part of my leadership.

The past five years have confirmed that change doesn't take place overnight. By being positive, building good relationships, empowering staff and getting children to work hard and do their best, we now have a school of which everybody can be proud.

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