

Ringshall School Report 2007-8.

Every year the villages which our school serves ask if I would like to give a report at their Annual Parish Meeting. Unfortunately, due to the number of these, I am not usually able to attend. I hope this written report may be of interest to readers:

Children at Ringshall School enjoy learning through a rich curriculum enhanced by many special activities, visits, visitors and themed weeks. Our children continue to achieve well, including those with Special Needs, or who are gifted in some area. We have a lovely, spacious and well equipped Nursery and Foundation Stage and pupil numbers are such that parents need to apply in good time to be sure of a place. In the Autumn term, we all enjoyed our whole school visit to the Museum of East Anglian Life. Other class visits have been to the East Anglian Daily Times in Ipswich, in connection with an excellent "Reading Together" project, Daws Hall Environmental Centre, Ipswich and Christchurch Park, Thornham Field Centre, and various sporting events. In the Summer term, Year 4 children have a week of cycle training and also enjoy a one night residential, doing a wide range of outdoor activities, at Southwold. Key Stage 2, children also have a term of swimming lessons at Stowmarket pool. We are part of the Schools' Sports Partnership and our children have excellent opportunities to participate in a very wide range of physical activities. They have enjoyed Street Dance, Tag Rugby, Rounders, Football, Speed-stacking, Circus Skills as well as trying other activities such as golf on inter-school activity days. Children's health and safety are paramount. We continue to promote a healthy lifestyle and are pleased that we were awarded an Activemark for quality Physical activity.

2007 saw the start of our Eco School Status, when we won our Bronze Award. The School Council, made up of elected pupils from each class, played a very significant role in this, by helping the school to minimise water and electricity usage. We promoted and took part in Standby Saturday which brought to everyone's attention the huge amount of energy wasted by leaving appliances on standby. Children are good at politely reminding teachers in school if we don't switch things off as soon as we have finished! This year we have had a wood pellet boiler installed, replacing our antiquated oil boiler. Solar panels have been installed, to heat water for the school kitchen. Both projects were funded mainly through government grants.

There have been numerous occasions for our parents, who are very supportive, to visit us in school. We have run two successful "Learning Together" days when parents come in and work with their children on specific topics organised by the teachers. There have also been Book Weeks, Sports Day, a Spooky Party, Christmas Fair, children's performances, an Easter Eggstravaganza, and a Ceildih to name but a few events. Our Parents and Friends work hard to put on social and fund-raising events for the school. In November we held an Open Morning to which anyone from the community was invited. Watch out for this to take part again in the Autumn, as our eight and nine year olds do an excellent guided tour of the school giving you their personal insights! We take social responsibility seriously, and the School Council ran their own toy sale raising £80 for their chosen charity, NSPCC. As well as sending less fortunate children Christmas boxes through Samaritan's Purse, we have also raised money for the British Legion, Children in Need, UNICEF and the servicemen's charity Combat Stress.

In the Spring term we were able to ask all our children and their parents to let us know their views about our school and what else they would like us to provide. This was possible through us hiring a huge inflatable POD, which is a sort of Big Brother diary room in which individuals can express their views privately. Not only did we have the POD at school for a day, but we were also had it in the Wattisham Airfield Community Centre. The data collected has given us very encouraging feedback and will also help inform our future Development Plans.

Over the last year, Suffolk's School Organisation Review has been occupying the thoughts and time of Governors, staff and parents, and will continue to do so over the next few years as plans are made for the change from a three tier system to two tier. I'm pleased to say we have excellent working relationships with our neighbouring schools and so will be working collaboratively for the best interests of all our children. In 2007, we joined a new partnership, with other local schools in the Stowmarket/Thurston pyramid of schools, called the Gipping Valley Partnership. The opportunities to join together, on specific ventures of our choosing, is both stimulating and makes good use of financial and physical resources.

One of the challenges of our school is that we always have a lot of pupil moves, both in and out, during the school year. About 50% of our children are from army families. However, this creates the opportunity for us to help our children develop great social skills and show respect and interest towards others. Ringshall School is a very welcoming and secure place, and we are constantly praised and thanked for what we do for our children and their families. I am grateful for this, as it is well deserved by the excellent, dedicated staff who give generously of their time, to children and parents, on all the little things that make a difference.

As children move away, so we also lose Parent Governors, and recruiting new ones is an on-going task. Again, we have been very fortunate in having a hard-working and committed team. If anyone from our local community is interested in volunteering to join the Governing Body, we would be delighted to hear from you via a telephone call or personal visit to the school (Tel 01473 658307). Apart from Parent Governors, there will soon be vacancies for Community and Local Authority Governors, so please do consider if you have the time and the interest to give to this rewarding task.

As well as pupil and governor changes, for a small school, we've had more than our fair share of staff changes over the past year, with three teachers on maternity leave and one leaving to teach in a Special School. Nevertheless, we have still succeeded in providing quality education in a happy environment! Our fantastic caretakers, John and Elsie Gardiner, are retiring at the end of term, and if anyone local is interested in this part-time job, we would be delighted to hear from them.

Sadly, this year will be my last as Headteacher at Ringshall School. After 36 years of teaching, I am retiring at the end of August. It has been a great privilege to teach the children of this community and I shall leave with the very happiest of memories. Please continue to take an interest in your local school and get involved in whatever way you can.

Jill P. Grosvenor, Headteacher