



Hillcrest Governors Newsletter

October 2015

On behalf of the Governors, Welcome to the Governor's News

It is with great pleasure that the Hillcrest School Governors have been able to contribute to this new communication aid.

In an effort to inform our students, parents and staff, we have put together this newsletter to give our school community a vehicle to celebrate our school achievements.

There are new staff appointments and new Governors who are keen to put our children in a position of obtaining the best learning environment we can give.

To that end we are delighted to cover the first phase of the playground which was opened at the beginning of term.

Mrs Mead and her team have been very proactive in recording and celebrating events and activities that will enhance the student's learning and development.

The students have also contributed to their learning with the "Student Voice" committee. We hope that you will be able to tell us of any other events involving our school community so that we can share these activities/ achievements with one another.

Mrs Jacqui Hall (Chair)
Hillcrest School Governors.

We want Governor News to provide you with accurate and timely information on the key issues affecting the school, our pupils and staff, and your child's education.

The 6th Form Lodge

After months in the planning it was great to see the 6th Form Lodge delivered on 1st October after travelling 2 000 miles over 5 days from Estonia. The build will take approximately 8 weeks to complete.

The school recognised the importance of preparing our 6th Formers for life after Hillcrest. The Lodge will help give them an environment that will support their development towards increasing independence and give them a separate identity to the rest of the school population.

School Improvement Partner Visit

Michele Crichton visited the school on the 24th September. I am pleased to report that she commented on many positives in school that show that Hillcrest are addressing the key areas from the OFSTED Inspection in January.

Positives included:

Pupil's attendance has improved with 56% of pupils increasing their attendance (comparison with the academic year 2014/15 to that of the previous).

During a learning walk that took place pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour was noticeable. The school environment was calm, purposeful and pupils were keen to talk to visitors about their work.

Coaching and mentoring to improve the quality of teaching has already commenced.

Learning spaces are used creatively to diffuse potential behaviour issues and to accelerate learning for all pupils. Classroom walls clearly show the changes in the merit system with 'success ladders' reflecting clear rewards and consequences. The Governing Body look forward to reporting on continued school improvement in the next Newsletter.

Changes to the Day

Responding to the need for Change.

In response to identified areas for improvement the school made a decision to change the running of the school day.

In recognition of students arriving into school hungry, thirsty and bringing very different issues into school every morning it was decided to create a focus time.

During focus time all students are offered breakfast and a drink of milk or water. This is a time when students can sit around the table and form strong relationships with their peers and the staff supporting them.

A time is set aside for students to discuss any issues that may be concerning them, whether at school or at home. Even after just a short space of time the benefits of the focus time in the morning has had a positive effect on the students and the school day is calmer and students are ready to start their learning.

Reflection time at the end of the day is a chance when students are able to talk about their day and again any issues can be resolved.

Another important part of this time is a chance for students to re-visit their work and make any corrections and improvements that have been identified by their teachers in their work books. It was imperative that students were given the time to make the corrections that they had been asked to do.



Official Opening of Phase one of Operation Playground

I was delighted to attend the official opening of phase one of Operation Playground on the first Friday morning of the new term. It was great to see a number of Parents and Carers there to witness Pat, one of the local residents, cut the ribbon.

Everyone at Hillcrest recognised the need to give our students areas to use for break & lunchtimes, and were keen to create an area which can be used for healthy exercise.

Stage one was funded by the school, and we are hoping to be able to access outside funding so that additional equipment can be added.

The students are enjoying spending time in this new area.

I look forward to watching Hillcrest continue to

“Aim High, Dream, Believe and Achieve” the best possible environment for our students”

Thanks also to Ringtons for providing refreshments.



Life after levels

It is great to see how the staff have responded to the changes set by the government around the assessing and levelling of pupils. Hillcrest have looked at the New National Curriculum and have arranged these into set stages which the children can progress through.

It was impressive the way that every teacher had a clear baseline of the pupils in literacy and numeracy and they were able to show the strengths and areas for development. The simple colour coding of these assessments means that staff can also discuss this with the pupils and talk about their Individual targets.

The data collected by the school is being presented in a way that allows us, as governors, to monitor the progress of your child and ensure that they are being challenged to make the most progress they possibly can. If you would like to discuss and find out more about the way that assessment and levelling has changed it would be worth arranging an appointment with your child's teacher to discuss this.

Parent and Carers Phonics' Training

As part of Hillcrest's strategy for improving student achievement in literacy we would like to invite all Parents & Carers to a "phonic" training session.

Phonics are used in school across the curriculum. We believe that if Parents and Carers are able to support their child's reading at home using the letter sounds phonic strategy; this will be of great benefit to your child's literacy needs.

The session will take place on Wednesday 14th October 1.30 -2.30pm.

Northumberland Junior Chess Club.

Thanks to Northumberland Junior Chess Club for providing us with chess sets to use in school, and specially designed ones to use with the outside table.

Northumbria Police Charities Fund

A huge Thank you to Northumbria Police Charities Fund for their generous donation. We have used some of the money to buy an outdoor chess table as a number of our students enjoy playing chess.

A large outdoor chalkboard for The Base was also provided, and we are currently looking for suggestions as to how we spend the remaining money.

Important dates for your Diaries

School will be closed Thursday 22nd October and Friday 23rd October for Staff Training.

www.hillcrest.northumberland.sch.uk/website