



**Aboyne Lodge School**

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Dear Parents and Carers

### **Governors Update 2019/20**

Firstly, we hope that everyone is safe and well and looking forward to some form of break over the summer. At this time of year it is customary for the Governors of Aboyne Lodge to prepare a newsletter to provide you with some more insight in to the work that has been going on at the school, the achievements that have been made throughout the year and to advise you of our plans for the forthcoming year. Of course, like so many things, this years update has proven a greater challenge than usual in light of recent events.

### **School shutdown and Covid-19**

The school year has faced unprecedented challenges and, whilst not wanting to labour on the negative impact of Covid-19, it is only appropriate to comment on how well the staff and children have risen to the unique challenge that it has presented. As a smaller school, with less resources than most, we have been incredibly proud to have been able to provide regular learning updates to the children as well as being able to keep the school open to those most in need throughout the entire lockdown period.

Whilst we know that this unique challenge has caused frustration and difficulty for all, we wanted to express our sincere gratitude to the entire staffing body at the school as, and this is something that you may be unaware of, they have all continued to work full time throughout this period. Not only have they been preparing the remote work for the children but they have also been on site teaching and supporting those groups that were able to return. In addition, they have also given up their time and holiday time to come into the school to pack up, and then unpack, the entire school building in order that it could be relocated into the temporary school. This is a huge effort on their part and has been done in order that they can deliver the best possible teaching experience when we look to return in September.

### **Building Project**

It's been quite a busy time since the last newsletter. Lots has happened and the building works have pushed on throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

The temporary building is complete and being used by those children back in school. Hopefully everyone will get to use it come September. The staff have worked incredibly hard to move everything over to the new building and get the classrooms



up and running, all whilst providing home-learning content for those at home and teaching those back in school.

The Hall space is temporarily being used for storage until the Lodge Room is



complete.

The external play spaces have been reorganised several times – not just to enable the building work but also more recently to enable social distancing. There is now a great new Astroturf area which will provide the school with a good weather-proof



play space over the next few years.

The work to the Nursery and Lodge Room is almost complete. Additional repair work was required to the floor which significantly delayed the completion of this part of the project - now scheduled for mid-August. This hopefully gives the school enough time to move the Reception and Nursery class into this building for the start of next term.

The glazing and external walls have all been completed and are looking much better. The server room has been relocated to the lodge room - to keep the school ICT operational during the building works - and new heating and electrics installed. New



ceilings have been completed and now the floor is done new finishes can go down and decorations completed.

**What will happen over the Summer Holiday?**

With the school now decanted into the temporary building, work has started on stripping out the main building. 60 years worth of strip out!

Additional surveys will be carried out to establish the exact requirements and then work will begin on installations of new plumbing and wiring.

The school will operate in the temporary building and the Lodge Room and Nursery for several months now while the work refurbishing the main building is completed.

The scope is for a full refurbishment which will see the building transformed. We will keep you updated on progress from September.

**Access Arrangements**

Pedestrian access will remain through the gate at the front.

Access to the temporary school will be re-organised over the summer to bring



everyone round the back of the nursery. More details of this to follow before the start of term.



## **Education and Learning**

Prior to the early closure of the school we were pleased to see the positive feedback of a review of teaching by our Hertfordshire Improvement Partner where it was noted that;

- At Aboyne Lodge, leaders and teachers deliver a creative curriculum that is purposeful, engaging, follows the national curriculum but is also personalised to the school.
- The school have identified learning drivers which are central to their planning and teaching, meeting the needs and interests of the pupils and helping them to bridge any predictable gaps. The Learning Drivers are Growth Mindset, Sustainability, the Arts and Cultural Diversity.

The Governing body also reviewed the School Development Plan in March, just before lockdown, and were pleased with the progress that was being made against all targets. It has been agreed that the targets are still very relevant and that they will be continued into the new academic year. And that the school are particularly aware of the importance of promoting the well-being of staff and pupils after such a difficult time.

## **School Finances**

Those of you that have read these updates over the past few years will be all too aware of the financial pressures that Aboyne Lodge is under. As a single form intake school, in what is considered a relatively affluent area, Aboyne Lodge typically receives lower levels of funding than similar sized schools in other areas. This is a frustration as it must still meet the same statutory obligations and this places a significant strain on resources.

For the 2019/20 financial year the school did a great job in managing to break even for the year and repay an historic carried forward loss from previous years to end up overall positive (by a few hundred pounds). However, for 2020/21, as a result of projected cost increases, it is anticipated that the school will once again fall into deficit. The result is that the school must, with the assistance of Hertfordshire County Council, put a cost cutting plan in to place. You will appreciate that is difficult as the school already closely watches its costs, having reduced them over the last few years.

In addition to government funding, the school is dependent on additional revenues from:

(i) income from lettings, and (ii) donations from ALSA, and (iii) parent donations to the School Foundation.

- (1) As you will appreciate, lettings income has effectively been stopped by the lockdown and by the school building project. Once the building work has finished, the school will be in a position to increase lettings again which will be a great help.



- (II) I have included an update from ALSA below. We are incredibly grateful to ALSA for all their support and to all the parents for their support for ALSA. ALSA plays a vital part in the school community and it helps fund many of the projects around the school that make Aboyne Lodge special.
  
- (III) In the last couple of years the Governors and school have looked to increase income from parent donations. This has included setting up a charitable trust, the Aboyne Lodge Foundation, to enable donations to be eligible for gift aid. We asked earlier this year for parents to consider donations by direct debit. We fully understand the financial pressures that families are under (at this time in particular) and we do not want to ask parents for money. However, the reality is that the school is dependent on donations in order to remain financially sustainable. I'm therefore very sorry to have to ask you again for support. Gift aid forms are available from the school and we will send them out again in the autumn term.

### **Update from ALSA**

ALSA have asked us to include the below note from them in the interests of collaborating with the school.

*We wanted to give a brief update on the state of ALSA and its funds.*

*Currently, ALSA are looking for a new co-treasurer and auditor as well as some more year reps. We'll be in touch via year reps soon with further details but it is important to note that without a co-treasurer ALSA cannot survive as a charitable organisation. This would be such a shame so please, if you think you can take on the role, get in touch with your year rep now.*

*Fundraising has taken a massive hit during the last few months of lockdown and we have had to cancel what would have been three of our biggest events of the year: the summer fair, the parents' ball and the much-loved summer disco (it's those chips!). This would have added over £10k to our funds.*

*Currently, ALSA have approx £17K in the bank. This may sound like a lot but £12K of this is already earmarked to be spent (eg on the KS2 TA and the teachers' subscription to TWINKL). ALSA need to retain a working capital of around £5K in the bank in order to organise future events (such as balls and pantomimes etc). So, without any major injections of cash we will soon struggle to meet the basic funding requests we expect to receive from the school (eg storage during the building works of approx £1500 and any improvements/making good once the builders have gone, future TA funding etc) let alone be able to fund any of the extra nice-to-haves which enrich our children's school experience and which ALSA has always been proud to provide.*

*However, our message is not just about funding.*





*At this time the school community is more important than ever as we can't get together over a cheesy tune, a competitive quiz or a glass or two. We are giving lots of thought to creating events to maintain the fantastic community that exists at Aboyne but we need everyone to pull together to achieve this. To that end we have a few asks:*

*1) We appreciate everyone's circumstances are different but, if you can, please can you donate to support the school. As the governors outlined the school needs our help now more than ever as central cuts impact locally.*

*2) Volunteer your time. No skills required just the chance to get involved, support the school and your kids and to have fun. Honest! Most of the ALSA roles are joint so you won't be doing this on your own. As mentioned above, we need a co-treasurer, year reps and an auditor. Your current reps will be in touch with more info. Also, a gentle reminder that ALSA roles are open to all carers, not just mums!*

*3) Your creative ideas. Holding events for the kids like school discos, and for parents like the quiz nights (though who doesn't love a school disco!) in this 'new normal' will be hard. We really don't want the kids to miss out on these lovely rites of passage so please join our committee or just send ideas to Emma on 07941325561 at any time.*

*Thanks again for all the time, mad ideas, baking, sweetie jar filling and donations you have given over the years and together we will weather this particular storm together.*

The school and ALSA are incredibly grateful for your support and any and all support (in particular through volunteering and donations) that you are able to give make a huge difference to the day to day activities of the school.

The first half of 2020 has been one of the most difficult times that the school has experienced in recent years but with the support of the staff, children, parents and carers we have made it this far. We are hopeful that come September we will once again be in a position to offer the children the caring, engaging and supportive environment that they need and thrive in and, in the meantime, would like to wish you all a restful summer.

The Governors of Aboyne Lodge

