

Headteacher News

Following on from the item written by the governors last week, I'd like to pick up on a particularly hot topic that appeared on various social media forums, and that is primary school league tables. It appears some of our parents have quite strong views on Montpelier's position within them and question why I haven't made any attempt to explain it. But I will bow to a bit of public pressure now and give you my thoughts on this.

As a country, we report primary school performance as a single percentage generated from pupil achievements in tests on reading and maths, and a teacher assessment of their skills in writing. We collect other data, but this is the headline that dominates reporting. Measuring schools mainly on such test results creates inherent dangers though and, as Russel Hobby of the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) stated, 'There's more to primary education than maths and English'.

It is a fundamental truth of organisational life that you get what you measure. If you measure just two things, from all the many aspirations and goals we have in education, and if you make the stakes so high that failure spells disaster, then the potential for distortion is huge. Key basic skills are really important of course. We wanted our son, Joe, to leave primary school able to read fluently, write coherently and imaginatively, and be able to solve maths problems confidently. However, we also wanted him to be active and enjoy sports, to appreciate music and play an instrument, to be able to socialise well with others and be a good team member, to understand the rich variety in the world around him. That's all incredibly important too. Those are the life-skills that will make him a more rounded and capable individual. He's now 18 and forging his own way in life but his primary school played a huge part in making him who he is today.

The NAHT stressed that parents should ignore this year's primary school league table results, as drastic changes to the curriculum mean test scores are an unreliable assessment of schools' performance. New, much tougher end-of-primary SATs exams meant that only 53% of children nationally actually passed them, compared to an 80% pass rate on the old SATs last year. The pass mark for the tests was set at such an absurdly high level that we had effectively failed half the children in the country - about 11,000 schools didn't meet the 65% target, Montpelier being one of them.

You might argue that 'some schools managed it, so why didn't we?' That's where we come back to priorities. Key to high-level success in those SATs is test preparation; coaching children to successfully apply their knowledge in a test situation. Every school has to decide how much quality learning time they sacrifice to refine these test-taking skills. Of the thousands of hours that children attend primary school during their seven years here, their abilities (and our success as a school) comes down to a 1 hour reading test, 45 minutes on grammar and punctuation, about 15 minutes on spelling, and then a 30 minute, and two 40 minute tests for maths. That's it. So the success of around six and a half thousand hours of primary school learning across a broad and balanced curriculum is narrowly judged within the space of just under four hours. Doesn't matter if you didn't sleep too well the night before, or your pet rabbit just died, or your parents are in the throes of separation, or you've got a splitting headache and a bit of a cold; there's no second chances. If you're finding it hard to concentrate, for whatever reason, tough. That's life I guess. But, for our 11 year old children, is this really what we want?

We do acknowledge the SATs tests hold importance but, for all the reasons stated above, we try not to put too much emphasis on them. Lots of other schools do because they fear the repercussions of poor headline data. And I get that. I constantly feel that stress and pressure, partly because Ofsted judgements are very much influenced by these measures. But, as I've always stated, we have the children's interests at heart. When we compare the learning our children do in their books with those in other schools (which we do a lot), our pupils always come out very favourably. The quality of learning they produce each and every day is truly impressive in comparison. Interestingly, we decided to increase the expectation in terms of homework for SATs revision this year, as we do concede that it's important for the children to do as well as they can in these tests. This gained favour with some parents but also resistance from others. I very much got the feeling that the majority of parents have the same reservations as we do regarding the high-stakes accountability surrounding the SATs. I'd urge parents to look beyond the measurable towards the whole child, and the young people they are becoming thanks to their experiences here. There; I can't voice it on Facebook but, for what it's worth, those are my thoughts on our position in the league tables.

Diary Dates

Mon 13th - Fri 17th Feb 2017 Inc.

- Half term

Fri 3rd March 2017

- Vista group photos - Year 6 and Foundation only.

Fri 17th Mar 2017

- Mufti – chocolate donation for Easter Fair

Fri 24th Mar 2017

- Easter Fair – after school

Fri 31st Mar 2017

- 'Wear a Hat' mufti day - for Brain Tumor Research

Mon 3rd-Tues 18th Apr 2017 Inc.

- Easter holidays

Mon 1st May 2017

- Bank holiday

Wed 24th May 2017

- Tempest Photos – Class groups & Year 6 individual photos.

Sun 21st – Fri 26th May 2016

- Bude Residential (Yr 6)

Mon 29th May - Fri 2nd June '17

- Half term

Tues 25th July 2017

- Leavers' assembly
- Last day of term 2:30pm finish (Yr6 finish at 1.30pm)

Wed 26th July 2017

- Start of the summer holidays



Monty's Den

Monty's Den is our onsite after school care. Call on 07522 429599 for more information or to book a session. Sessions start from £6.50. Flexible booking available
www.thedens.co.uk

Headlice

Check everyone in the family. You'll need to treat everyone affected to get rid of them. Let's banish them from Montpelier.

Foundation News

Apologies if your child went home smelling of baked beans one day this week...it was all part of learning how to wash our hands properly! The week ended with a fantastic day in the mud for 50 Things. We do like being messy in Foundation! After half term, we look forward to meeting you all at Parent Consultations to discuss your child's progress. Please do sign up if you have not already done so. We hope you all have a super half term.

Year 1 News

What a brilliant half term this has been! Year 1 have continued to dazzle us with their fantastic attitudes towards learning and ability to take on all of the challenges set so far... From creating clay hedgehogs, writing adventure stories and letters, to learning about shape, money and super subtraction, as well as becoming plant experts! The children really have been very busy! We cannot wait to delve deeper into our fantastic topic next term. Have a lovely break!

Year 2 News

What a brilliant term! We have certainly become prehistoric pro's and the children have shown superb learning behaviour throughout their learning, even when it is really tricky. It is amazing to see the progress the children have made over the past 5 weeks. Thank you for your continuing support and engagement. All the team hope you have a fantastic half term.

Year 3 News

Another fantastic week in Year 3. In English children have been planning, editing and drafting their South-West guides ready to send to the Tourist Information Board. In Maths children have been continuing to explore fractions. Year 3 really enjoyed their 'mud' day, it was brilliant to be outside learning new things. Have a fantastic half term.

Year 4 News

Wow! We have been really impressed by year 4's focus and enthusiasm for their learning during this week, rounding off a successful start to 2017 in year four. In Maths this week we have been looking at measures. During half term please ask your child if they can continue to read in order to gain air miles for their reading passport. In English we have been writing our own information guides to Italy which have included adverbs and prepositions. Thank you for your continued support with their learning. Enjoy your half term.

Year 5 News

Well done to all the year 5 classes for filling the top three places in the TT Rockstars 'Battle of the Bands' last week. Once again 5S won the event, scoring over 100,000 answers 5P were second, with 5M in third. The children were so enthusiastic about the event and enjoyed telling the teachers how often they had visited the site and practiced their tables. Keep practicing over the half-term break and see if you can improve your speed even more! Have a great week off.

Year 6 News

Have you checked the school website recently? We have updated the Year 6 area. It includes the curriculum letter, details about our learning and lots of pictures of all the fun things we have done. Check it out!

We will be issuing the homework timetable on the first day back after half-term.

We hope you have a lovely half-term break!

Children's University Workshops

Come along for free, to this year's British Science Week Children's Lecture. Fri 10 March 2017 17:30 – 19:30. For 7 years old and up, the study of science, past, present and future, and looking at how technology has shaped our understanding of the natural world.

17:30 Arrive and get hands on with some of our exhibits

18:00 The Evolution of taxonomy: from drawings to DNA, Niall Dunne, Plymouth University

18:20 The secret life of microfossils, Dr Jodie Fisher, Plymouth University

18:40 Break

18:50 Ice age alive! Recreating ice age beasts, Jan Freedman, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

19:10 - 19:30 TBC, Plymouth Marine Laboratory Devonport Lecture Theatre, Portland Square, Plymouth University, Drake Circus, Plymouth

Also Monday 20th March 2017 Teddy Bear Hospital workshop 4.15-5.15pm. Places are limited

To book your free place contact: psmd-outrreach@plymouth.ac.uk or call Chloe Frude on 01752 437429

Don't forget to look on the MPS website under Children's University for the latest news.

School Games - Athletics

Wow!!! What a week for the Athletics team. On Monday Year 5/6 went to Marjons in the level 2 finals after winning the family heat back in November. Both girls and boys competing in 6 track and 6 field events, first on the track was the girls, setting the standard winning their heat in style, while the boys were giving their all in the field. Knowing that each race was going to be very difficult up against the best 9 schools in Plymouth all athletes didn't disappoint. The girls shinning in all events and receiving a special mention at the end for gaining the most points with 202, this added to the boys 88 points our school finished 3rd overall and qualified for the regional event on the 24th February. Congratulations team you were amazing.

Year 4 athletics team participated on Wednesday at the Life Centre, competing in 5 track and 4 field events. With this being new for some of our children the butterflies were kicking in. First race was the girls 1+1 relay showing that the Year 4 are just as good as Year 6 - it was another win in our heat. This winning streak continued for the girls winning 4th and 2nd position in the track events. The boys proving to be just as good as the girls' again winning 4th and 2nd position on the track. In the field events the team continued putting in the effort, finishing in the top 2 for every event. Waiting for the final result to be announced the overall winner being Montpelier with an incredible 340 points, 78 points ahead of 2nd position. Year 4 you were all amazing, you showed how hard work and determination certainly works, not only are you fantastic as individuals you are exceptional as a team. Well done!!

Linda Pearce

Parking

Please be mindful when parking around the school. Do not park over neighbour's driveways or on the zigzag lines.

Reminder that the school carpark is for staff only.



Children's University Workshops

Monday 20th March 2017

Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry

Teddy Bear Hospital Workshop 4.15pm - 5.15pm

Suitable for Primary aged children (5-10 years old)



The Teddy Bear Hospital is a fun and interactive session run within our simulated ward at Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry. Children are asked to bring a poorly teddy to visit the Teddy Doctor. The children will help the Teddy Doctors and Dentists to treat Teddy within the ward. The children will also become Junior Teddy Medics and run through a number of role plays and interactive stations.



Medical and Dental Workshop 5.20pm - 6.20pm

Suitable for Secondary aged children (11-14 years old)

The Medical and Dental workshop is a fun and interactive session. Children can come along to learn about and take part in a number of hands on activities with our own medical and dental students such as:

- Spirometry & peak flow metres
- Laryngeal mask airway & intubation
- Auscultation (stethoscopes, normal/abnormal breath sounds)
- Basic life support
- What to do with a wobbly tooth



These sessions are facilitated by PU PSMD Medical and Dental Students.

All children must be accompanied by an adult. Adults can stay with the children or they are welcome to wait in the café area.

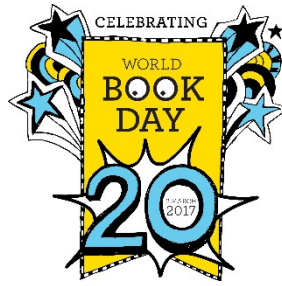
The John Bull Building, Plymouth Science Park, Plymouth, PL6 8BU

PLACES ARE LIMITED SO BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL

To book your free place contact: psmd-outreach@plymouth.ac.uk

or call Chloe Frude on 01752 437429





FANCY DRESS



Come to school dressed as your favourite book character on Thursday 2nd March (no charge).



BEDTIME STORIES

Return to school in your pyjamas for some bedtime stories on Thursday 2nd March

5.15pm - 6.15pm: Foundation and KS1 bedtime stories.

5.30pm - 6.30pm: KS2 bedtime stories.

5.15pm - 6.30pm: refreshments for the adults (small donation required) and parent book swap (KS2 hall).



BOOK VOUCHERS

As in previous years, all the children will receive a £1 book voucher enabling them to buy one of this year's brilliant £1 books from selected bookshops.

More details to follow...

