



Cooper News

Issue No. 44

October 2002

From The Headteacher

Introduction

Welcome to the first newsletter of the academic year 2002-03 at Cooper School.

The new school year started with real improvements in many areas of the school's facilities and its environment:

- the new ICT suites in E8 and S1 came on line as planned
- the new ICT facilities around the school in the library, music, art, study centre are now operational
- the new telephone system is in place and operational
- the external works on improving disability access to the school had been completed
- the new classrooms attached to the performance/sports hall were ready for use as intended
- improvements in the whole Humanities block have made a significant and highly visible improvement
- the new staffroom ceiling/lights and re-chairing have been implemented
- new locker facilities for the new Year 7 and continuing for Year 8
- general ease of access has been enhanced with new pathways and steps to the front of the school
- increased pupil space has been provided by the flattening of the mound outside the PH/SH
- new doors/enhanced access have been provided to the library and lecture theatre blocks
- painting of the gymnasium and many other areas has enhanced the aesthetics of the buildings
- new furniture has been provided for many classrooms that had had need of it for many years
- new flooring and carpets have been provided in the same way in Humanities, Science, Maths and other areas
- the Head's office has been refurbished as a more appropriate first point of contact for parents, governors, meetings, visitors, et al: reception and the office areas will follow
- dining facilities have been enhanced with the new servery in the Sports Hall block
- flood repair works have been completed in the Maths/Humanities block
- many other projects have been started or planned and will be reported in due course



In addition to the physical changes that have taken place in the school, there are again multiple initiatives being started or continued with the staff's continuing commitment to provide the best they can for the pupils of Cooper School. Some examples of these things are:

- the second year of the new school day with it adjusted marginally at the edges to enhance lessons
- a large number of new staff and others taking on new and exciting roles
- we have planned out the implementation of the Increased Flexibility at 14-16 programme that we are running in conjunction with BCC and for which we gained significant funding from the Learning and Skills Council
- the second running of our TTA sponsored Returners' Project has started and is continuing with greater numbers
- a renewed Graduate Teacher Programme is in place with candidates in Maths and Science
- we will be starting an Overseas Trained Teacher's programme with a candidate in English
- on the back of these initiatives we have applied for Training School Status to the TTA in partnership with BCC
- the curriculum developments in PSHE/Citizenship are continuing
- the new developments in Applied GCSEs in Leisure & Tourism and Business have been adopted fully
- the pastoral developments in academic tutoring and the new reporting systems continue towards embedding

These developments will help ensure that it will be an exciting year this year and we will work to ensure that these changes, and many others, are bedded-in and we continue striving to make improvements that will see Cooper School making significant progress in its teaching and learning that will culminate in better pupil performance overall. To this end we have highlighted the improvement of standards in teaching and learning as being the key element from the school development plan for all staff to focus on and have at the centre of their thinking.

A Plea for the School Environment

The ongoing drive to improve the environment around the school has utilised a positive use of the budget and the determination that we should all take lead responsibility for the state of the site. This includes an ongoing drive to improve the state of litter around the site by utilising pupils to collect litter on an infrequent basis: each child will collect litter on approximately 4 or 5 days over the course of a year. We would ask for your support both in encouraging your child to utilise our enhanced litter bin system and in not sending them into school with snacks/lunches that multiply our litter problem.

New Staff Welcomed This Term

The ongoing vision for the school is to generate a secure environment in which all children can achieve and to provide the face for success that every pupil has inside them. To generate this environment we need to attract, recruit, train and maintain a highly motivated staff that can deliver a quality teaching and learning experience. This is the main reason for our continued development and promotion of initiatives such as the Returners' projects, the GTP and OTT programmes as well as our attempts to pre-empt staffing shortages by imaginative recruitment strategies.

To achieve our aims, therefore, we have appointed additional, high quality teachers so that we have the wherewithal to deliver improved standards of teaching and learning. A summary of the latest staffing changes is as follows:

- Mrs V Westwell (Maths) will be returning from maternity leave in January 2003
- Ms C Francis (MFL) part-time until Christmas initially to cover shortages in MFL and cover some of the English: Ms Francis is also on our Returners' project
- Mr K Kolb (Science) and Ms S Lewis (Maths) join our GTP programme and Ms N Dingwall (English) to our OTT programme
- Mr J Rendle (DT) to replace Mr M Hill as Head of Technology
- Ms G Coton (Geography) and Ms K Ford (English) as NQTs in the school
- Ms E Stones (English) and Mrs L Ellard (Science) have taken over as acting Heads of Department pending permanent appointments that will be advertised in due course
- Mrs Z Schmidt has taken over as acting-2i/c in Maths pending a permanent appointment that will be advertised in due course
- Mr M Goodridge, Mrs B McEwen and Mrs K Sheehan as TAs in the Learning Support Department
- Angela Head has tendered her resignation from the post of librarian in school due to a family move: we advertised the post and have appointed Mrs T Talbott to start after half-term
- Mrs W Spencer is helping us out as Assistant Librarian in the short term
- To enhance the strength of the school's Senior Leadership Team we have appointed Ms G Merritt (English) as Assistant Head and Mrs G Martindale (Food Technology) as Senior Teacher both with effect from Jan. 2003.

Behaviour Review

Last year we undertook a full revision of the behaviour management system within the school. This was very successful but would have been more so with greater consistency in pupils following the new rules. We would therefore value parental support in making sure that their children continue to adhere to the behaviour management and uniform policies. This includes not supporting your children in their breaking of the rules: e.g. at the present time, a lot of parents are condoning their children's wearing of trainers from having 'poorly' feet/toes/ankles where shoes would be as good, if not better, for them.

In addition, I would like to emphasise to all parents, as I have to all pupils, that I will neither condone nor tolerate verbal or physical abuse of staff by pupils. My response to such attacks will be swift and consistent: I will exclude the pupil from school pending a meeting between pupil, parents and myself. Continued performance of such acts will put the pupil in danger of permanent exclusion from school.

Mentoring

To help our year 11 achieve to the best of their ability we are again going to provide as many of them as possible with mentors to help them plan, organise and complete their work. In addition the mentors will help them by using their experience to advise them on revision methods, stress management techniques and any other help that is needed on an individual basis.

Mentors may come from the teaching or non-teaching staff and/or external employer mentors. If any parent would like to become involved in the mentoring programme please contact Mrs Wainman in the school and we can then provide additional information and training.



SPECIALIST SCHOOL STATUS AT THE COOPER SCHOOL

A decision was taken during last year to pursue the attainment of specialist school status in Science. That decision led to certain processes being started that impact on pupils, parents, staff and governors and which require several tasks to be completed:

- Generating the engagement and commitment of the staff and governors of the school
- Raising the awareness of and the commitment from, parents
- Raising of £50,000 of sponsorship
- Making a formal bid to the DfES

We have undertaken the first two tasks and each time have highlighted the benefits to be gained for the pupils of the school by attainment of this status. To reiterate this in summary, if we can raise the £50,000 of sponsorship and generate a suitable and successful bid to the DfES, then attaining specialist school status in Science will generate:

- An immediate £150,000 of funding for capital projects in the school
- Approximately £140,000 each year for 3 years of funding to support the learning of the children and the community
- It will raise the status of the school in the county
- It will help us to attract good quality teaching staff to the school
- It will help encourage growth in pupil numbers, that generates additional funds, that helps improve education, which helps to generate pupil numbers ... and so on
- It helps provide us with the funding and flexibility to really increase standards in the school

As we enter the new school year we have reached the following point: we have generated the commitment of staff, governors and the wider community; we have been raising the awareness of parents and pupils of the benefits to be gained; we have prepared much of the necessary written bid to the DfES for the award of specialist school status; we have been attempting to raise the £50,000 of sponsorship from parents, the business community, self help fundraising and any other endeavour which comes to mind. The only delay in finalising our submission to the DfES is the fact that, currently, we have not yet raised the £50,000 of sponsorship required.

WE NEED YOUR CONTINUING HELP TO RAISE THIS SPONSORSHIP

At the present time we have raised approximately £15,000 of sponsorship. Whilst this is good, we are obviously still £35,000 short of our intended target. We are continuing to seek sponsorship from the business and wider community, but the substantial part of this additional £35,000 will need to come from the parental body. We are exceptionally grateful for all of the contributions made so far, but would encourage you to consider contributing to the future development of the Cooper School for the benefit of your children.

As we have pointed out, if each of our parents were to contribute the equivalent of a reasonable night, out or two lessons of private tuition, we would raise somewhere in the region of £25 - £30,000 directly.

We cannot make a formal bid to the DfES to attain specialist school status until we have the full £50,000 sponsorship pledged and in place. We are therefore going to aim, not at the October 2002 round, but rather the March 2003 submission round. This gives us five months in which to raise the additional sponsorship. We would urge you to continue to support us in this project.

Free School Meals - We Need Your Help Again!

Many government statistics and funding mechanisms for the school are based on the percentage of our pupils who are eligible for free school meals, e.g. the level of funds we get or as a basis for such things as comparing our academic progress with other schools. Whatever we feel about the validity of this method it is still going to be used. It is therefore essential that our information on this measure is as accurate and precise as possible.

As last year, to ensure that this is the case, I am requesting that parents inform me in complete confidence if they are in receipt of Income Support or Income Based Job Seeker's Allowance but not Family Credit and therefore are eligible for free school meals. I ask them to do this by using the reply slip on the letter that I will be sending out to them. Please return this slip if you are eligible, even if you are not going to claim the free school meals, as it WILL help our funding and therefore the education of your children.

Lockers

The pilot use of lockers for new Year 7 pupils last year was generally a good success with the Year 6 parents additionally requesting that we maintain it for their children this year. With many Year 7 parents requesting that we continue with lockers for them as Year 8 students we decided it was worthwhile extending the pilot for a second year.

Lockers for this year's new Year 7 therefore duly arrived and have been issued to all who requested them. All of the Year 8 pupils who wanted lockers have also got them and the spare lockers will be rented to other year groups in the school who have been very upset that we have not made them available for them so far. We will continue to monitor the performance of this pilot and I will report to governors during the year should any further issues appear.

New Building Name

It has been suggested that with the addition of the new classrooms to the Sports Hall/Performance Hall Block that it has reached the proportions where it might well be appropriate to give the whole block a name. The Governing Body of the school has therefore requested that we ask parents whether they have any suggestions for an appropriate name for the block. If you do, please let me know by **returning a note with the suggested name to Mrs Munro, my PA, by November 15th** so that they can be presented to Governors for their consideration at their Full Governors' meeting in December. The result of their deliberations will be reported to parents in the December newsletter.

The Merit System

The new merit system was implemented on our return to school in September 2001 to launch our new behaviour management system. The original intention was to reward good behaviour and quality work by pupils with either one (blue) or ten (gold) merits that they could save up and 'trade in' for 'goodies' of all sorts as outlined to parents last year. This was a pilot scheme we were going to review at the end of the year.

We undertook the review of the new behaviour system at the end of the year and so far the results have been remarkably pleasing and the general level of behaviour/pupil attitude has improved and been very positive. Pupil and staff response to the merit scheme part of the system has been most pleasing. The review included looking at how many merits had been gained by pupils, how many had been traded in for 'goodies' and how many had not been traded in over the year.

It is herein that lies the only problem that we have found with the pilot system. Pupils responded positively and have tried hard to gain and collect merits. Staff have also responded remarkably positively and have awarded merits freely, in particular using far more gold merits than had been anticipated. The anticipated level of award of the merits had been that the *very* well behaved and meritorious pupil would receive up to about 200 in the year so that by the end of five years they may just about reach the maximum award of £25 cash for 1000 merits, with maybe 10 people in a year achieving this level and gaining the £25.

The way that pupils have responded, and the generous way in which merits have been given out, has caused the most common number of merits to be about 400 per student whilst one student has as many as 820! If this were to continue we could have approximately 600 students gaining the target of 1000 merits this year or next.

If the number of cash awards was limited to 10, as anticipated, this would leave a lot of pupils with unused merits. On the other hand, if all these students were to be awarded the £25 in cash, a total of £15,000 would be required in 18 months time, and on an ongoing annual basis. This is a situation that could not happen as the money would come directly from resources that should be aimed at providing educational resources to our pupils: this would be counter-productive.

In our review of the system, we therefore had to find a middle way that would continue to encourage and motivate the pupils and staff but would ensure that the school was not put in a problematic fiscal position, spending resources in an inappropriate fashion. We have therefore decided to modify the system as follows:

- We will increase the number of £25 cash awards to 20 each year, instead of the 10 as anticipated, with them awarded as pupils claim them on reaching 1000 merits.
- We will aim to generate 40 additional non-cash awards to value of approximately £25. These may include things such as free paintball trips, free/subsidised CEW trips, other free/subsidised school trips or other additional awards.
- Pupils need to be encouraged to cash in their awards for worthwhile awards so we will continue to investigate/find enhanced merit awards for pupils to cash their merits in for.

If you would like any additional information on these modifications then please do not hesitate to contact me at the school. We hope that you feel the modifications will enhance the system and school for the benefit of your children. We will be outlining them directly to the pupils in assemblies over the next few weeks.

Bradford and Bingley

An opportunity has been presented to the school by the Bradford and Bingley. The nature of the opportunity is that we contact our community and enable Bradford and Bingley to send them information about the possibilities for personal, independent consultations.

If, following these consultations, it leads to a product, or products, being purchased by members of the community, then the school will receive a bonus payment for each product purchased. The important point here being that this bonus comes direct from the B&B and in no way is a charge on the purchaser.

The Governing Body of the School have positively adopted the project as it will help us raise funds and as the B&B are completely independent financial advisers who analyse their clients' needs and then recommend the product that best suits these needs. Their independence ensures that they can recommend any product and are not tied to a minority of companies.

If you would like to know more about this opportunity to help us raise funds please do not hesitate to contact me at the school and I can provide you with more information.

A S Hamilton

LADIES INDULGENCE EVENING

Monday 4th November 7.30-10.30pm
The Cooper School Performance Hall

The PTA have organised a wonderful evening of pampering, shopping and demonstrations for you. We have been very fortunate that many local businesses have agreed to give their time free to join us on this fund raising evening. The exhibitors will include:

- Hairdressing demonstration
- Beauty treatments
- Health and fitness
- Christmas gifts and ideas
- Jewellery
- Ladies lingerie
- Christmas flowers and decorations

Please come along and "INDULGE" yourself (bar available!!!) and perhaps do some early shopping.

Requests for tickets (£4.00 each) can be made at the School Reception.

**PARENTS WANTED!**

Do you remember what it was like bringing up small children? Did you ever wish for a friend to drop in and help you out?

At Home-Start Bicester we value your parenting experience very highly. We would like you to talk to us about using your skills to make a real difference to another family. We have been sending friendly parents into family homes to offer friendship and practical help for thirty years, with magnificent results. Now we're offering the same home-visiting service in Bicester. We would like YOU to give:

- 2 or 3 hours a week
- friendship and practical help to a family locally, for about a year
- the flexibility to visit them at home, or go out with them to a local playgroup, swimming pool, shopping centre and so on.

In return, we would love to offer you:

- free training of a high national standard
- weekly support
- a family carefully matched to your own personality, with at least one child under five, who are going through a difficult time
- regular social meetings with other volunteers
- travel expenses and other out-of-pocket expenses
- a warm feeling from having a positive effect on other people's lives

Would you like to talk to us about joining our team? Just pick up the phone and dial 01869 320099 for a chat with Naomi.

Naomi Hillman, Co-ordinator

**ENGLISH SCHOOLS' ATHLETICS
ASSOCIATION
SCHOOLS' CROSS-COUNTRY CUP
Preliminary Round**

The above event was held at Cooper School on Wednesday 2nd October. Fifteen schools took part in four age groups; Junior Girls & Junior Boys for teams from years 7 & 8; and Intermediate Girls and Boys for teams from years 9 & 10.

The event is a team race with the first four runners in each team scoring points based on their finishing positions. The team with the lowest score wins.

In the Junior Girls' race Amanda Carreras won for the second year running, with Melanie Cadle 10th, Rebecca Gill 21st, Katie Richards 33rd, Hannah McArdle 47th and Charlotte Landy 61st. The team results were: Waddesdon 1st, Tudor Hall 2nd and Cooper 3rd.

In the Junior Boys' race Ricky Auger was our leading runner coming 13th, with the other positions being: Adam Blaylock 20th, Matthew Savins 21st, Josh Duggan 24th, James Pearson 37th and Daniel Walters 51st. The team results were: Waddesdon 1st, Wallingford 2nd, Gosford Hill 3rd, with Cooper a creditable 5th.

In the Intermediate races Cooper only had a Boys' Team and they also performed very well. Their individual results were: Neil Flynn 8th, Charlie Barrett 12th, Karl Freeman 14th, Jordan Weaver 20th, Ollie Cross 34th and Brendan Murray 39th. The team event was won by Lord Williams School, with Stantonbury Campus 2nd and Cooper 3rd.



The Intermediate Girls' event was won by Headington, with Waddesdon 2nd and Oxford High 3rd.

The top three teams in each event have qualified for the Regional Final which will take place at Lord William's School, Thame on Saturday November 9th.

We wish both the Junior Girls' and Intermediate Boys' teams all the best in the next round.

NETBALL



The Year 10 and 8 netball teams are playing in the Banbury Schools' League. Matches continue after half-term and all girls in Years 10 and 8 are welcome to join the school netball club which takes place on Thursdays from 3.30pm.

NATIONAL SCIENCE COMPETITION

Three Year 9 pupils recently won prizes in a national science competition. The Study Cards competition, organised by the B.T.A., encouraged pupils to study independently and outside the National Curriculum.

Felicity Vidler gained a certificate for her work on Parkinson's Disease. Leanne Pitcher was highly commended for her plumbing project and received a cheque for £50. Shane Elliott won the National Bayer prize and received a cheque for £100. The Science Department received £500! Mrs Ellard was delighted by the achievements of her pupils.

HEAD LICE

We have had reports from primary schools in the area and some parents that there is a local problem with head lice at the moment. If you are worried, contact a local chemist, health visitor, school nurse or the Community Infection Control Nurse on 01865 226858. We also have leaflets at Reception giving guidelines on detection combing.

SCHOOL COUNSELLOR

Need someone to talk to?

The School Counsellor is happy to talk over any worry that you have. This would be done confidentially. Please ask at Reception for an appointment with Mrs. Warburton

DIARY DATES

Autumn Term Tuesday 3 September - Friday 20 December (Lunch-time)

Half Term Monday 21 October - Friday 25 October

Spring Term Monday 6 January - Thursday 10 April

Half Term Monday 17 February - Friday 21 February

Easter Holiday Monday 14 April - Friday 25 April

Summer Term Monday 28 April - Friday 18 July

In Service Training Friday 18 October Friday 20 June (PM only)

Days: Pupils not in Monday 6 January Friday 11 July (PM only)

School: Friday 11 April



Reporting to Parents Schedule 2002-03 (Incorporating Examinations)

Year	Autumn		Spring		Summer	
	1	2	1	2	1	2
11		20 Nov Full Report 9-20 Dec Mock Exams	29 Jan Progress Report 4 Feb Parents' Eve			
10		30 Oct Effort Report		12 March Full Report		16-27 June Exams 3 July Parents' Eve
9		4 Dec Effort Report		24-28 Feb Exams 27 Feb Options Eve 25 March Parents' Eve		9 July Full Reports
8		20 Nov Effort Report		10-14 March Exams 9 April Parents' Eve		25 June Full Report
7		30 Oct Effort Report 6 Nov Settling in Parents' Eve	12 Feb Effort Report	24-28 March Exams	21 May Full Report	26 June Parents' Eve

GCSE Examinations begin on 19 May 2003 and end on 27 June 2003.

Secondary Article Heading

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“Take a memorable quotation from this article (a pullquote) to pique your readers’ interest.”

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