

Partnership Update: Primary Schools (December 2019)

There are 77 Primary Schools in Nottingham City (3 Independents within this number). Every school is unique and all serve very individual communities with very different barriers to learning. There exists a range of schools with Academy status and some who are within the NST (Nottingham Schools Trust).

Nottingham City Primary schools are now in the majority Good or better schools as judged by Ofsted. Schools work collaboratively across local partnerships and within the City to share success and support each other. Attendance figures are now in line with national averages. Schools work incredibly to ensure the children attending them make good and better progress in order to attain well. Children now have more points than ever where their attainment is captured and their progress is calculated.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
Year 1 Phonics Screen Check
End of KS1 SATS
Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check (will be compulsory from 2020)
End of KS2 SATS

I can only reflect my own views as a Headteacher at Robin Hood Primary School which is located in Bestwood. We are a larger than average school with 420 pupils on roll from Reception through to Y6. The community we serve is diverse and the dynamics have shifted over the past 8 years. 34% of our pupils are in receipt of Pupil Premium and this is decreasing year on year. We have increasing numbers of children from other countries and with English as an Additional Language entering the school – especially Poland. We are part of the NST and also the Aspire Local Partnership of Schools. We are very lucky in terms of our physical environment and our school is partially new build (completed in 2011) and we have some extensive outdoor areas which means that we can run a successful Forest School / have plenty of areas to promote physical education and growing. We have a large staff (approx. 70) who work incredibly hard to support every child in our care as an individual and we are guided by our mission statement of “A community of learners aiming high to excel and exceed!” Below is a brief idea of the current sorts of challenges we (as are many primary schools) face at present:

1. Curriculum

Schools have been given the freedom to design a curriculum which best meets the needs of its pupils. This is a fantastic opportunity and allows every school to develop engaging and inspiring projects which reflect the community they serve. Curriculums must be built upon delivering the skills of the National Curriculum and be rigorous in terms of evidencing progress between year groups. This change has come about alongside a new Ofsted Framework (Sept 2019) This evolving ambitious curriculum sits alongside the subjects of Math, Reading and Writing and the key knowledge in these subjects which we must be aware is acquired and retained.

2. Children’s Mental Health

We are lucky and have a very skilled Nurture Team in our school. As part of this team we have a dedicated Talking Therapist. We have seen a significant increase of children struggling with their mental health in the past couple of years.

The Routes to Inclusion programme has been very well received in our school. We are very committed to working with individual children and their families in order to prevent exclusions. Our Nurture team run a variety of programmes e.g. Lego Therapy / Circle of Friends / Marvellous Me to support many children across school in raising self-esteem and building self-regulation strategies.

3. Reading

Our ambition is to be a book loving school and ensure children and staff alike have a good breadth of texts and literatures. We want to celebrate local writers and encourage children to read widely – seeking the support of libraries inside and outside of school as much as possible to do this. We reward children regularly with books – we aim to share classic texts and current new titles as much as we can and engage children at every opportunity of the curriculum to be exposed to books / text. We run a spoken word project (a 2 week period where every year group learns a section of text linked to their curriculum project by rote and which is then performed). We aim to engage parents (as we believe parents are a child's key educator) in loving books too and have run a family book club. Early Reading is very much a high profile topic on the Ofsted agenda and we continue to review and evaluate our approach to the teaching of Reading – in particular the teaching of Phonics and Shared Reading.

4. Early Help

We have six trained DSL's (Designated Safeguarding Leads) in our school and also have a Family Support Worker and several staff who work with Nursery parents and with siblings of children in our school who are 0-3. We aim to build great relationships with parents and their families. We are finding more and more that we are directing families to Early Help Services. More and more schools are very much part of the Early Help package. Safeguarding concerns are various and often complicated – many of them increasingly point to an increase in adult mental health which impacts directly on the children we teach. Several of our Office staff and Nurture Team have accessed the MHFA training and we have several staff looking to access the Adult Mental First Aid Training also.

5. Staff Wellbeing

The staff at Robin Hood are well established and work very hard. As time goes on there is a greater focus on staff workload and wellbeing. Staff work passionately to support children in school and it is a difficult job getting the balance of pastoral care and academic rigour. We encourage staff to support one another and

6. Budgets

It is difficult to forecast for a 3 year plan as the political and educational landscape is so uncertain. In order to run successfully (with high levels of SEND, a significant number of children requiring 1:2:1 adult support, running our Hayroom provision – to support children with ASC and our Hub – our internal provision to support children with self-regulation strategies) and the usual staffing – the budget is stretched. It is a key part of the job to get the most from it. We have a significant Pupil Premium budget but accessing the funding which is available is not straightforward.

These are just some of the current challenges in the educational climate which we are currently in and they are ever changing. Being a Headteacher at Robin Hood is a great job – a great privilege and I very much appreciate the support of staff, Governors, local Headteachers and the NST.