**Summary of information evening held for parents**

**Friday 23 June 2017**

*We were delighted that so many parents could join us on Friday for the information evening and because it was not possible for everyone to be there, we thought a resume of the main points would be useful.*

Chair of Governors Ollie Hatcher began by outlining the school’s achievements over the last 20 years:

In 1997, when Duncan joined Bealings, the school was rated ‘**Good’** by OFSTED. Within three years, the school had become **‘Outstanding’** and in 2001, Bealings became a Beacon School – one of just two in Suffolk, at that time.

In 2003, Duncan introduced ‘**The Mantle of the Expert’\*** and that year new classrooms were built. OFSTED inspections in 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2012 resulted in an **‘Outstanding’** rating every time.

Last year the Government introduced a ‘Progress Score’ in the SATS testing. **Bealings was the top school in east Suffolk.**

There have been several years in the last 17 when **Bealings has been in the top one per cent** of England and Wales’ schools.

Last year a letter was received from the schools’ minister Nick Gibb , saying **Bealings was in the top 200 schools out of 20,000 nationally!**

The success of Bealings has attracted visitors from all over the world wanting to see everything that goes on at the school first-hand. More than 5,000 visitors have come, including educationists, head teachers, county advisers (UK wide), teachers, teaching assistants and university students.

Just last month a film-maker/researcher arrived from the University of Amsterdam; a Spanish teacher and an Egyptian student visited the school; and a head from Oxfordshire. Typically, visitors pay £150pp to attend a study day as a direct result of hearing Duncan speak, or having seen one of the many films about the school.

Duncan limits himself to a maximum of three talks/lectures per term about the philosophy and pedagogical approaches at Bealings. But he is also requested as a keynote speaker – in March this year, for example, at the Oxfordshire Headteachers’ Annual Conference (£1000 income for Bealings) followed by speaking at and running a conference in Gateshead the next day.

Duncan additionally visited Regio Emilia\*\* in Italy with Kelly and Joy one holiday because he had read about their work in the early 90s. This approach is now used extensively in Joy’s class.

SEN progress has been widely recognised with SEN advisory teachers and heads and teachers from around the UK continually impressed at the way our SEN children access the curriculum through our multi-sensory approaches.

Ollie quoted a letter written to Bealings from a past pupil which ended:

“Bealings taught me so much, but not just how to do the Italian method of long multiplication, or how to write the best oxymoron but also how to live my life. It gave me the best unintentional advice that I could ever have asked for. It taught me to look for the best in everything and everyone and I couldn’t have imagined a better way to spend my childhood.”

Duncan then continued by outlining the ethos of the school , explaining how children needed to learn at their own pace with an enquiring, inquisitive mind enthused by the world about them; that the children learn best through experiential, heuristic (trial and error) methods and through social constructivism which promotes a growing model of how the world works through group interactions. This is based on the research of Reggio Emilia, Heathcote, Vygotsky, Bruner et al.

Many an anecdote from his years of teaching echoed the points he was making.

Clarification was sought by year 5/6 parents on the teaching structure for the autumn term and Duncan confirmed that three teachers would be covering these years. All the teachers were fully qualified with 20+ years’ teaching experience, including years spent teaching in secondary school, enabling valuable preparation for the children’s transition to secondary school.

Consistency in teaching was discussed and Duncan confirmed that the class would be carrying on with the teachers they were used to, but that it was important for the year 6 group to also get used to the experience of having new teachers because they would be taught by a wide range of teachers in each subject at secondary school. Furthermore, Bealings encouraged teachers to teach each other’s classes– the ethos and philosophy of the school remaining consistent in their teaching.

A request was made for parents to be able to meet their children’s new teacher at the start of term and it was agreed that this would be organised.

Several parents then spoke in wide-ranging support of the school, its teaching staff and management team.

\* <https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/dorothy-heathcotes-mantle-of-the-expert-approach-to-learning>

\*\* <http://www.aneverydaystory.com/beginners-guide-to-reggio-emilia/main-principles/>

National Park Kenya

<http://www.bealings.org.uk/exciting-projects/videos/>

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