

Dear Friends of Worplesdon Primary School,

“Please help me to help the school to help your children and your children’s friends.”

I have recently written to you as the Chair of Governors, providing an update on school activities. I am now writing to you as a parent of three children benefitting from the education the school has provided, as a friend to staff (and husband to one!), and as a volunteer trying to find what time I can to ‘give back’ to my local community.



Four years ago, I ran the London Marathon in tribute to my late Mother-in-law. Having crossed the finish line with great fatigue, I vowed that that was an experience I would never choose to repeat. Time passed, and in its usual manner of eroding good sense, I entered the ballot this year. With some sort of twisted fatalistic glee, it turns out I was successful and will be running in April, as other parents at Worplesdon may also be.

A ballot entry provides me with the luxury of ‘running for myself’, without the stress of a fundraising target. However, I investigated where I could direct funds should well-meaning friends & family wish to do so. I reflected on the full-page glossy adverts in the Virgin Marathon magazine with headline charities vying for sponsorships. I reflected on my immediate family connections to Autism, to Cancer, to Alzheimer’s, to Stroke, and others. I’m sure all of us are touched by the impact of one or more.

I reflected again on my role as Chair of Governors at Worplesdon, and my question to the school was:

“How many different types of need does the school support, and how many parents and families are impacted by our ability to support those needs in a manner that the child deserves?”

Those that know me know I love data. I immediately pulled the public numbers. You know already that Worplesdon is a large primary (472 on roll). They also show that Worplesdon has a marginally **above average** number of pupils with an ‘**Education, Health and Care Plan**’ (1.7%) and a significantly **above average** number of pupils with ‘**SEN Support**’ (15.3%)

That’s approximately 80 children then. Children that are part of the Worplesdon family, and the reason that we do what we do as educators and governors’ day in day out. It couldn’t be more obvious that if I were to fundraise, it should be for **you** – our local community.

Sadly we face very real budget constraints in school. We have relied on the wonderful PTA for many years in but providing significant funding for core facilities such as libraries and computing equipment. The general secretary of the NAHT, Paul Whiteman, has said:

“The picture facing schools supporting children with special educational needs is bleak. Not only are school budgets at breaking point, there have been severe cuts to health and social care provision. Schools are left struggling to meet the needs of our most vulnerable pupils.”

There are four broad areas which give an overview of the range of needs that are identified within schools. These four areas are **Communication and interaction, Cognition and Learning, Social, emotional and mental health** difficulties and sensory and **physical needs**. In practice, individual children often have needs that match more than one or all of these areas of need and their needs may change over time. In order to provide the children at Worplesdon with the resources and provision needed to make good and better progress we ensure they have:

- A high level of Special Needs Teaching Assistant support
- Additional manipulatives and resources to support learning, including Chromebooks
- Staff trained in supporting children with social and emotional difficulties
- Additional interventions such as Attention Autism, colourful semantics, Lego therapy, phonics, spelling, reading, 1st class @ number, Social skills and sensory circuits;
- Access to movement and brain breaks during the school day, including access to the school gym;
- Access to our HSLW (also supporting emotional literacy), and Individual work with the school SENDCO.

I am writing to let you know that **should you be able** to support your school through donation I have set up a fundraising page which will donate to the Worplesdon PTA Charity. All money donated, plus Gift Aid, will be spent directly supporting those with special needs at the school. In particular there are three specific areas that have been identified where funds raised may be used:

1. In recent years there has been a pattern of a growing number of children experiencing **social and emotional difficulties**. The school would like to support children in the future using animal therapy. This includes the use of therapy dogs in school and providing children with the opportunity to access therapy farms.
2. The school would like to be able to support children with specific learning needs through additional purchase of resources, both physical and online, such as individual licences for the online Dyslexia resource ‘Nessy’.
3. Investment in current SEND assessments in order to ensure we identify specific areas of need and then provide the appropriate support to enable our most vulnerable children to flourish in our learning environment.

I would be delighted if you wanted to check in on my progress as I train and offer encouragement on Strava. I have just completed the first full month of training covering 200km in distance. I would also be really happy if others are involved in the London Marathon or sponsored running events in the coming months (Surrey Half anyone?) and wished to join up and consider also directing friends and family to the ‘Run for Worplesdon’ page? Please also consider asking for corporate sponsorship if you work for an organisation that has interest in supporting local causes. The link to the donation page is below, or please go to Wonderful.org and search for ‘Worplesdon’:

<https://wonderful.org/fundraiser/chairofgovernorsmarathon-33cc2ef8>

Many thanks for reading and kindest regards. Matthew Woodruff, Chair of Governors