

Governors' Newsletter



Message from the Co-Chairs

The end of the summer term at East Sheen Primary School always involves lots of goodbyes – goodbye to the Year 6 leavers (one of ours included) and some of their families, goodbye to other families who are moving away and goodbye to staff who are moving on. But the biggest goodbye of all this summer is to Helen Colbert, who is leaving to return back to her roots in Wales after four years as headteacher, 10 as deputy and over 25 years at the school. This edition of the Governors' Newsletter contains a special tribute to Helen and I'm sure you all join us in thanking her for her years of dedicated service and wishing her a wonderful rural 'retirement'!

As you know, Liz Page, who has been Helen's deputy for the last four years and has worked at ESPS for 14 years altogether, has been appointed as our new headteacher by a panel of Local Authority experts and experienced governors. We wish Liz all the best in her new role and look forward to continuing working with her.

This has been an exceptionally busy year at school and next year looks as if it will be just as busy. We have, as you know, been asked by the Local Authority to take a further bulge year this coming September. We are lucky to have the wonderful new classrooms at the back of the school where we will be able to accommodate all the children. We continue to have discussions with our closest neighbouring schools, Barnes Primary and Richmond Park Academy,

about the possibility of a more formal collaboration. At the time of writing these talks are still ongoing and we will of course consult with parents when and if any firm proposals are made.

We'd like to welcome to the Governing Body new staff governor Rebekah Palmer and new parent governors Ben Merrick and Helen Wrigglesworth. You can find out more about them elsewhere in this newsletter. We're delighted and grateful that so many parents are willing to volunteer to give up their time and expertise to help keep East Sheen outstanding.

Thanks as always goes to the PTA for their tremendous support. This year they've contributed massively to the new reading spaces about the school and have driven fundraising with the successful Christmas and summer fairs, as well as the amazing Great Ball of Fire. Thanks too to everyone who has supported these events.

On behalf of all the governors we'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has made this last year so special – the staff, the parents and most importantly the children. We hope that everybody has a lovely relaxing summer break. Good luck to all those who are leaving for pastures new and we look forward to welcoming everyone else back in September.

**Susannah Milligan &
Jessica Mellor-Clark**
Co-chairs of Governing Body

FIT FOR SPORT AFTERSCHOOL PROVISION

We know that many of you have already used the new onsite after-school care provided by Fit For Sport. We've had some very positive feedback from both parents and children who certainly seem to love the wide range of activities on offer, as well as the healthy snack provided. As a reminder the club runs every school day from 3.15 to 6 pm with various options available to incorporate other after school activities. The full details including price options can be found on the Fit for Sport website at www.fitforsport.co.uk

NEW SCHOOL SPORTS PROVIDER

This term we ran a comprehensive tendering process for our external sports provider to deliver both sport within the curriculum and after school sports clubs. We are pleased to let you know that Scott Hunter will be heading up our provision from September. Many of you will know Scott from his days with SCL. He is now running his own business, NS Sports, and we are very excited to be partnering with him.

Thank you to the PTA for all their efforts this year and in particular to **Helen Shore** and her team for the beautiful Teaching Garden which was completed this week. If you haven't seen it please take a stroll in this sensational garden which can be found behind the Year Two and Reception cedar lodges.

Welcome to our new Governors

Helen Wrigglesworth

I'm absolutely delighted to have joined the ESPS governing team. We have three boys: William, who's in Reception, Robert who starts in 2016 and our newest addition Edward, who'll be starting in 2019. We've had a fantastic introduction to school life at ESPS, so much so that William's even taken to wearing his school uniform at the weekend!

I'm a stay-at-home-mum to the boys but I'm also a chartered mechanical engineer with an MBA and a background in product development and project management. Along the way I've acquired numerous skills which I intend to put to good use serving the ESPS community.



Ben Merrick

My daughter Hannah is in Year 1 and my son Max is starting Reception in September. I've always been interested in helping kids: I volunteered at Childline for six years and was a Community Governor for three years at Sheen Mount. I now want to help ESPS as a parent and am looking forward to using my skills and experience from my day job in the Civil Service to help the Governing Body keep ESPS outstanding. We're very lucky to have ESPS and the Governing Body deals with a wide range of important and interesting issues.

6UP: Raising standards in reading comprehension

During the year Carla Ruocco and Debbie Canner have been involved in a reading project called 6UP. The project is led by English Consultants, Nikki Gamble and Ginny Germaney and includes a number of local primary schools working alongside Richmond Park Academy. The project's aim is to raise standards in reading comprehension and, in particular, as hinted in the title the number of children achieving a SATs level 6. Since the inception of the project, SATs levels have been superseded so the project aspiration is for children to achieve equivalent levels in the new curriculum.

In reality, the project has a much wider scope and the work being undertaken will benefit the reading of all children in our school from Reception to Year 6.

Carla and Debbie have been deepening their own knowledge around the theory and practice of teaching reading. They have also led sessions for the project members to share their expertise, particularly the use of thinking maps and thinking hats in the teaching of reading. Within school, a selection of Year 6 children have already taken part in a trial of the techniques and a second study has started with Year 5 children.

The project is nearing its end and the team are busy evaluating its impact. They are producing a 'toolkit' of resources to share with other schools to support the teaching of reading. But this is only the beginning for ESPS. In the next academic year, Carla and Debbie will be sharing these resources and their experiences with the teaching staff in our school so that they too can review and develop their own practice and introduce new techniques.

Parent Satisfaction Survey: 2015 feedback

Thank you to everyone who recently completed the Parent Satisfaction Survey 2015. This is one of the ways in which the Governors and School Leadership Team seek the views of parents and we place great importance on your responses. This was the seventh on-line return for the survey and we had another high response rate with 269 questionnaires completed, up on the 223 of the year before.

As this is the eleventh year we have run the Parent Satisfaction Survey we have made the decision to update the survey questions to reflect current school services and include the “wrap-around” care now offered. In addition, at the suggestion of a participant, we changed the “No view” response to “Neither agree nor disagree”. As a result, there has been a statistically significant increase in the number of people choosing this neutral option instead of “Agree” or “Disagree” in certain questions. Changes in survey method often lead to changes in results, but we felt the suggestion was worth implementing and we will be using this year’s figures as a benchmark for future years.

With these changes, we believe we have enhanced the satisfaction survey and are able to have great confidence in the results. Although 2015 becomes the new benchmark year, the previous six years of results are displayed in the results table below to allow review of previous year-on-year data.

Here we give feedback on some of the most significant findings.

Summary

Once again, the survey results show overall high levels of parental satisfaction with the school; most results are in the high 80’s or 90’s. These results are a very positive endorsement of East Sheen Primary and confirm that parents’ current perception is of a happy, high performing school.

The survey showed that 97% of respondents agreed with the statements “I would recommend this school to others” and 95% said “Taking everything into account I am satisfied with the school”, while 98% of respondents agreed “My child likes this school” and 92% agreed “Teaching is good”. In addition, 92% agreed “The school encourages me to be involved in its life and work” and 98% agree “The school promotes worthwhile attitudes and values”. These are splendid results.

East Sheen Primary’s key priority is to provide a happy, safe and stimulating environment to promote children’s learning. The survey results show that 96% of respondents agree “Staff encourage my child to become mature and independent” and 94% agree “There is a good range of activities that my child finds interesting and enjoyable”. Many of the additional comments, containing lovely endorsements of the school, demonstrate that we are doing just that.

We always take account of your suggestions and concerns and use the survey as a source of information to help us determine school priorities for the year ahead.

As an example, last year’s survey highlighted that some parents wanted on-site after school care. A Governor working party was set up to investigate suppliers and feasibility for the school to host this provision in parallel with existing clubs. This progressed to defining service levels, running a procurement process and awarding Fit for Sport the contract. The service is now up and running and has been included within the scope of this year’s Parent Satisfaction Survey.

In addition to all the positive feedback this year’s survey highlighted a number of areas for further consideration:

Assessment and information on progress

A number of parents indicated some concern in the survey, and raised questions, about the assessment and reporting of their child’s progress. You are probably aware that the government announced in June 2013 that the system of levels of attainment as a means of measuring children’s achievement would be axed because it believed the system was “complicated and difficult to understand, especially for parents”. However, the government has not replaced it and has instead given schools the freedom to devise their own system. This year was always going to be difficult, as we clarify the requirements in line with the introduction of the new national curriculum.

For this year, the school decided that Year 2 and Year 6 would be tested against the old curriculum (with levels), whilst the rest of the school have been assessed without levels. For next year, in order to standardise the method and allow for moderation across schools, the Local Authority has had a working party of Headteachers developing their ideas on assessment systems. This working party is expected to complete its recommendations in time for implementation in the coming academic year. Once the recommendations are available, we will share our approaches to curriculum and assessment with you at a meeting in school, so that you can gain a better understanding of the implications of the changes, and how it impacts on your child.

| AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS | YEAR OF SURVEY | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Base: All respondents | 2014 - 2015 | 2013 - 2014 | 2012 - 2013 | 2011 - 2012 | 2010 - 2011 | 2009 - 2010 | 2008 - 2009 |
| My child likes this school | 264 | 216 | 241 | 267 | 200 | 251 | 244 |
| | 98% | 97% | 98% | 99% | 97% | 100% | 99% |
| My child is making good progress | 236 | 210 | 233 | 255 | 192 | 241 | 235 |
| | 88% | 94% | 95% | 95% | 93% | 96% | 95% |
| Children behave well in school | 244 | 207 | 229 | 251 | 195 | 248 | 240 |
| | 91% | 93% | 93% | 93% | 95% | 98% | 97% |
| Teaching is good | 247 | 211 | 235 | 261 | 201 | 250 | 242 |
| | 92% | 95% | 96% | 97% | 98% | 99% | 98% |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on | 199 | 194 | 196 | 222 | 175 | 233 | 221 |
| | 74% | 87% | 80% | 83% | 85% | 92% | 89% |
| I am satisfied with the opportunities I have to discuss my child's progress | 203 | 191 | 193 | 226 | 180 | 233 | 223 |
| | 75% | 86% | 79% | 84% | 87% | 92% | 90% |
| I am pleased with my child's curriculum | 230 | 202 | 227 | 256 | 186 | 239 | 233 |
| | 86% | 91% | 93% | 95% | 90% | 95% | 94% |
| I feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem or a complaint | 226 | 196 | 215 | 243 | 192 | 242 | 237 |
| | 84% | 88% | 88% | 90% | 93% | 96% | 96% |
| Staff expect my child to work hard and do his or her best | 252 | 210 | 227 | 251 | 193 | 243 | 231 |
| | 94% | 94% | 93% | 93% | 94% | 96% | 94% |
| The school promotes worthwhile attitudes and values | 263 | 218 | 239 | 262 | 205 | 247 | 244 |
| | 98% | 98% | 98% | 97% | 100% | 98% | 99% |
| The school is led and managed well | 239 | 197 | 226 | 255 | 201 | 248 | 242 |
| | 89% | 88% | 92% | 95% | 98% | 98% | 98% |
| Staff treat my child fairly | 234 | 209 | 228 | 246 | 197 | 243 | 242 |
| | 87% | 94% | 93% | 91% | 96% | 96% | 98% |
| The school seeks the views of parents and takes account of their suggestions and concerns | 206 | 182 | 195 | 221 | 163 | 214 | 215 |
| | 77% | 82% | 80% | 82% | 79% | 85% | 87% |
| The school encourages me to be involved in its life and work | 248 | 210 | 233 | 255 | 197 | 233 | 233 |
| | 92% | 94% | 95% | 95% | 96% | 92% | 94% |
| Staff encourage my child to become mature and independent | 259 | 214 | 232 | 245 | 195 | 246 | 233 |
| | 96% | 96% | 95% | 91% | 95% | 98% | 94% |
| There is a good range of activities that my child finds interesting and enjoyable | 254 | 213 | 235 | 253 | 198 | 236 | 235 |
| | 94% | 96% | 96% | 94% | 96% | 94% | 95% |
| I am happy with the variety of extra-curricular clubs | 226 | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| | 84% | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| My child is not bullied or harassed at school | 208 | 190 | 203 | 223 | 181 | 232 | 234 |
| | 77% | 85% | 83% | 83% | 88% | 92% | 95% |
| I am happy with the school lunches | 188 | 164 | 203 | 224 | 170 | 201 | 204 |
| | 70% | 74% | 83% | 83% | 83% | 80% | 83% |
| I am satisfied with the condition of the school buildings | 235 | 202 | 220 | 227 | 175 | 212 | 216 |
| | 87% | 91% | 90% | 84% | 85% | 84% | 87% |
| I am satisfied with the condition of the school grounds | 239 | 213 | 233 | 248 | 158 | 225 | 232 |
| | 89% | 96% | 95% | 92% | 77% | 89% | 94% |
| I am happy with the quality of school trips | 253 | 196 | 209 | 236 | 185 | 215 | 216 |
| | 94% | 88% | 85% | 88% | 90% | 85% | 87% |
| My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the school | 247 | 209 | 233 | 262 | 200 | 245 | 244 |
| | 92% | 94% | 95% | 97% | 97% | 97% | 99% |
| I would recommend this school to others | 261 | 210 | 238 | 266 | 203 | 251 | 246 |
| | 97% | 94% | 97% | 99% | 99% | 100% | 100% |
| Taking everything into account I am satisfied with the school | 256 | 207 | 238 | 265 | 203 | 251 | 246 |
| | 95% | 93% | 97% | 99% | 99% | 100% | 100% |
| I am happy with the quality of music lessons | 52 | 44 | 43 | 42 | 36 | 63 | 41 |
| | 79% | 75% | 72% | 70% | 69% | 80% | 85% |
| The school has provided worthwhile help with particular learning difficulties | 15 | 14 | 12 | 18 | 5 | 16 | 13 |
| | 94% | 93% | 80% | 86% | 83% | 94% | 93% |
| I am happy with the quality of breakfast club | 69 | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| | 90% | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| I am happy with the quality of the Fit for Sport provision | 37 | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| | 90% | – | – | – | – | – | – |

Toilets

The toilets are checked at lunchtime and thoroughly cleaned daily after school. The facilities have been upgraded in recent years, but these are well used places and in order to maintain and improve the good standard of cleanliness throughout the day a number of behavioural and upkeep aspects are planned to be reinforced.

The children are regularly reminded in assemblies about the importance of using the facilities hygienically and this year the Pupil Leadership Team presented in an assembly and led classroom discussions about this very subject. The members of the Pupil Leadership Team discussed with the children that they are responsible for respecting the toilets as they are for all the children to use. This message will be revisited and good hygiene encouraged in the coming year.

In addition, the Governors have given support to increasing the cleaning provision to include an extra clean at mid-day.

School Lunches

We remain happy with our Catering provider, Pride, and we have welcomed a new chef, Steven, this term. To help the catering team improve their service further, the children have been asked to fill in evaluation cards. The Pupil Leadership Team are currently promoting these cards and encouraging children to fill them in and to hand them to Steven.

Following best practice, the catering contract went out to tender in the latter part of the summer term and, as a result of an extensive process with three candidates, Pride was awarded the contract as best overall for quality and value with the opportunity to develop service and introduce new processes. Pride will be holding an open evening at school early next term for parents to have a taster session and a Q&A session to get to know the new team and service. This will be an excellent opportunity for parents and carers to ask any questions directly about the provision. Further details will be sent out next term.

Communications

Several suggestions were made about communications, access to information and opportunities for dialogue with the school. We appreciate how important it is to get communication right, and are always trying to improve things.

In addition to the regular weekly newsletter, Helen and Liz send out an issue of *Headship Headlines* once every half term to highlight school priorities and progress against targets, as well as give up to date information on the various challenges of leading and managing a busy primary school. The school has streamlined what goes out on ParentMail and the on-line payment system is up and running.

This year the school has developed the enhanced parent consultations and maintained regular Leadership Team discussions with Class Reps and subject specific "Deep Dive" facilitated events to seek parents' views on the general running of the school and communication itself.

In addition, the Headship Team and Governors have taken a fresh look at all aspects of school communication and interaction with parents and have recently implemented a Communication Strategy for the school. This is available on the website under policies and contains details of what can be expected and the approach taken to ensure appropriate and effective dialogue.

As an example, the policy for parents wanting to talk with staff is:

- (1) Class Teachers are always available for a 'quick word' at end of the day. However, if parents need to talk with the class teacher in more detail, they can make an appointment, either through the office or directly with the class teacher, for a telephone conversation or a meeting in person, as talking at length in the playground after school is difficult for the teacher and the children.
- (2) A member of the Leadership Team will always be in the playground at the start and end of the day. Many parental queries and concerns can be dealt with at this time. It is also possible to make appointments through the school office.

The website remains a great source of information about the school and it's on-going development is a priority for Governors. This year the site has been upgraded and moved to a new "responsive" technology platform which allows for better access on tablets and smartphones than was possible on the previous system. In addition, the calendar function and the site navigation have been improved to make sure that it is as helpful and easy to access as possible.

UNSUNG HEROES



This term's unsung hero is **NOEL GERAGHTY**. Noel is the father of Gerard Geraghty, our wonderful reception teacher. He's been kindly giving up his time and sharing his expertise to build for us both a new sandpit and our wonderful chicken run, ably assisted by Lewis Hambridge. Thank you both. The reception outdoor area now looks even more amazing!

HIGHER ABILITY, ACHIEVEMENT AND ASPIRATION

VISION Our vision at East Sheen is to nurture happy, confident children who think deeply about themselves and others in preparation for the challenges ahead. Key to this is unlocking their potential through: challenging and inspiring teaching; an exciting curriculum; an enriching experience. We want every child to enjoy these things and the benefits they bring.

TEACHING Teaching that is challenging and inspiring has high expectations of every learner; it wants to stretch children so they achieve highly. As children learn to work both independently and in collaboration, as they grow in confidence, becoming determined and resilient, they are better prepared for the challenges ahead, regardless of success. Celebrating these achievements and importantly, the effort behind them, is an essential part of encouraging our school community and raising aspirations amongst all the children. This sense of pride in each other's achievements and the supportive environment it creates, helps our children look beyond themselves and ultimately, act with kindness and thoughtfulness. It is always encouraging to see how the children congratulate and take pride in each other's achievements – whether it is a successful piece of work, a sporting accomplishment or a musical performance.

CURRICULUM A curriculum that is exciting feeds a child's natural inquisitiveness. Curious children think deeply and ask questions – not only filling their minds but expanding them – so they can think creatively, searching for different possibilities (using their green Thinking Hats!). The recent Innovation Week is an example of our children doing just that: English breakfast ice cream, schools of the future with rooftop playgrounds to maximise space, a rainbow machine, recycled bottles used to create a greenhouse. Whether in the classroom or as part of 'extra-curricular' provision, a curriculum like this enthuses children and gives them a love for learning – frequently seen by visitors who often notice the enthusiasm our children have around school.

EXPERIENCE An experience that is enriching helps educate the whole child. Individuals are more rounded when they are able to enjoy opportunities that broaden learning, as well as deepen it – especially for the more able, where the chance to be further challenged and inspired will particularly stretch them. At East Sheen there are many opportunities that enrich learning: topic days, workshops and themed weeks; trips and visits; clubs and competitions; not to mention, sports to play, instruments to learn and positions to hold. These opportunities give our children the chance to discover new talents, as well as develop their current strengths. Many of these opportunities everyone can experience, some are targeted at those we believe would benefit most. And many of these experiences utilise the skill and ability of those within our wider community, like parents, local businesses and other schools.

ABILITY, ACHIEVEMENT AND ASPIRATION In doing all these things, we therefore seek to ensure every child has the opportunity to:

- develop higher abilities
- make higher achievements
- have higher aspirations

Thank you for your support and involvement in helping us do just this. If you have any ideas or want to offer your services do let us know. The more our whole community is part of the East Sheen experience, the better it will be.



Reading for enjoyment at East Sheen Primary



One of the school priorities this year has been to promote reading for enjoyment and pleasure, a worthy cause in itself but also fulfilling the requirements of the new curriculum.

Regular features of our school calendar include World Book Day and the summer challenge of 'Extreme Reading'. This year the costumes on World Book Day were better than ever from both children and staff. It was a great day to be part of East Sheen Primary School as parents, carers and friends cheered on everyone taking part in the parade. In our celebratory assembly children from each year group represented their house groups in a 'Battle of the Books' competition and impressed with their knowledge of children's literature.

East Sheen Primary School children love to read and observations of children reading in cold, draughty corners inspired a drive to improve reading spaces around the school. The first priority was to tackle the classroom environments. Children were consulted and designs for comfortable, cosy spaces were born. Our classrooms now feature enchanting, inviting areas for children to enjoy their reading.

The next project identified was the school libraries, particularly the junior library where our library stock looked tired and faded. Currently, the libraries are 'work in progress' but the developments are exciting. An electronic system is being installed which will allow the children much better access to the books on offer. They will be able to search for titles of their choice, read reviews and seek recommendations for their next read. Management information from the system will help staff to track children's interests and keep choices current. A complete restock of the library books is underway with boxes of fiction and non-fiction books arriving on a regular basis ready to be catalogued. Finally, if there is any space left in the libraries look out for new comfy sofas and bean bags to snuggle down on and enjoy a chosen book.

But reading doesn't just take place inside. Outside there are plans to erect a tepee in the Sheen playground for storytelling and reading and to transform the gazebo in the Putney playground with cushions and beanbags. Watch this space!

Next year the focus on reading for enjoyment continues, seeing through the projects started this year and then moving on to look at the reading choices available in the classroom. The plan is to update the class reading stock to inspire the children to widen their reading choices, so they experience, compare and contrast new current authors and classic choices.

Happy reading!



Memories of Helen Colbert

Mentor, colleague, friend... it has been an absolute privilege to work with Helen. Her energy and inspirational leadership have motivated all of us as we strive to be the best we can be to make a difference for the wonderful children in our school. Her clarity of vision and ability to 'get things done' have kept our school moving from strength to strength.

For the last four years, I have shared an office with Helen and we have developed a strong and powerful partnership. We have loved working together to find solutions to challenges, shared the excitement of driving new projects, discussed and debated the ever changing world of education and bounced ideas off each other as we have found ways to embrace these changes to ensure that ESPS remains an educational flagship. We share common values in our child-centred approach to learning and school development. And we have become really great friends.

Yes, we have our stories: times we have laughed until we have cried, times we have supported each other through stressful moments and times we have celebrated the fantastic achievements of our children and staff. We also share the inability to use a SAT NAV successfully and have enjoyed some exciting journeys together as we have used the sun to guide us back to the required destination!

I know that Helen's heart is in East Sheen, but also in Wales. When she talks of 'home' she is always referring to Wales and the place where she grew up. She is a wonderful story teller and she recounts with great humour tales of her adventurous childhood.

I will miss Helen hugely and wish her and her family all the happiness they deserve as they start exciting new times in their lives. With Lucy moving on to university and Thomas to secondary school, the time is right for the Colberts to go home.

Liz Page

Deputy Headteacher



Memories of Helen Colbert



What can I say about Helen Colbert that I haven't said so many times? She is without doubt an utterly dedicated professional who has shown me her true quality over twenty five years: as a class teacher, as a Senior Leader and then, of course, for ten years as both my right and left hand side as Deputy Headteacher of yours and our wonderful school. Over the last four years she has given the school brilliant leadership and cared for the children, staff and school improvement with all her energy and many, many talents.

Helen always had and always has endless energy and was ever able to share my vision for the school which enabled us to work together in a highly creative, forward thinking and totally productive way for the children and staff. In ten years we never had a significant disagreement which ensured a fantastic working relationship which I miss to this day. Helen has a great talent for developing new ideas, creating opportunity and seeing the wood through the trees on all occasions. Her dedication to meeting the needs of so many children and adults is a rare quality not found in all leaders in any working environment. I know this spirit of partnership has been extended in her work with Liz and the school has continued to develop and innovate under their superb leadership.

Her legacy will be picked up by Liz and the staff with equal love and enthusiasm and now, as a former Headteacher of East Sheen Primary School, Helen can sleep easy knowing the school is in great hands – just as I have done over the last four years!

David Ford

Former Headteacher



Memories of Helen Colbert

We first got to know Helen as Miss Gwynne when she was the Year 2 class teacher for my eldest son Jeremy's class (1994, her fourth year at ESPS). The class photograph shows Helen with a carefully styled perm wearing a summer dress with a cornflower pattern and smiling directly and confidently into the camera. Some of her charges are less enthusiastic about the photographic process and seem very keen to get back to their ball games or maybe to a fortifying lunch.



Helen was and is an absolute whizz with anything art or DT-orientated. I seem to remember the Year 2 1994 Christmas Bazaar stall being a riot of Quality Street cellophane wrappers transformed into jewel-like containers for sugared almonds that any professional confectioner would have been proud to display at an exorbitant price. One of the cohort of 1994 (not my son, but still my son's closest friend over 20 years later) is a professional Product Designer just launching on his own after a successful stint with Dyson. Helen will have helped plant that seed.

By the time Helen taught my next son Jonathan (Year 4, 1998) she was Mrs Colbert. The perm has gone, the hair shorn, the floaty dress replaced in the class photograph by an arty embroidered cardigan. Helen is still smiling, possibly particularly looking forward to Roman Day and Sayers Croft later that school year (when something's working well, keep doing it). The pupils look perhaps a little more serious as befits their status as experienced Key Stage 2 learners, but Helen will continue to do what she does so well with this as with previous classes: energising, setting the lead, invigorating all around her.

My third son Robert missed out on Helen as a class teacher which may have spanned her first maternity leave to have Lucy. Later Helen took a sabbatical year when Tom was posted to Holland and Thomas made his appearance, but when she returned to the ESPS Mother Ship it was as if she'd never left.



Helen's years as Deputy Head alongside Head David Ford and her own four years as Head working closely with Liz Page as Deputy have been characterised by laughter, larkiness and a gloriously wilful refusal to allow any child in their care to be short-changed of the very best educational opportunities. Helen's imagination, willpower, hard graft and most importantly her cherishing of all in the school community has been part of the ESPS DNA for an amazing 25 years. We pass her back to Wales as our much loved ambassador knowing she will bring out the very best in and for others as she has in and for all of us. Thank you for everything, Helen.

Janet Dewhurst

Local Authority Governor and former ESPS parent

Memories of Helen Colbert

My children Jonny and Suzy were both taught by Miss Gwynne soon after she joined the school and they really enjoyed their time in her class. Little did I know that the young and bouffant styled teacher (let's face it – everyone was a bit bouffant in the nineties!) would achieve such great heights. I joined the governing body after my children moved on to secondary education and Helen was appointed Deputy Head soon after. She impressed in the way she dovetailed brilliantly with our Headteacher at the time, David Ford. She took a particular interest in data analysis and was able to identify children needing support at an early stage, and ensure their education was kept on track. I remember her 'can do' attitude to suggestions from governors that were assessed and quickly implemented when relevant.



I was delighted that she chose to apply for the post of Head when David retired and enjoyed seeing her outperform the other candidates to secure the position. I am, of course, sad that she is moving on but I wish her all the best in her new life in Wales, somewhere that has always had a call on her heart. After so many years, she leaves the school in an even better place than when she first started and I am sure everyone in our community would like to thank her for her service. I wish her and her family all the best on this next stage in their lives.

Raz Khan
Governor

Memories of Helen Colbert

Helen Colbert and I both arrived at East Sheen for the start of the Summer Term in April 1990, an astonishing twenty five years ago! Helen was so excited to be teaching in London – she had been brought up in Wales, educated there and her first teaching job was at her old school down the road. I think it was her first time out of Wales; she was very, very Welsh in those days. Lovely, but Welsh!

From the first moment, we both loved the place. It suited Helen perfectly. Helen is a person who gets things done, she has ideas and sees that everything is possible. Very quickly she established herself as an invaluable member of East Sheen Primary School. Artistic and creative, Helen took on the role of Art Co-ordinator, in fact I think she pretty much became a co-ordinator in most subjects before taking on the role of Deputy and then Headteacher. Maybe not Maths. Or PE.

It surely is a sign of an excellent school when the Headteacher chooses their workplace for her own two children. Both Lucy and Thomas have spent all their primary years at East Sheen. However, the masterful organiser sometimes slipped up: Helen mixed up the days that Lucy was to start in Reception but luckily had the foresight to raid the Lost Property box for Lucy's uniform in order that her daughter could start school in the proper way!

She was and is an outstanding teacher and we have been fortunate to have her here for so long. Even the best though make mistakes and Helen once made a spectacular one. I'm not sure I should really tell... but on her return to school after a swimming trip, the pool in Hampton rang us to say they still had one of our children... Fortunately all was well but never forgotten.

Some of us from the old days have great memories of many social occasions and a weekend in Wales at Helen's home. She was an amazing host, everything planned perfectly – I'm glad her dad is going to live with her in Wales. She owes him for the food we ate that weekend when we raided his shop.

I will miss you Helen!

Helen Oakley
Teacher

