

# Halstow Primary School

Halstow Road, Greenwich, London, SE10 0LD

Tel: 020 8858 2767

Email: [headteacher@halstow.greenwich.sch.uk](mailto:headteacher@halstow.greenwich.sch.uk)

Website: [www.halstow.greenwich.sch.uk](http://www.halstow.greenwich.sch.uk)

**Headteacher:** Tom Gray  
**Deputy Headteacher:** Beckie Williams



Dear parents and carers,

26<sup>th</sup> May 2017

I am really pleased to inform you that our yearly 'Sutcliffe Park Sports Day' will definitely be going ahead on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> July. We were fearful that we would be unable to use the venue as there is major building work going on there, but we have secured that date with the venue manager and are thoroughly looking forward to it.

This information has led me to evaluate what we do here at Halstow and how we can maintain this. I walked a group of parents around the school last week, as I regularly do, and the reaction from them was incredible. They told me they had not seen a school environment which looked like ours – everywhere they turned was packed with fantastic learning and pictures of happy children doing great things. Every classroom they walked into gave them a sense of awe and wonder and our Art Exhibition rendered them speechless! It made me feel very proud of the staff here who are relentless in their pursuit of creativity and fun, as well as high standards of sporting and academic success. They make the school what it is and I feel privileged and honoured to work with all of them.

It made me think of all the extra activities we do here. Just in the last term here are some of the events which have occurred at Halstow:

Year 5&6 children have visited The Geffrye Museum; children from Year 3&4 have visited the Royal Observatory and had multiple 'Adventure Learning' sessions in the Pleasaunce; Reception children have been on a trip to Woolwich where they enjoyed an interactive Shakespeare show; our School Council children had a fantastic trip to go and explore the workings of Parliament; Year 2 children have continued with their 'Forest School' learning; a group of Year 5&6 children have travelled to Crystal Palace to take part in the regional finals of a Tag Rugby competition; Mr Eastwood has showcased the music in our school during a special assembly to all the children and our SEND drama group, led by Sara Williams, have performed their shows in front of 2 separate audiences. We have also had Arty Party in, working with every child on a project for our Art Celebration, to celebrate the Global Goals.

We run or facilitate 31 separate, extra-curricula clubs across the school week – this is as a result of feedback from parent questionnaires saying there weren't enough clubs and we now have the most clubs offered by any mainstream primary school in Greenwich. We also

run a separate breakfast club and after school club which, compared to many after school clubs and schools in Greenwich, offer a very fair and competitive price structure.

As you will probably be aware, the cuts which are hitting schools are real and harsh and are forcing many school leaders to make difficult decisions. I am very pleased with the reporting of this recently in the press and the fact that a cross-party alliance has formed, in order to try to persuade this Government that 'enough is enough', is encouraging.

The Government has stated that they will be changing the 'fair funding formula' so that schools in London are not hit with such extreme cuts but we are still projecting a 4% budget decrease each year over the next three or four years due to inflationary pressures not being met by the DfE. I hope some of you managed to talk to Matthew Pennycook yesterday – he was at the school gate talking to parents about cuts in Education. Creating a MAT will mitigate these cuts up to a point; it will help us survive, but this will not be enough. All state schools are facing these cuts and there are difficult times ahead for all schools regardless of whether they are Academies or maintained schools; this is the reality which is facing schools at the moment.

I am determined, alongside our Governing Body, to make sure that the wonderful opportunities we give children at this school are maintained; the emphasis on music, creativity, mental and physical well-being must be fought for and must continue! However, much of this relies on money; from hiring a specialist music teacher, to the cost of coaches, to coloured card with which we use to back the wonderful learning created by your children, it all costs money. Some people would say that these are 'luxuries' but I feel they are essential and help to create a school which is special and highly sought after. We are oversubscribed and our catchment area is tiny for a reason – we are a great school with great staff who provide a great education to great children! I often give staff this message but rarely do I give parents this message.

This brings me back to 'Sutcliffe Park'. For many trips and visits, we ask for 'voluntary contributions' from parents. Last year, Sutcliffe Park cost £2,800 for the coaches and the hire fee. We received £640 in voluntary contributions from parents, therefore leaving the school to pay £2,160 to balance the cost. Our wonderful group of parents who run the 'Friends of Halstow' (FOH) make sure that we are helped with such costs but moving forward, we will not be able to provide the amount of extras we provide here without more financial support from parents. Over the last few years, the FOH have raised a substantial amount of money and I am hugely grateful to them for this, but it is not enough to sustain everything which we do here.

Not every parent can afford to pay the contributions which we ask for but if you can, please try to do so. If you can pay more than is asked, we will accept everything. If you work for a Company, or run a Company which has a charitable department, please enquire as to whether they can help us finance a trip or a special event – we need more money – it is really that simple!

In order to cover the cost of Sutcliffe Park this year, we are asking for a voluntary contribution of £5. To make it easier, we will accept this as cash which you can drop into

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the office any time between now and then. A letter regarding the finer details of the day will be sent nearer the date.

Moving forward, we are going to be changing the way we finance our trips and other extra activities. After much research with other schools, we are going to start a termly collection so that parents pay one amount of money per term to cover these costs. You will be receiving another letter at the end of the year to explain this in greater detail, but we will be asking for £20 per child per term, one payment being made in September, one in January and one in April. We can then, as a school, determine what we can afford and plan trips accordingly.

It is with a heavy heart that I send this letter; I hope you understand that we have been put into this position by external circumstances and all state schools are going through similar experiences.

Yours truly,

Tom Gray