

One of the major life forces in any village is the school and this month Lesley Clark, the (relatively!) new head writes about her experiences and ideas for the future.

Now that I have had several months to 'find my feet', I have been asked by the Editor to write a 'personal profile' outlining my background in education and the focus for development at Marcham Primary.

As the daughter of a school secretary, I can not claim to have entered into the teaching profession lightly! In fact, having graduated with a BA specialising in English, World Religions and Archaeology, I deliberately spent several years in the 'real' adult world (working in then Personnel – now Human Resources) before training to become a Primary teacher. I would recommend this as a way of appreciating both what is lacking in school working environment (staff facilities – plusher accommodation), and in terms of what you gain (the thrill, challenge and joy of helping children learn)! I feel fortunate in having taught in a wide variety of schools. Before training in Primary education, I spent over a year establishing an 'A' level course and a career's service in a small secondary school in Liverpool. I wanted to experience life nearer the 'end-products' of our educational process, but I didn't want to be a subject specialist. Besides, Primary aged children are much more my height!

After qualifying at the Institute of Education in London, I spent a number of happy years teaching in an inner-city Infants School in Catford. I then faced quite a change when I moved to Singapore with my husband and worked in a large International school. It was quite a novelty having to evacuate the children's play area to enable a python to be removed from the classroom, and I learnt a great deal from being part of an international teaching staff. I was able to develop my interests in language, English and literacy learning, together with gaining experience of teaching English as an additional language. I later spent time working at a Study Centre specialising in language support and also offering programmes for children with Dyslexic tendencies.

When we returned to England, I enjoyed early years with my young sons, allowing time to be involved in pre-school teaching and to become a Governor at my sons' small village Primary. Did I realise then how useful these experiences would be?! I soon returned to the classroom, this time working with older children in a small village primary, where I also co-ordinated Special Educational Needs support. I then took on more responsibility at a large first school in quite a deprived area of Bournemouth. It was there that I really got engrossed in Early Years education, helping to establish a unit linking the Nursery, Reception and Key Stage One provision. It was quite a culture shock moving from a school of under eighty, to leading a unit FULL of ninety four and five year olds. I found time to work with the older classes too through my role as Literacy co-ordinator.

I then had a 'breather' from school life by working for three years at Reading University as a lecturer responsible for running courses in Primary literacy teaching. Our (then) Reading and Language Centre was brilliant for pooling national and international research and celebrations of children's literature. I must admit that I do miss the space and time to read and reflect... BUT I missed that vital FUN ingredient freely available in any school... CHILDREN!!!! So... I spent two years as Deputy head of a large multicultural First school in East Oxford, just at the time of city-wide re-organisation!!! I completed the hard slog of thought and evidence-gathering required to gain my National Professional Qualification for Headship and applied to Marcham Primary School. (Reading this makes me sound very old, but I don't admit to many grey hairs yet!)

Please remember to bring in any Tesco vouchers, as these need to be collected up by 30 June.



Lesley talking to Nathan Bateman

And so now here I am enjoying my first headship at Marcham, which is a genuinely welcoming and hard-working school. We work as a team to build upon our strengths and high attainment. Learning can only be fully effective when children feel confident and supported, able to take risks and to learn from each other. The values and relationships promoted by the school need to be established. We have established a School Council and a buddying system to offer the children real responsibilities and involvement. I am also keen for the older children to mature into supportive roles in order to gain confidence and social skills – crucial to adult life.

Marcham is very much about working as an effective team and playing to the individual strengths of everyone in the school community – both staff, children, parents, governors and the wider community – YOU! We welcome visits and approaches from villagers who want to support the children's learning in some way. Learning is much more motivating when you add first hand experience and the passion of a specialist (whether this is a gardener, someone describing their Christian wedding or a visitor sharing their collection of priceless and much loved teddies).

We are determined to continue to raise standards of achievement for all children here at Marcham, as well as to inspire them with a real thirst for learning. We want to work with you to share a genuine pride in our village Primary and to increase the range of learning experiences we can offer the children.

LESLEY CLARK

MARCHAM SCHOOL PTA SUMMER FETE

Marcham School will be holding its Summer Fete on Saturday 26 June 2:00 - 4:00 pm at School.

This year the Summer Fete has an Olympic theme. There will be a band and costume parade. We have various field games including Jousting (back by popular demand). There will also be all your usual favourite stalls including the Milk Bar, Tombola, Plant Stall, Cake Stall, Stocks, Bouncy Castle, Trap Door and many more. Please make note of this date so that you will not miss a great event.

JOHN WATERHOUSE

If you would like to contribute or can suggest a suitable subject to be "In Profile", give me a call on 01865 391725. Ed