

Report for Bucknell + Bedstone Parish Council

The Federation

St Mary's Bucknell, Clunbury + Newcastle are members of the Blue Hills Federation since September 2017

There is good collaborative working between the 3 schools. Training + planning is done with staff from all 3 schools together so that they can share ideas. They can also moderate the work done by pupils in the other schools. It has been helpful for the teachers to be able to compare the standards of their pupils' work with written work done by similar pupils in other schools. Schools in rural areas can leave staff feeling isolated so feeling part of a larger team has been good for staff.

Pupils on role + Curriculum

There are 54 pupils in our school currently, predicted to rise to 56 in 2018/19. They are taught in 2 classes but the 2 key stages are split at so that teaching can be differentiated such as for phonics in ks1 and for maths in ks2. Bucknell believes in having an enriched curriculum- not just teaching for national tests (SATS) but with an emphasis on drama + music too — the school performances are of a very good standard. There are good whole school science days which the pupils always enjoy with the emphasis on practical experiments. The topics that will be studied this year are "weather" in key stage 1, + "the Romans" in key stage 2. There are many after school clubs offered at St Mary's school: craft club, cooking from around the world, film club, Lego club and Maths Booster. The older children will be taking part in an athletics competition in Church Stretton later this month. They will also be taken to watch an international athletics competition in Birmingham in March.

Leadership

Miss Anna Cook is teaching head of Bucknell + Clunbury spending half of each day in each school. Parents seem to be happy with this arrangement. Mrs Ruth Gittings is acting head of Newcastle for this school year then next school year Anna Cook is expected to be head of Newcastle school too. Anna Cook + Ruth Gittings work well together and support each other. Newcastle's Ofsted inspection was today, 9th January.

Multi-Academy Trusts

We haven't yet felt it necessary to join a multi- academy trust: we have been content with the support which has been given by the officers at Shropshire council (such as Recruitment, Human Resources, Pay role, school improvement, policies + Health + Safety). We have concerns about for how much longer the council will have the resources + staff to supply the support that schools need. The government want schools to join MATs to give them the support that has previously been provided by L.A.s. Some trusts have failed + some schools have been abandoned by their trusts. Not all schools will attract a sponsor.

Challenges

There are always challenges- there are concerns about the budget. There is a new National Funding Formula coming in. Small school have in the past had disproportionately less funding than larger schools as larger school dominate in the organisation (the Schools Forum) that decides how to split the funding. Historically, different counties have been funded differently and Shropshire has been 1 of the most poorly funded counties. Many schools have had to propose deficit budgets although Bucknell has always reduced costs to the minimum to stay within our budget.

Also, the SATS tests for the children in key stage2 are very challenging, particularly the grammar, spelling and punctuation ones and especially as they are only primary school pupils. The terms the children are expected to know are ones that I was only taught in high school. I have attached some questions from a sample test paper in case any of you would like to have a go at answering them (but don't ask me to mark them). The children cannot achieve a good mark in their writing, no matter how inspiring the subject matter might be, if they do not spell, punctuate and use grammar correctly.

Conclusion

St Mary's school is thriving. Pupil numbers are strong. The children enjoy school and make good progress. Ofsted judged the school to be Good at its last inspection. The Federation is proving to be beneficial.