

Willand School Report to the Parish Council 2023

After the difficulties of last year caused by so much pupil and staff absence due to Covid, we have reached a more stable period at school in the last twelve months.

There are still challenges in identifying and closing gaps in the children's knowledge and supporting their emotional wellbeing which has been a legacy of the pandemic and impacted on our KS2 SATs results. Our attainment in the Phonics Screening however was 8% above the national average and reflected the staff's dedication and the measures taken to address early reading and training since Autumn '21 following our Ofsted . We also had outstanding results in the new national Year 4 Multiplication test.

The school now has 383 children on roll which has decreased from our highest numbers of 415. We have had bigger year groups leave and smaller year groups enter in the last two years, however, we are still full in some year groups.

In the autumn term Uffculme Academy Trust asked Devon County Council to include Willand in it's catchment area and for our school to become a feeder school for them in addition to Cullompton Community College. We await the outcome of the consultation period about this which ended in January.

This term the industrial action taken by some members of staff has resulted in the school being closed to all but our most vulnerable children and those with Education Health Care Plans. This is the most industrial action that I have experienced since I started teaching in 1986. The teachers have had a pay rise which has not been funded and which therefore depletes the school budget by an enormous amount for all our other activities. This aspect does not seem to make the news.

The return of school assemblies and plays this year has been wonderful and we are now able to return to our enrichment programme and take the children out or bring visitors into school- all of which enhances what we are able to provide for our youngsters. Last week we celebrated World Book Day and this week we have a panel of our Year 6 pupils taking part in an activity organised by the Royal Society. They have been reviewing some children's science books and had a live call with the authors who had written the books. Many of the questions our panel had sent in were answered by the authors and Willand was once again firmly on the map!

This year there is also a lot to celebrate. In the Summer term we look forward to the coronation of King Charles III and in the Autumn term the 75th anniversary of the school on our present site.