

## Governors in the Classroom

For most governors, their direct contact with children at 'their' school is quite restricted, for a wide variety of reasons and, in consequence, many governors never get the opportunity of experiencing for themselves either the rewards or the tribulations of being a 'classroom teacher'. However a new scheme is currently being piloted within the Borough, which does offer an opportunity for some governors to participate in classroom activity. The scheme, Young Enterprize (Primary), takes the traditional Young Enterprize initiatives (familiar already in Secondary Schools) and positions them within the Primary School setting, offering a stimulating programme from Year 1 to Year 6. Originally developed in the U.S.A., the scheme is now fully absorbed into the curriculum in every primary school in Ireland, and is now finding its way throughout the U.K.

The success of the scheme depends upon finding suitable people to present it to each year group, preferably bringing in new faces as far as the children are concerned. "Business Volunteers", who can spare the time, are actively being sought, although it is expected that class teachers will still be present, but in a supportive capacity. School Governors represent an ideal source of volunteers and, when the proposal to offer the scheme at Lutley was first mooted at the March termly meeting, several offered to take part. As a direct result a meeting was held with Geoff Willetts, Borough co-ordinator for the scheme, and we agreed to pilot the Year 1 materials with three parallel classes over six weekly one-hour sessions.

Roz Mace, Mitchell Davis and I, each with a group of about 28 5/6 year olds presented the theme of "Ourselves" using prepared materials, externally produced. The story follows a group of children who decide that they want to buy a tent in which to play, realize that they do not have enough money for the purchase and work together in order to raise the money they need. Themes of 'working together', 'sharing' and 'saving up' run through the storyline and the classroom activities reinforce these same themes. Although the materials supplied are American in origin it is expected that revised anglicised versions should be available shortly; nevertheless it gave us the opportunity to discuss some cultural differences between the two countries thus converting what first seemed to be a disadvantage into a 'plus' point.

Year 2 of the scheme picks up the theme of "Our Families", followed in Year 3 by "Our Community", "Our City" (Year 4), "Our Nation" (Year 5) and "Our World" (Year 6). Given that "Our World" raises issues of

international trade it promises to be a thoroughly challenging experience!!!

The children certainly seemed to enjoy the provision of the Year 1 scheme, which the teaching staff felt mapped well onto the P.H.S.E. curriculum, and having outside presenters proved valuable from the staff's point of view, particularly having some men in with the Early Years' children. Clearly this was very much a learning experience for both us and for the school and, based upon a subsequent evaluation of the scheme, we have decided to make the provision again in the next academic year, 2002/03, but this time repeating the Year 1 course and extending it into Year 2; we are, however, going to try out Year 6 as well. With a three-form entry school this requires nine presenters but, with some 'doubling up' and with some other governors agreeing to take part as well, we anticipate that this should provide a very positive experience for the children next year. Timing is important and we anticipate using the time post-SATs for Years 2 and 6 and a slightly earlier implementation for Year 1 (as this year).

The whole of the scheme is still very much at the 'pilot' stage in Dudley and it remains to be seen whether it will subsequently become available for all schools within the Borough. The feelings that we, and the staff, have shared to date are exceptionally positive and we fully expect that the children will derive considerable benefit from what is being done. Being a pilot centre has given us an early opportunity of reviewing the scheme and the materials; however it has also meant that there is little or no local experience on which to fall back so that there are both pluses and minuses.

The ability to find "Business Volunteers" is fundamental to the process and, in some schools this may prove to be a handicap. However, on the 'plus' side, no teaching experience is required, only an enthusiasm to communicate with youngsters. Parents who, inevitably, have had to explain so many issues to their own children, will readily enough fit into the role, particularly at Key Stage 1.

For the rest ..... watch this space !!!