

# Lewes New School



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## *Annual letter to supporters July 2006*

Dear supporter

Our sixth year draws to a close and I look back and marvel at the progress we have made since we started.

The main news is that we have recruited a head teacher, Lizzie Overton, who is already commuting part time and starts full time in September, when she moves to Lewes with her family. Her two children will attend the school. Lizzie was previously deputy head at Fleet School in Camden and brings a wealth of educational vision and real commitment to continue to develop our unique ethos. Her passion is to develop a sophisticated child-led curriculum where, along with developing essential skills, children are inspired to follow their own ideas rather than working towards predetermined targets.

She will be writing the next newsletter as I am leaving the school next week and will initially just take time off to take stock. Working here has been an extraordinary accelerated learning for me – about starting and running a small business, about communicating genuinely and effectively with a whole community of people, about managing a staff team of 22, about dealing with conflict effectively, and, frankly, about being human. In this community of learners, there is the opportunity for everyone to change and grow, not just the children.

Our unique approach to respectful communication is still being embedded in our culture, with regular discussions and training. The oldest children were once again trained in peer mediation this term. Most of the parents have taken up the free parent communication course that is a 24-hour course spread over 8 weeks, and from September Stephanie will be running a pilot Teacher Effectiveness Training Course, based at the school, for teachers nationally. Her articles are being published in national parenting magazines and the influence of her work via the school is spreading.

Scherto Gill of Sussex University's Centre for Educational Innovation has been researching our school and has delivered two papers now about our learning community to academic conferences (see the website for copies). We continue to be closely linked with our patrons, the Guerrand-Hermès

Foundation for Peace ([www.ghfp.org](http://www.ghfp.org)), who has recently co-sponsored a new MA programme in person-centred education at Sussex University's Centre for Educational Innovation, and who also recently hosted the international Conference 'Rethinking Educational Change', attended by our Lizzie and Matthew.

GHFP also funded Matthew to travel to Denmark to visit two progressive schools whose Flow philosophy is based on Intrinsic Learning, the idea that most children want to learn and that providing children with appropriate learning experiences/environments helps them to flourish as whole people.

Our attempt to get government funding with the support of Human Scale Education met a barrier during a meeting at the Department for Education and Skills with the local authorities in the spring, who were determined to not fund small schools such as ours. This is despite an encouraging government White Paper speaking of the need for innovation and parent involvement. However, we will continue to pursue this avenue, possibly investigating getting funded as a research school.

We are fantastically fortunate to have as a new patron, Penelope Leach, child psychologist, researcher, government adviser on children and parents, author of many books on child development and educational matters. She has offered to work closely with Lizzie to help us get support nationally for our work.

Ours is truly a unique school pioneering new and essential paths in education. Society is in need of a new way of treating and working respectfully with children – and adults. This precious community, this seedbed of innovation, needs lots of support and care.

We have a new fundraiser, Noa Lachman, who is currently launching a major new drive to fund bursaries and other programmes. Part of this drive is a lovely new simple brochure and updated website.

Please support us generously, in whatever way you can. Thank you for all your care and help over the years – it has all been gratefully received.

Goodbye, with love

Adrienne