



High Peak Kids Council meeting



Ashley Parry, headteacher of Newtown & Thornsett

Schools working to be stronger together

By Gabrielle Pickard Whitehead

WHEN it comes to choosing a school, parents in the New Mills vicinity certainly have their pick of the crop, as 12 schools sit within a three-mile radius of each other.

Despite the substantial number of schools located in such proximity, rather than competing with one another these local schools have a long history of working together across a number of areas.

In recent years, Ofsted has been challenging schools to look outwards and engage with other schools to improve inwardly.

Schools in the New Mills community have been doing this for many years.

The local schools formed a cluster 15 years ago, designed to work together and share resources for the benefit of the children and wider local community.

In the spring term of 2016, the Peak Edge Group of Schools group was set up, as a means of formalising, varying, developing and strengthening the collaborative approach between the local schools.



By offering inclusive and enriching learning experiences, PEGS is building the capacity to raise standards of teaching and learning for all pupils in the local schools.

The schools involved in the PEGS initiative include: Buxworth Primary, Combs Infants, Furness Vale Primary, Hague Bar Primary, Hayfield Primary, New Mills Nursery, New Mills Primary, New Mills Secondary, Newtown Primary, St George's CofE Primary, St Mary's Catholic Primary, Thornsett Primary and St. Luke's CofE Primary in Glossop.

PEGS events take place weekly, ranging from meetings with school business officers, senior leaders and PEGS subject

co-ordinators, to events in which children from all the local schools take part in. This term has seen joint INSET for all schools on autism.

Ashley Parry, executive head teacher of Newtown and Thornsett Primary School, told the High Peak Review of the positive upshots of PEGS.

He said: "At meetings I attend across the county, the PEGS collaboration is seen as a fantastic example of how schools should work together to improve outcomes for all stakeholders.

"In a climate where competition is often encouraged, it is refreshing to see collaboration providing the best path to school improvement."

The staff also get a lot out of the collaboration by sharing expertise and tackling challenges.

Being a parent of two children in a PEGS school, I can vouch for the beneficial effect the collaboration is having on the pupils and the community. Barely a month goes by before the pupils are involved in some sort of event with other schools, whether it be a sports tournament or a learning activity.

My son, who is in Year 6, is part of the High Peak Kids Council. Several times a term, representatives from the local school meet at New Mills Town Hall to discuss important issues affecting the children.

"I really enjoy being part of HPKC. We talk about important things and I get to meet kids from other schools, which will be good when we go to high school," said Frankie.

Driven by an ethos to make "our sharing, caring community, stronger together," PEGS and everyone involved in it, is, without doubt, doing a stellar job in bringing the New Mills community even closer together and enriching the learning experience of all its pupils.