



UPTON JUNIOR SCHOOL

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Upton Swimming Pool to Reopen Next Week!

Dear Parents / Carers,

It is with great delight and pride that I am able to write to you today with wonderful news. We can confirm that, thanks to the incredible work of the school, parents, volunteers and the local community, we have been successful not just in raising the £130 000 required to repair and refurbish the Upton Swimming Pool but also in completing the works. The pool is now ready to reopen and once again serve as a much needed community pool that schools and other organisations are able to use to provide opportunity within the Thanet area.

Those of you newer to the school might not have been part of our journey. We started out when the pool was forced to close at Christmas 2014. At the time it needed at least £80 000 of just mechanical repairs to even be usable. Other items such as the pool liner, metalwork, pipes, the changing rooms, etc were also past their life-expectancy and this pushed the costs well above £100 000. We were faced with the decision to either close permanently, as most non-private schools across England have now done, or attempt a huge fundraising effort to see if it was possible to save the pool. Upton has always been incredibly committed to sports and sports opportunities; we had committed staff, governors, parents and a very strong PTFA team and the role the pool had within the community for lots of schools and community groups meant this choice was simple one for us.

At the outset we'd hoped we'd be eligible for funding streams from the lottery or other charities but it became clear that grant funding for swimming pools was scarce, particularly as we are in Broadstairs rather than a deprived area of Thanet, and so the bulk of the amount simply had to be raised through fund-raising. We then embarked upon an intense period of months and months during which every weekend was a fundraiser of some sort. We engaged massively with the local community - there was a period where hundreds of Broadstairs-based businesses or establishments had our collection pots in them - and the community responded magnificently in support.

This morning I looked back at the spreadsheet of events we raised money from to write this letter to you and it was like looking back on a timeline of my life at the time - I know that was also the case for many of you as parents and supporters who were heavily involved. From baths of beans outside ASDA, skate-park sessions, to Easter Egg hunts, to millions of cake sales, to craft fairs, to concerts, to sports events, to fun days, to camp-outs, to UptonFest, to **so many** events that children did outside of school using their initiative, to basically anything that could be done! There were literally hundreds of fundraising events run to save the pool. It was an incredible time we can now look back on fondly because it's ultimately been successful. I honestly don't think there are many schools in the country who could have achieved such a feat.

There is still work to be done: the outside of the pool, the roof, a viewing area, etc. are projects in the works and the school will continue to look for funding for this. The pool will also be run in a different way to previously: we intend to have our own swim-schools, family swim sessions, water polo clubs and parties as well as continuing to provide for the many groups we have always hosted. Hopefully the pool will be a huge asset to the school and community for many years ahead.

We have no intention to delay the opening by planning something massive and time-consuming - indeed we want the facility in use as soon as possible! **The opening ceremony for the pool will take place on Friday 25th November 2016 (next week) and the pool will be available for use from Monday 28th November.** While I'd love to invite every single parent to attend the opening, the size of the hall and the wet weather conditions at this time of year make this absolutely impossible. We'll open the pool with the children on the morning of Friday 25th during assembly, they'll get to go in the building and look around - which they'll love - and we'll 'reopen' it again on Friday afternoon to the local mayor, councillors etc. If, as a parent past or present, you were involved in fundraising through running an actual event with your child or similar we do have some spaces left during the afternoon and these will be allocated on a first-come-first served basis via email to our Business Manager lisa.burke@uptonjunior.com

Friday 25th November - the day of the opening - is rightly a day of celebration at the school. It will be a non-uniform day (no charge) for all pupils with an optional 'pool or beach' theme.

The aim is for every child in the school to experience the pool as part of their PE lessons in the short time before Christmas. After which, the classes will continue to swim on a 'term-on-term-off' basis as previously. A letter detailing this and swimming requirements will follow shortly.

Thank you to you all once again for your dedication to the school and to creating opportunity not just for our pupils but for children across Thanet. Together we've achieved something exceptional.

Kind regards

Mr Walker

Head of School