

Headteacher Spotlight:

Lorna Jackson, Maryland Primary School

In our first headteacher spotlight, we meet Lorna Jackson from Maryland Primary School, the longest serving primary teacher and Headteacher in Newham.



Can you tell us a bit about the history of Maryland?

Having worked in Newham as a teacher for 40 years (the longest serving primary teacher and Headteacher in the borough) I could probably be written into the history of Maryland! The original school was called Maryland Point. It was replaced in 1968, as separate infant and junior schools, which amalgamated into [Maryland Primary](#) in 1990. The opening of the school featured on Blue Peter, when the BBC buried a time capsule in the garden. In 2008, Maryland pupils worked with the designers of the Olympic Park to ensure it reflected their wishes.

What is the school ethos, and how is it embodied in the pupils?

My passion is sustainability and my pupils will challenge big businesses, including Michelin starred restaurants, about single use plastics. We use cardboard pens and are the designated crisp packet recycling centre for [Walkers](#). Locals bring their packets here as our Eco Warriors are determined to reduce non-biodegradable items. Walkers pay us and we donate funds to charity. All visitors comment on the calmness here. Children will tell you that Mrs. Jackson likes CALM



- whilst taking a deep breath in. We have a Japanese style calm zone with a large globe water feature. We are driven by our six school values: Ambition, Teamwork, Resilience, Respect, Courage and Kindness.

Our motto is "Where our children's future matters most" so everything we do is built on that belief.

Are there any unusual subjects taught or unexpected experiences offered?

We have a RHS 5 star award from TV gardener, Alan Titchmarsh, for our inclusive outdoor curriculum. This is delivered from our showpiece 'Nature's Garden' (yes, belonging to nature). Within the Garden we have built '[Negril Beach](#)', a mini orchard, Mediterranean garden, cactus garden,

sensory grotto, research station, nine growing beds (with unusual crops such as aubergines, sweet potatoes), a pond (with rare species such as the crested newt). We grow hops and grapes which trail down our walls. Visit our busy Nursery garden and you will see Cluckingham Palace, our chicken coop, housing our beloved hens, named after 'royals' - who show off their daily clutch of blue, white, brown and green eggs. The Palace is run by Eggstraordinaire, a company formed by the children (our Eggsperts) who run the business like Alan Sugar. They sell shares to any unwitting visitors!

What is the most rewarding aspect of your role at Maryland?

I love to see the outcomes of my international research

projects become embedded in our curriculum at Maryland, to the point where they are unnoticeable. I have been fortunate in carrying out educational research trips to China, Bangladesh, Japan, Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands and Singapore with the unwavering support of my governors who trust that 'she will always bring back something revolutionary'.

What is really rewarding is seeing the changes I have made, not just to lives (adults, children, animals) but also to charities, buildings, policies, attitudes, lifestyles.

Not to mention the educational standards that have risen in my time. When I took up headship, Literacy standards were low, at 43%, and now are consistently above the national average. I feel a great

sense of satisfaction seeing enjoyment in action. I love to stand at the school gate and watch the children skip and scoot to school and greet the parents gathering for their daily chat - completely relaxed and satisfied with whatever Maryland is going to get up to with their children that day!

What are your future ambitions for the school?

We are widely recognised for being pioneers in curriculum innovation - I believe in research. I always start with a single question then my mission is to find the answer, no matter where I go. I live by the mantra "those who say it can't be done should not disturb the person doing it". My ambitions are for Maryland to keep innovating as long as there is change, then there is something new

to find out. Being brave and taking risks are what keep our children engaged and enthused!

What would you say sets Maryland apart from other schools?

We are adventurers. We are only one of a handful of Primary schools in the UK invited to actually meet [Captain Tim Peake](#) the astronaut and conduct an experiment for him, growing Rocket seeds that Tim had taken into space and NASA then sent to Maryland (via Kazakhstan). The children discovered the seeds were affected by zero gravity! We were the first primary school in Newham to introduce Google Education. We introduced Ruth Miskin's reading programme, RWI, to Newham and are one of only two international model schools, hosting teachers from around the world. In 2019, Maryland became one of the Mayor of London's '[School for Success](#)'. We were showcased in the 2018 '[Parliamentary Review](#)' highlighting best practice for innovation and research.

What else sets us apart? My staff and pupils come into assembly dancing and singing to One Love or any other musical message that I share on that day. Our adopted school song is [True Colours](#) by the Kaos Choir for deaf children. Have a look at



the link to see why it inspires my pupils, I challenge you not to be moved.

Are there any pupils achievements that you would like to mention?

I believe leadership should be about instilling ambition and enhancing talents. Maryland children win many sporting competitions and we have an England squad basketball coach on our staff. Our fencing club will soon be duelling at borough level. We proudly won Newham's Panathlon with our SEND team. We live the Olympic values and have one of the 2012 Olympic torches on display in our hall.

Are there any upcoming events/ programmes that the local or wider community should be aware of?

We proudly hosted Newham's Black History Month art exhibition, sponsored by the council. We were open to the public and received excellent reviews on the children's interpretation of work done by black artists.

We are hosting a delegation of 18 educators from Japan, strengthening the close links we have with Osaka university. This is the 5th research visit by the Japanese to Maryland and they refer to us as 'a most excellent school'. We will of course give them a memorable Maryland experience, as we dance them into assembly.

This is our first Headteacher Spotlight and we hope to do many more. If you are a headteacher interested in sharing your experience, please get in touch.

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