

Brabourne Church of England Primary School

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Headteacher: Mr Andrew Stapley

Dear Parents,

Apologies for the delay in our first news of the year – somehow term 1 has disappeared. Welcome to all the new families in the school!

For the sake of new parents, and as a quick reminder to others, our key areas of responsibility are three fold:

- **Providing Strategic Leadership**
- **Driving up the Performance of the School Academically**
- **Overseeing the Financial Performance of the School**

As the first letter of this year, it feels appropriate to talk more about the strategy element of this.

A couple of years ago, when the new national curriculum was introduced, governors and staff spent a lot of time looking at the vision and direction of the school. The new curriculum is far more challenging in the core subjects – maths and English – and there was a concern amongst teachers that it would not be possible to cover this to the level expected by the Department for Education (and therefore Ofsted who inspect against their criteria) as well as maintain a broad curriculum. However, all governors and staff were unanimous that a wide and varied curriculum was essential for primary school children. Our current vision:

We educate, encourage and inspire our children to develop a love of learning for now and forever. We provide stimulating and challenging experiences; teaching them Christian values and meeting their individual needs in our small, nurturing environment.

stemmed from this work. The teachers received governor support that meeting criteria for Ofsted 'outstanding' was not the key aspect of education at Brabourne. Outdoor learning as a routine part of education was introduced, recognising that all children benefit from being outside, connecting with nature and observing the passing of the seasons. Additional sports funding, generated from the sugar tax, means we can now offer a broader range of sporting activities and even more are planned for this year.

We also recognised that governors should be paying as much attention to the well-being of pupils as we do to their academic results. At a governor level, we re-structured to create a committee (Ethics and Culture) that is focussed on pupil well-being. They look at pupil survey data, help ensure the school improvement plan is balanced and support the Christian Ethos of the school. Whilst we realise that most of our families are not regular church attendees, the underpinning Christian values of the school help develop rounded pupils who are capable of questioning and challenging, no matter what they eventually decide to believe in. There has always been an aspect of nurture to church schools that helps develop confident children, eager for their next steps into secondary education and beyond.

Our hope at the time was that the decision to maintain this breadth of education would not, actually, impact on the core subject results either. It was a risk but we hoped that core subjects would be enhanced too – writing would be richer, problem solving more creative – as a result of the experiences that all pupils participate in. It has been great to see that this is the case with the Key Stage 2 results from the summer being significantly above national averages virtually across the board. It is a challenge for our teachers and teaching assistants to balance all of this – to provide stimulating lessons which engage all the pupils and address all aspects of the curriculum – because it takes a lot more time than lifting a lesson plan from a website. But every year we see improvements when we look at pupil survey results so we know we're on the right path.

Even more heartening have been recent comments from Amanda Spielman, the new Ofsted Chief Inspector, addressing the Festival of Education in June. Comments such as 'Because education should be about broadening minds, enriching communities and advancing civilisation', 'All children should study a broad and rich curriculum' and 'if you are putting more resources into providing exam scribes than in teaching your strugglers to read and write, or scrapping most of your curriculum through Year 6 to focus just on English and maths' have confirmed that our direction is right and we can be confident going forward.

We will, no doubt, still have challenges along the way. Teachers and headteachers are under increasing amounts of pressure but we will continue to try and provide the best support for them given the various external pressures. We certainly also appreciate the great parental (and wider community) support the school receives. Many individuals give up their time and energy to help the school deliver education and experiences they couldn't otherwise do and we appreciate you all – it makes a huge difference, thank you.

If you have any further questions about any aspect of governance, please don't hesitate to ask me or one of the other members of the governing board. All parent governors are fairly commonly seen at the school gate! We are, as follows:

Hester Fenwick – Chair of Governors, temporary Chair of Teaching and Learning and member of Finance Committee (Parent governor)

Roger Shaw – Vice-chair of Governors and Chair of Finance Committee (Co-opted governor)

Emma Keating – Chair of Ethics & Culture Committee (Parent governor)

Sarah Hopker – Safeguarding Governor, SEND Governor and member of Teaching & Learning Committee (Parent governor)

Sarah Vant – Health & Safety Governor and member of Ethics & Culture Committee (Parent governor)

Maggie Smith – member of Ethics & Culture Committee (Foundation governor)

Jasmine Stewart – Member of Teaching & Learning and Finance Committees (Co-opted governor)

Mr. Taylor – (Staff governor)

Mr. Stapley – Member of Teaching & Learning and Ethics & Culture Committees (Headteacher)

We would like to thank Mick Taylor who stood down at the end of term one after several years of valued contribution. With his many years of education experience, he contributed greatly to the recruitment over the last year and will be much missed – we wish him all the best as he spends more time with his family.

We currently have two vacancies. One is for a foundation governor and the key requirement for this is that they are a regular church attendee of any mainstream Christian religion (they do not have to be Church of England). The second is a replacement for Mick as the Local Authority governor and we are ideally looking for somebody with senior leadership experience in schools. If you know of anybody who would be interested in either role, please let me know and I can explain more about the role and commitment.

More details of all our governors and their attendance at meetings can be found on the school website.

Many thanks

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