

# Brabourne Church of England Primary School Brabourne,

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Headteacher: Mr Andrew Stapley

Dear Parents,

It's time for a slightly belated annual report and welcome to those new parents that have joined the school in the last few months. For the sake of new parents, a little about our role. As governors, we don't get involved in the operational, day to day running of the school. We never look at information about individual pupils. We help the Headteacher and the rest of the staff decide on the priorities for the school and we support them in delivering those, challenging them if needs be. Our role is categorised in the three headings outlined below:

## **Providing Strategic Leadership**

Brabourne's vision is to 'deliver inspirational teaching within a creative curriculum with high academic standards and to build strength of character through our core Christian values.' The key message is that the school is not just about academic achievement. We want every child to be inspired about learning, to find areas they're good at and through this to understand that finding other areas more challenging doesn't mean they've failed. We hope that building this strength of character means they will have more resilience in secondary school and the challenge of teenage years. Part of this is to give the children space to fail and then helping them learn through that – whether it be difficulties in friendships, challenges in lessons or supporting them in moving out of their comfort zone. Clearly as governors our role in this is to make sure that the school has the right staff in place to deliver this vision – staff who share it and are able to deliver it on a daily basis. This year much of this has meant supporting Mr. Stapley in recruitment – ensuring he has the very best staff in place to deliver this vision. Since he started as Headteacher, he has recruited for a number of roles in the school and now has a strong, skilled, cohesive team of staff who are all putting their hearts and souls into supporting all of the pupils.

We were delighted that both the SIAMs and OFSTED inspectors who have visited in the last few months recognised both the strength of the vision and how well the school is delivering it. The OFSTED inspector who visited just before the summer holidays said 'You are passionately committed to ensuring that every pupil has something they can be proud of and fantastic in. This vision drives the ethos of the school and creates a happy, harmonious place where pupils thrive'. We know that not every pupil will find every day perfect – balancing the needs of thirty pupils in every class will never result in every pupil being happy all of the time – but we know the staff we have are skilled and experienced in finding the best solutions for all.

## **Driving up the Performance of the School Academically**

Our strategy of driving a broader curriculum is paying dividends academically too. In core subjects, the results from the Key Stage 1 and 2 SATs in the summer have yet to be made public on the DfE website but we're delighted that the school has scored well above national averages in virtually every measure. In particular, the KS2 progress scores were very strong with the school registering 'well above average' (top 10% of schools) in reading and writing and 'above average' (top 18% of schools) in maths. Mrs. Miller took over the job of subject leader for maths when she started as the Mars class teacher and has helped improve the maths curriculum and delivery which means far more pupils are now working at greater depth across the school. All of the primary school results will be publicly available on the DfE school comparison website from January so all parents will be able to look at these results and those of other schools.

Mr. Taylor is now leading the broader curriculum for the school, as well as help sharing best practice across the CARE foundation trust. There have been discussions around outdoor learning – governors visited Aldington and their forest school to understand the implications of going down a forest school route – but after discussions with the teachers, we have decided to keep outdoor learning more loosely defined, leaving the decision up to teachers how they use that time. Then they are not constrained by the forest school curriculum but can introduce themes from it if they wish – or they can build on topic work or use it to start a literacy project or inspire some practical maths or..... Most of all, we know the children love their time outside and it scores very highly in the pupil survey.

Our challenge for the year to come is to encourage learning from one area of the curriculum to enhance others. This was an area we had already identified for improvement and one the Ofsted inspector agreed with – for example, we know the children can write beautifully in literacy but may not reach the same levels in topic books or finding creative ways of using maths skills in topic work. Being able to translate skills from one area of the curriculum to another will help them in life to come.

### **Overseeing the Financial Performance of the School**

Budgets are, and will continue to be, extremely tight. The government has announced increased pay rises for teachers – which they certainly deserve – but, as yet, there is no increase in school budgets to fund these rises. Equally additional funding for children with extra needs is being slashed so schools need to find money from elsewhere in the budget to support them. We are now liable for the apprenticeship levy (ironically taking money from educating school pupils to fund later training) and cuts in local authority funding mean we have to pay for many services that used to be provided for free by KCC. We are extremely lucky to have staff who are willing to give their time for free – for example, none of them are paid to run after school clubs – and to have so many generous parents, willing to run and support the PTA. I can only plead with you all that you continue to support both – recognising the extra efforts made by our staff and helping the PTA in whatever way you can because every penny really does make a difference.

With a number of new recruits to the governing board, we are nearly fully populated. We welcome our new vicar – Rev. Chris Denyer – who is now officially in the job and has joined the FGB. We have also recruited a second Foundation Governor after a year of searching – Ruthie Gilbert is based in Kingsnorth and brings a wealth of experience in education (in many settings including across Asia) as well as missionary work. Maggie Smith, who was covering as a Foundation Governor whilst we had no vicar, has kindly agreed to stay on as a Co-opted governor. The only outstanding vacancy is for our LA governor for which we are ideally looking for somebody with educational experience.

Emma Keating will soon complete her four year term as parent governor so will be standing down at the end of the year – allowing her more time to pursue her thriving jewellery business. We therefore need to recruit a new parent governor to start in the new year. If you'd be interested in the role, please do have a chat to any of the current governors to find out more. A self-nomination form is attached with this letter if you are willing to stand. Meantime, a huge thanks to Emma for all of her hard work and dedication to the role – her skills will be much missed.

So, our governing board is now as follows:

Hester Fenwick (Parent Governor) – Chair of Governors, Chair of Teaching & Learning Committee (temporarily) and Member of Finance Committee

Roger Shaw (Co-opted Governor) – Vice Chair of Governors, Chair of the Finance Committee

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

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

Sarah Vant (Parent Governor) – Member of Finance Committees, Health & Safety governor

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

Natasha Miller (Staff Governor) – Member of Teaching & Learning Committee

Chris Denyer (Incumbent) – Member of Ethics & Culture Committee

Ruthie Gilbert (Foundation Governor) – Member of Ethics & Culture Committee

Maggie Smith (Co-opted Governor) – Member of Teaching & Learning Committee

All will welcome your comments, thoughts or suggestions!

Hester Fenwick (01303 814432/hesterfenwick@hotmail.com)