

# Brabourne Church of England Primary School

Brabourne, Ashford, Kent TN25 5LQ \* Tel/Fax 01303 813276 \* email [office@brabourne.kent.sch.uk](mailto:office@brabourne.kent.sch.uk)

Headteacher: Mr Andrew Stapley

Dear Parents,

After a busy year on the governance front, it's time for another annual summary. As a quick reminder, our role as governors falls into three main areas: Providing strategic leadership, Driving up the performance of the school academically and Overseeing the financial performance of the school. We've had challenges in all of those areas this year:

## **Providing Strategic Leadership**

After a lot of work in 2016 on our vision and long term strategy, we've been able to ensure that everything the school does is focussed on achieving those aims. The biggest challenge this year has been the work on the new CARE group Foundation Trust which will help us achieve our vision by giving us a support/challenge network around us. The feedback from our consultations was all positive although we have been working closely with the diocese to ensure the church schools involved continue to maintain their Christian Ethos foremost. Based on this feedback, at our last governing board meeting, we voted unanimously to join the Foundation Trust as 'full partner members' (no loss of our current foundation but with the same working relationship as all the other schools), subject to diocese approval. The new trust is due to be incorporated from 1<sup>st</sup> August. In reality, none of this will make any immediate difference to day-to-day life at Brabourne but it will make an enormous difference over the years of change ahead.

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

Clearly our biggest visible job of the year was the recruitment of a new Headteacher and we hope that you will agree that it was worth holding out for the right candidate. Now Mr. Stapley has had a few months to settle into his new role, he's getting everything lined up for an exciting year ahead, full of plans and improvements. His main challenge so far has been in recruitment – for his own replacement, for somebody to cover Mrs. Winchester's maternity cover, for a new year 1 and 2 teacher and for a couple of new TAs. We're confident that the teaching and support line-up from September will be stronger than ever and look forward to supporting the new team next year.

Taking on board feedback from both parent and pupil surveys, we know that communication of pupil progress is a key area to address for next year. The new 'assessment without levels' system has been in place for a year, following the introduction of the new curriculum, but it's still hard to understand and even harder to track with the spreadsheet system the school has used historically. Going forward, the school will be implementing a new automated tracking system which should free up teacher time (and, even more, headteacher time) and the challenge next year will be to make sure all pupils and parents understand the new system and what every individual needs to work on. We are also conscious that whilst this is easier for 'core' subjects (maths and literacy), we need to be sure that we don't forget every part of the school curriculum so will be investigating easy ways of tracking every subject.

We are also concerned about a downward trend in attendance figures for the school. We used to be routinely in the top 25% of schools for attendance but this figure is dropping and we are particularly worried about the increasing number of unauthorised absences (in general children being taken out of school for holidays). We will be writing separately about this because the level of absence is now impacting on lessons for everybody – teachers having to repeat lessons, other pupils having to sit through parts of topics again – which will affect the progress of all pupils.

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

Our financial responsibilities are the most challenging. As a maintained school, we receive funding via the local authority. The majority of the money is proportional to pupil numbers but we also receive specific funding in some areas – to support those pupils with special educational needs or disability (SEND), to support pupils from low income families (pupil premium), to fund free school meals and, at the moment, special sports funding to support the government drive in encouraging active kids. In virtually all of these areas cuts have happened or will happen shortly so the challenge is always how to provide the same quality of education on an ever-diminishing budget.

Whilst we continue to streamline our spending, we are more grateful than ever for the depths of parental support the school can draw on. Whether it's giving up time to support reading or specific activities like art or handicrafts or for supporting the PTA with time and money, it all makes a huge difference. PTA money has paid for projects the school would never otherwise be able to afford – the solar panels which give additional income, the interactive whiteboards and improved wireless network, new classroom furniture and lots of playground improvements. We know that the laptops are all reaching the end of their natural lives so there will need to be investment there and Mr.Stapley's discussions with the School Council have resulted in some more suggestions about how better to use our outside space. So thank you all for your ongoing support and please keep it up! We will continue to eke out the budget as best we can with your help and watch the latest changes in government policy with interest.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to ask me or one of the other members of the governing board. We are, as follows:

Hester Fenwick – Chair of Governors and member of Finance Committee (Parent governor)

Mick Taylor – Vice-chair of Governors and Chair of Teaching & Learning Committee (LA governor)

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

Roger Shaw – Chair of Finance Committee (Co-opted 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)

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

Mr. Taylor – Member of Ethics & Culture Committee (Staff governor)

Mr.Stapley – Member of Teaching & Learning Committee (Headteacher)

Rev. Richard is retiring from his role as our local vicar at the beginning of September and will be replaced by Maggie Smith as a Foundation Governor whilst a new vicar is recruited. We also have a vacancy for our second Foundation Governor following the resignation of James Barber last week. So if you, or somebody you know, might be interested in the role, please let me know. The key requirement is the role can only be held by somebody who regularly worships at a church recognised by 'Churches together in England' which covers most denominations of Christianity.

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

We wish you all a relaxing summer and look forward to an exciting year ahead!

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