



Brabourne CofE Primary School

Governor News October 2024

Dear Brabourne Families,

Welcome to a new academic year and a very warm welcome to all the new families joining us for the first time this year. We normally try and do a little governance update a couple of times a year, just so everybody can understand our role and what the priorities are for the school.

First, a short explanation of our role for those who've not heard it before. As governors, we're not directly involved in the day to day running of the school. We don't make decisions about how classes are taught or individual pupils – that is entirely down to Mr. Stapley and the staff. We are only involved at a more strategic level. We help the school decide what the important priorities are, what sort of school it should be, 'the vision', we oversee the finances and how the budget is spent (or, more realistically, what we can afford and what we can't) and we support and challenge the headteacher.

Having done quite a lot of work over the last couple of years on the strategic plans for the school, the year ahead is all about 'embedding' – making sure those plans become a reality. The vision for Brabourne is:

Through creative and challenging experiences, we inspire our school community to develop resilience, a passion for learning and the courage to pursue our dreams. Within our nurturing environment and beyond, we live out Christian values, enabling all to flourish in the love of God.

Offering an inspirational education takes time to plan and prepare – teachers need to have enough space to come up with creative ideas rather than being bogged down with bureaucracy. And that means we have to let them have a bit of time away from the classroom to gather ideas from elsewhere and visit other schools – so they can bring all of those ideas back and use them within their planning. Many ideas have already been gathered, although the quest continues, and now the 'embedding' is about putting those ideas into practise, and we hope the pupils will all enjoy the year ahead. For example, we are one of very few schools in England to extend the continuous provision model into key stage 2 – Neptune class initially. The teachers are still developing the plan but the idea is that this will be an opportunity for pupils to gain key life skills too – carpentry, sewing, cooking etc. – which are not normally covered in much depth in the national curriculum. This is further supported by the many volunteers from the local community who help with practical skills by running the gardening club, maintaining the garden and supporting with teaching other skills too.

Underpinning the strategy delivery is the financial position of the school. Releasing teachers to research ideas means we need other teachers to cover in the classroom and staffing costs amount to about 80% of the total budget received from the Local Authority. We are now in the very fortunate position of being virtually full as a school – which means we have maximised the amount of money we can receive to run the school. This has given us a little more space in the budget than many schools, but it still requires careful planning. That's also why we're very grateful to the PTA for all of their fundraising activities, as well as some very generous donations which are helping to support areas such as running the minibus (which in turn means we can offer more trips to more pupils). This means we can offer pupils opportunities which would not normally be possible in a school as small as ours without external support.

The other element of support for the 'inspirational' curriculum is clearly all of the staff and we are incredibly lucky to have such an amazing, dedicated team. The wellbeing of staff – from the Headteacher down – is therefore the other key priority. If staff are stressed and overwhelmed by workload, they will not be able to plan and teach their best lessons. Unfortunately we, as governors, cannot wave a magic wand and make it all easy sailing but we do our best to support Mr. Stapley which, in turn, allows him to support the whole staff team. They may all collapse at the end of each successful term, but they bring such passion to the school, it's a joy to be a part of the journey. As part of our role as governors, we make visits into school to see learning in action and to talk with pupils and staff. Every visit is written up and shared with the full governing board and it's great to hear about pupils who have been so keen to share their knowledge and experiences.

It's only fair to also add that all of this enriched curriculum also gives benefits to academic results. Our Key Stage 2 SATs results were well ahead of national average across the board – with 80% of our year 6 leavers reaching 'expected' in every category (against a national average of 61%) and 13% reaching the much tougher greater depth in every category (national average 8%) and over 30% reaching it in at least one area. Similar results can also be seen lower down in the school with 79% reaching a good level of development in every area at the end of Venus class (national average 67%) and the Mars class phonics tests beating national averages too.

So, our year ahead will involve more visits and more financial juggling. We have a school improvement plan in place, full of ideas for the next few years ahead and we will be checking that everything is on course, that the school has the support it needs to deliver them, and that the outcome is flourishing pupils. If any of you would like to be involved in this journey, we will have a parent governor vacancy shortly as Selina Eyles will reach the end of her four year tenure in December. To find out more about what is involved in the role, either catch one of the governors in school or message me for a chat sometime.

Our current governors are as follows:

- Lucie Edmed – Local Authority Governor, Grandparent and Gardener
- Adam Lott – Parent Governor
- Yolande Roberts – Parent Governor
- Selina Eyles – Parent Governor
- Rachael Burley – Parent Governor
- Rev. Susan Manners – Foundation Governor
- Ben Gilbert – Foundation Governor & parent
- Emma Waton – Co-opted Governor
- Hester Fenwick – Co-opted Governor (and ex-parent)
- Katie Vasu – Staff Governor (and ex-parent)
- Andrew Stapley – HT

We've also just welcomed a new clerk to governors – our governance professional – Sara Emmerson, who some of you might know from other village groups, so she will be training but hopefully up to speed soon.

Any questions, let me know!

Hester – Chair of Governors, 07874 855340