

## Higham Primary School Annual Report

This report is where I, as Chair of Governors, look at what the school has achieved in the past academic year so that we can review and make changes (if needed) and plan for the new school year.

Looking back 12 months it is refreshing that normality has returned to the school life with in class learning, external workshops, sports, extra-curricular events, trips and outings, parents evenings, drama performances plus so much more, instead of talking about face masks, hand sanitiser, restrictions, social distancing, home learning and zoom meetings. Whilst they were all very important at the time, a return to the normal education expectations, well-being, safeguarding, fun and learning has a more positive impact on the staff, parents and children at this school.

The highlight of the year for me was the Christmas Show performed by the Infant Classes where parents could see their children perform with such confidence and enthusiasm.

This Spring saw a return to Key Stage 1 and 2 tests for years 2 and 6. The Senior Leadership Team will assess these results against their forecasts and review our strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. I have been on some virtual meetings over the last few months to get an understanding of the Local Authority views on these results.

In pre pandemic times the results of one year would be compared to the results of the previous year in line with the particular cohort's tested. This would be done in every school and then every school would look at how they compared locally amongst similar schools and nationally.

The Local Authority guided by the Department of Education have stressed that this year and the next few years will not be judged against pre pandemic times. The children have had two years of disrupted learning and different children have reacted in different ways. Some will have been significantly impacted due to family matters, resources, anxiety, well being and the stage of their learning. While others have adapted to the changes better and appear to be flourishing as if nothing had changed.

As Chair of Governors it will be good to see how the Key Stage 1 and 2 results turn out and of course the higher the percentage of children on or above the expected standard will be positive news.

However, by far the more important issue is to understand what the Senior Leadership Team have learnt from the results. Will we need to focus on a particular learning area? Is there a particular class cohort that are struggling? What will we be doing differently as a result of this information? Catch up funding may have ceased but our pupils still need to catch up on lost learning from the pandemic years, parental support and engagement is also key to this catching up process.

Ofsted last visited Higham in June 2018 where we were assessed as a Good School. It is a distinct possibility that they will visit again over the next 12 months. They will be looking at the same points that they have always reviewed, namely the teaching in the classroom, pupil behaviour, happiness of the children, attendance, that we follow the correct safeguarding procedures and our School Plan.

I have full confidence in Mrs Grattan, her Senior Leadership team, her teaching staff and teaching assistants plus the other key members of the Office, kitchen and facilities to demonstrate Higham

Primary School to its optimum standards. The Governing Body will work with Mrs Grattan and the School Plan to ensure that what is planned is delivered to each and every pupil.

Aside from the day to day teaching at Higham Primary School there are other matters that we need to be aware of.

I have always been an advocate of avoiding complacency, as that is when standards slip, so I have looked at what I believe will be the biggest challenges faced in the coming academic year.

- 1) The school will have the challenges of the budget, as we do every year, but with inflation levels, cost of living, fuel prices and the squeeze on family budgets, this year is likely to be unprecedented. We must ensure that our budget control and getting the best value for money remains strong. This means delivering the best learning experience by using resources wisely, it also means supporting our vulnerable children, our Pupil Premium children and our SEND children who may be the hardest hit by budget challenges at home.
- 2) I think we as a school still need to communicate better with parents, whether by newsletter or the Governors Board or School Facebook. Face to Face parent evenings will improve this but communication must happen every week not just at parent consultations.
- 3) Wellbeing of pupils and staff must still be high on our priority list. Wellbeing wasn't just important during the pandemic. It is always important and so its everyone's duty to keep an eye on their peers and colleagues, whether children or staff
- 4) Attendance of pupils is something which is very important. Some absences due to sickness, injury etc are unavoidable. However there appears to have been a trend in the last academic year that it is acceptable to take a child out of school for a holiday in term time. This needs to be reduced, discouraged and avoided. These holidays in term time will be unauthorised absences and so the Local Authority can impose a fine on the parent (which does not go into the school budget). After so much schooling and learning was missed in the last two years to take a child out of school for one or two weeks will just make that learning gap bigger.
- 5) Better promotion of our school meals will be more important than ever as well as ensuring that all children entitled to extra support (for example Free School Meals and Pupil Premium) receive that help. With the focus being on good quality, healthy meals available to all children. The benefits are numerous. Studies have shown that well nourished children learn better, that well nourished children are less sick so attendance at school is increased. If as expected family budgets are squeezed adjustments will need to be made, but if a child has a hot, high quality and healthy meal at lunchtime that concern can be reduced for every parent, particularly in the Winter months. A higher take up on school meals will enable the school to make economies of scale in the purchasing of catering supplies, while retaining the healthy school meal status. I will not wish the high quality of catering to be compromised for any reason.
- 6) With the current challenges, never before has a strong team ethic between all stakeholders been so important.

By keeping constant review of the progress of the learning in all year groups as well as the overall management of the school, the Governors will work with Mrs Grattan and her team to continue to

provide the best possible learning and school life experience for every pupil that walks through the school gates every day.

I would like to finish with a few thankyou's.

Firstly, to every single member of staff who has dealt with the last few pandemic years and faced the challenges put before them in areas never previously challenged.

Also, to the parents who have had to adapt to changes sometimes sprung on them at short notice, who have become home teachers during lockdown periods and for continuing to support the school positively, especially the vital support and fundraising carried out by the PTA.

Thank you to everyone who has been involved on the Governing Body over this Academic year. We are all volunteers and so really do undertake the role for no personal reward, other than knowing that we are contributing to make this school the best it can be for every pupil every day.

Finally, the biggest thank you is to every pupil who is at Higham Primary School for their enthusiasm and adaptability. The last two years have been challenging to everybody, but children have been affected in ways that previous school children have never been impacted. A few days missed schooling due to snow was probably the worst it got in terms of disrupted education..... then came the Corona Virus Pandemic. Children are resilient and can bounce back, but this was truly unprecedented. As a school we will strive to deliver the best education experience to all children and with hard work by everyone the catch up will happen so that they can go on to achieve their aspirations in secondary school, further education and employment.

Brian Maynard

Chair of Governors

September 2022