

19 July 2016

Dear Parents and Carers,

Another year at The Queen's School is drawing to a close and it is my pleasure to share with you some of the school's achievements as well as areas of focus for the next academic year. This newsletter also marks the end of an era as demolition of the existing school building is due to begin during the summer break and the children will return in September to a brand new school building, while the work on the grounds continues.

### The Queen's School Vision Priorities

Our strategic priorities are set and managed on a two-year cycle. More details on how this happens can be found on the website. We are now more than half way through the current cycle, with the next vision-setting exercise due to take place around Easter time next year. Here is a summary of how we are progressing with our current priorities:

*Learning and Teaching:* You may be aware that the government has introduced some significant changes to the way children's progress is measured and reported. The old system of measuring progress using 'levels' is no more and there is now a focus on breadth and depth of knowledge rather than the more linear approach we had become used to. This meant significant changes for the staff, who have been working hard to develop assessment procedures that support learning and allow progress to be tracked. You will have received information about this and noticed the difference in reporting format and content. As we strive for excellence in all areas, there has also been a focus on subject leadership, as well as a review of foreign language teaching. One outcome of this was the Year 6 visit to a French school during their school journey, which was a real highlight of the trip for many of the children. Details of this can be found in the Year 6 Journey Blog on the school website.

*Child Centred Learning:* You may be aware that the school has developed a set of 'learning certainties' (for example resilience, determination, risk taking...) to ensure that children are positive, motivated and successful in their learning. The children have focussed on these in class and are becoming able to identify them as important ingredients for optimising their learning and truly fulfilling their potential. Now these learning certainties are becoming embedded in school, the challenge is to ensure that parents and other stakeholders understand how and why they are being used and can support this effort.

*New Build:* The building project has continued to bring challenges and opportunities in equal measure. While Miss Bentham and I have focussed our efforts on getting maximum benefit from the programme, the entire staff body has been involved in the planning necessary to ensure that the new learning environment reflects the values and ethos of The Queen's School.

In the mean time, there has been a focus on maximising the children's opportunity to participate in sport and outdoor learning given the more constrained environment, with the older children enjoying PE lessons at Westerly Ware, leaving more space for the younger children on site. Despite our space limitations, staff have used external venues for training and fixtures so the children were able to participate in a wide range of competitive inter-school fixtures - with plenty of success. Hopefully you will have been reading about this in the school newsletter, where the children's match reports are published.

*Transition Planning and Secondary Transfer:* The school has worked hard to ensure that the children's transition between Key Stages, from Early years (EYFS) through to Key Stage 3 (Secondary School), is smooth and well managed. Action plans have been created to ensure children are well prepared academically, emotionally and spiritually for the next stage in their education. The school continues to develop relationships with a range of secondary schools, both state and private, and has focussed on supporting parents and

children through this important transition. A focus for next academic year will be on influencing external parties with respect to secondary school catchment, admissions and provision.

## Statutory Responsibilities and Finance

I won't include details of our less exciting but still very important work on policies and other statutory matters, but we continue to keep abreast of best practice and make sure all statutory responsibilities are met. All our policies can be found on the school website, along with other information we are required to share – and lots more of course. Looking ahead to next year and beyond, finance and budgeting are likely to become increasingly challenging as funding to schools decreases in real terms while costs continue to rise. Rest assured the governors have the expertise required to steer the school through this difficult time and will be prioritising effective use of our resources, always focussing on what is in the best interests of the children.

## Thank You

This year has been a challenging and exciting one for the school. Despite the difficulties brought about by the building programme and the extra work this has created, the school community has shown its strength by working together in the best interests of the children. Miss Bentham and her staff have been truly amazing, showing enormous commitment and passion in difficult circumstances and relentlessly striving to give the children the best possible experience. The support of the parents has been tremendous with an army of volunteers stepping forward to support the school in its endeavours. Thank you all. A special thank you to Aine Breen who has recently finished a very successful period as PSA Chair. Her determination, passion and extraordinary energy will be missed but I am sure the new PSA team will relish the challenge of filling her shoes and I wish them all the best. Finally thank you to everyone who has participated in the incredible fundraising effort for the new building – led of course by the wonderful Aine. We have been able to afford everything on our wish-list, which really is an extremely impressive achievement.

## Welcomes and Goodbyes

Over this academic year there has been considerable change in membership of the Governing Body. Details of the current governors can be found on the school website. At the end of this year we say goodbye to Phyllis Cunningham, who has served as a governor for fourteen years and to whom we owe an enormous debt of thanks for her tremendous wisdom, commitment and support for the school. We also say goodbye and God bless to two members of teaching staff, Miss Wood and Miss Weaver. Next year we are excited to be welcoming Miss James, who will be teaching one of the Reception classes.

We also say goodbye to Year 6, who are marking the end of their time at The Queen's School in time-honoured fashion. Remarkable performances of The Little Mermaid were enjoyed by the school community; the children were presented with certificates at their graduation ceremony and disco and they will attend St. Anne's for their very special Leavers' Service today, before heading to Kew Green after school for an informal celebratory evening with their parents. Their new schools are lucky to be receiving such talented, compassionate and respectful children who will continue to shine on this next stage of their journey. We wish them well and will keep them in our thoughts and prayers as they move to pastures new.

Finally, I also need to say goodbye as I finish my term as Chair of Governors and hand the baton to Laura Coughtrie and David Durie, who will be Co-Chairs going forward. Laura is a Foundation Governor and David a Diocesan Governor; both have extensive experience of leadership and governance. They will be supported by Kristen Anderson and Inga Hall as Vice Chairs and an incredibly able and committed team of governors. I wish them all the very best for the future. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve the school and I will be very sad to say goodbye after seven years as a governor. I will however remain as an Associate Member linked with the building programme in the short term, to ensure continuity.

On behalf of all the Governors, I wish you and your family a very relaxing and happy holiday. May God bless you and keep you safe.

With very best wishes,

Bonney Venning

Chair of Governors