

## **Orton CofE Primary School**

### **Governors' report to parents, staff and friends, July 2015**

This is the first time the governing body has reported on its year so this is very much a trial to see if it proves a useful addition to communications. The idea is to look back at the end of one school year and then to look forward early in September, catching new parents whose children have just started.

It will be brief and, we hope, not too full of jargon and you are welcome to respond with any questions or comments. Thank you.

#### **Summer 2014**

Last summer was dominated by the need to create a new classroom (and class) and to adapt the budget for the year to April 2015 to accommodate additional staffing and costs - the budget did not rise to reflect the increase in pupil numbers until April 2015. Julian Thorpe and Alison Bland worked particularly hard on the practical Cube side of things while Mrs Arnold and Mrs Dunning did a great job on the budgets and cost controls. Thanks also to all the staff who were so flexible about taking on more hours and creating the new Class 4 even during Mrs Carrick's maternity leave.

#### **Autumn 2014**

Chris Bland joined the governing body as a new Foundation Governor but the term was dominated by Anna Robinson's tragic death early in November. As well as all her other roles in her family and the Orton community, Anna had been Clerk to the Governing Body for several years and we were all stunned by her death. It's still odd to find paperwork and emails with Anna's handwriting - you can almost hear her voice and we know we're amongst many who miss her. Huge thanks go to Vicky Percival who stepped into the role and has been great at prioritising, organising and spurring us into action to reflect ever-changing guidelines and regulatory requirements.

Throughout the Autumn term, as well as working out the practicalities of the Cube and four classes, staff in school were busy implementing the new National Curriculum, adapting existing lessons and topics and developing new ones. Feedback from external advisors in June 2015 was really positive about what has been accomplished so far – thank you to all the staff and classroom support who have contributed to this.

Similarly, Levels as a measure of progress were, to all intents and purposes, abolished by central government in 2014 but schools were left with little indication of how best to replace them. The same is true of the Baseline Achievement measures for children entering Reception. Thanks go particularly to Mrs Arnold and to Mrs Woodmass for developing new approaches, talking to their peers in other schools to see what's happening there and creating functional tools such as the Progress Checkers that should meet the requirements of the coming years. We recognise that parents (like governors) may take a while to grasp the details of the new systems but, again, external feedback has been positive. The children also seem to like their Progress Checkers, understand their targets and be making the progress (or more) that we'd expect – which is what it's all about.

The governing body drafted and submitted a document to the consultation process around the changes in catchment areas created by the closure of Ravenstonedale School. We were

disappointed not to see at least part of this added to Orton's catchment area and thanks go to all former Ravenstonedale parents for their continued loyalty in spite of a lack of travel support.

### **Winter/Spring 2015**

Vicky really got into gear and, in the course of a term, we had drafted and submitted our new Instrument of Governance to the local authority and to the Diocese. We also updated a number of key Policies and Vicky worked with Mrs Green and Paul Cornthwaite to ensure that the required documents were available via the school website.

School managed admirably with both Mrs Green and Mrs Woodmass off sick during the Spring term but it was great to have them both back later in the school year.

The governors were closely involved in a number of tough discussions during the spring and we created two new documents, a Code of Practice for Governors and the Governors' written statement of behaviour principles, to clarify the key things we expect and the roles of everyone involved in behaviour in the school. The Behaviour Principles are now on the website along with the associated Whole School Behaviour Policy.

We were also aware of the need to survey parents' opinions on this and related aspects of the school and conducted the parents' survey at the end of March, reporting back early in the summer term and, we hope, acting on any criticisms and building on the strengths revealed by the survey.

### **Summer 2015**

A number of changes in the governing body (arising from two resignations and at least one completion of a four-year term of office) led to some shuffling of personnel. Rona Arkle moved from being a parent governor to become our local authority-appointed governor and, in an election held in April, Ian Simpson replaced Rona as our second parent governor (with Paul Cornthwaite). The county Governor Support Team were delighted when they realised that we had four parents willing to stand for election and keen to be involved – thank you for all that this says about your commitment to our school. Thanks also to Rona for her continued involvement – her skills and expertise on data analysis, health and safety and in other areas are invaluable.

Looking at the bigger national picture, our neighbouring school at Tebay became part of a Multi-Academy Trust or MAT earlier this year. We hosted a meeting of local CofE primary schools where Joyce Keetley (Chair of Governors at Warcop and a National Leader of Governance) and Michael Mill of Carlisle Diocese updated us on changes in the local authority, the CASL and LASL (see [www.cumbriaalliance.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaalliance.org.uk) for details) and the Diocese, including the church's own MAT for the county as a whole. It was good to build links with other rural schools facing some of the same uncertainties and challenges that face us as there is less and less resource available from Cumbria County Council.

So that more or less sums it up. Thank you for all your support and for everything that you all do in and around school. And have a great summer.

Sally Seed on behalf of the Governing Body