





# St John's Green Primary School

Learn to Live, Live to Learn

Headteacher Mr Simon Billings  
Deputy Headteacher Mrs Tina Bourne  
Assistant Headteacher Mrs Fiona Bullivant  
Assistant Headteacher Mr Dan Green

We   
Maths

We are all  
writers ...

We are growing  
our learning 

Telephone: 01206 762884 Email: [admin@st-johnsgreen.essex.sch.uk](mailto:admin@st-johnsgreen.essex.sch.uk) Website: <http://st-johns-green.eschools.co.uk>

## Chair of Governors Annual Report to Parents

January 2017

Dear Children and Parents,

Firstly, I would like to welcome you all back to school for the spring term. I hope you all had a happy and enjoyable Christmas break. I would like to extend a particularly warm welcome to all the children, and their families, who joined us for the first time last September, I hope they are enjoying their experiences at the school so far. I hope, like me, that you feel that St John's Green is an inclusive and friendly school, with the welfare, education and happiness of the children at the heart of everything we do.

I would like to introduce myself; my name is Nicola Roberts and I have been a parent governor for three years. I have two daughters at the school, and two sons, one of whom attended SJG and is now at senior school, and another who will start primary school in 2019. I was elected Chair of Governors in September 2016, after our previous long standing Chair, Alan Short, decided to step down at the end of the last academic year. To ensure the continuity of the work of the Governing Body, Alan stayed on as an Associate Governor last term, during my transition into the role, so that we could continue to benefit from his ten years of experience. Now that I feel I have become more familiar with the demands that the role entails, Alan has informed me that he will be stepping down completely from the Board of Governors this term. Having worked alongside Alan for the last three years, and served as his Vice-Chair, I and the rest of the Governing Body have benefitted greatly from having him as a mentor and we now hope to continue his work to help St John's Green to be the best school it can be for all our pupils.

### Highlights of last year

Exam results and academic achievement are not the only ways of assessing the success of a school. We want children to leave St John's Green understanding and following our core values: to be proud, care for themselves and each other, be inquisitive, persevere, be successful and try their best. However, SATs and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) assessments are one way of measuring how well a school is doing, and I am pleased and proud to say that the children at our school did really well in those last year. The number of children in our school who were assessed in Year six and Year two as reaching or exceeding national expectations was much higher than the national average, and in the EYFS 30% more children finished the year at a good level of development across all subject areas compared to the previous year, and again this is above the national average. Full results can be found on the School's website.

The governor role isn't just about seeking to ensure good SAT's results; we take an interest in every part of school life, and part of that is ensuring that the School has a broad and challenging curriculum in place, for all. As part of the wider curriculum, last year we saw the welcome return of the Life Bus. As part of the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) program, the Life Bus is very much enjoyed by all pupils in the school, and focuses on teaching children in an age appropriate way about healthy living. The youngest pupils in our school were again fortunate enough to take part in the Forest Schools programme, which we have now been running for seven years, meaning that every class has been fortunate enough to have had this outdoor learning experience. We also have one member of staff trained as a Forest School Leader and another member of staff being trained. Our aim is to begin to embed Forest Schools across different year groups. The School has introduced inter-house sports competitions, with children competing against each other every half term; our Year six and Year four children went on residential trips to Kingswood and Danbury respectively; some of our talented artists were short listed in a landscapes competition and displayed at the Art Exchange gallery, and others had art work displayed in town as part of the Olympic celebrations; our student council completed the UNICEF articles of human rights and shared them with the

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CO2 7HE

rest of the school. All key stage two pupils had a term of swimming and a term of athletics at the Garrison Track, and we also took part in various inter-school netball and football matches. Some of our gifted mathematicians took part in the National Maths Challenge and the St Helena Maths competition. I was also particularly proud to attend our first Children's University graduation ceremony.

## **School Expansion**

As I'm sure you are aware, St John's Green is a growing school. There are currently 450 pupils, and next year this will increase to 510. When the school reaches capacity there will be 630 pupils in total, across the two sites. Due to the school's continued growth in pupil numbers, it also needs to expand in other ways, including an extension to some of the buildings, by increasing staff numbers and the Senior Management Team and we will need more help from parents.

## **Staff and the Senior Management Team**

As you may have seen in the media, schools are coming under increasing financial pressures due to changes in the way that they are funded, and the contributions schools must make towards teacher's pensions, amongst other things. As an expanding school, we have been in the fortunate position of not having to lose any members of staff, but we have still had to make many strategic decisions about how best to allocate resources, and always when making these choices our priority has been to do what is best for the children in the school. One of the decisions we have taken, in light of the current size of the school, is to expand the Senior Management Team, which is currently five members and will expand to six in September 2017. We also believe in the importance of retaining and empowering the talent we have, so we have created a tier of middle leaders from amongst the teaching staff we have, who will each take responsibility for different aspects of the curriculum.

As you may know, our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), Dianne Bibby, retired in July 2016 and we have been actively trying to recruit an appropriate replacement. When we were unable to find a suitable candidate, Fiona Bullivant happily stepped into the role and she has been assisted one day a week by Dianne Bibby. Fiona has enjoyed her new responsibilities this year, and so we have decided that next year she will continue to oversee the SENCO role and another member of our existing staff will come out of class to assist her, thus ensuring that some of our most vulnerable children will continue to get the attention they need. Both will study towards their SENCO qualifications.

## **Building Developments**

The Abbey site requires an additional two classrooms to be built, and after discussions amongst the Senior Management Team and the Governing Body, and with the council and the architects, the final plans have now been agreed. The plans now fit the requirements which we believe will best serve the children in the years to come. Work is due to start in April, during the Easter holidays, and should be finished by Christmas 2017.

The Town site meanwhile, already has enough classrooms to accommodate the 270 pupils it will have when it reaches capacity in 2018/19; however, we do have plans for the site, which include setting up a new speech and language room, redecorating some of the shared areas, and kitting out the new classrooms with clevertouch boards and other technology to bring them up to the same specification as the rest of the school.

## **Our school, Our Community - Get Involved**

Recently the Senior Management Team sent out questionnaires asking about your skills and if you might be able to help the school in any way. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to respond and especially those who have offered to help. As the school expands we continue to need more help and the assistance parents give us is invaluable. We are lucky enough to have an active Parent/Teacher Association, who are continuously trying to raise money for the benefit of our children. The Governing Body greatly appreciates the contribution they make. They are always looking for new volunteers, and you can be as involved as much or as a little as you want. They have a coffee morning at Town Site every other week, so feel free to drop by, to get involved or just to meet other parents, see the newsletter for details. We also have a vacancy on our governing body for a new Parent Governor, so we will shortly be writing out to you to invite applications. Anyone is welcome to apply but the Governing Body would particularly like to encourage

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applicants with financial expertise, as that is an area we would really like to strengthen our skills. If there is more than one applicant the position will go to a parent ballot.

## **Funding**

As I mentioned earlier, schools are under increasing financial pressures, and so I wanted to draw your attention to a small success we at St John's Green have had. Council funding is based upon the number of children that attend a school, and as our pupil numbers increase year-on-year, so does the number of pupils we are funded for. However, funding is paid each tax year, rather than each academic year, and thus when our pupil numbers first started to increase it was calculated on the total number of children we would have the following September. However, last year the council made the decision to change the funding formula, and only fund us for the extra pupils once they actually started at the school. They are, of course, perfectly entitled to do this, but the problem was that they changed the formula without, in our view, reasonable warning, and we already had a three year-spending plan in place; the reduction would have therefore resulted in a significant deficit in our budget. In light of this, the Governing Body took the decision not to ratify the budget, and through liaisons between the school and the council we were able to secure additional funding over the next two years, to allow us to adjust to the new funding formula, and thus only minimally curtail our spending plans and not negatively impact the children.

## **Future Direction of the School**

We are continually striving to do the best for our children, and the staff work hard year on year to get even more children to reach their age related expectations. We are very lucky to have a dedicated teaching staff, who are all continuously striving towards best practice. Part of the philosophy of the school is that 'we are growing our learning' and this includes the Teachers, LSA's, Governors, and, in fact all members of staff, as well as the children. In order to be innovative and inspiring educators, the School believes that it is important to continue to learn and adapt ourselves.

This year we are excited to announce that we, along with five other schools in our consortium, have bought into the Visible Learning program. Visible Learning is a professional development program that explores how evidence can be used to create innovation in the learning environment. It provides a coherent framework to up-skill a whole school, by using the largest ever evidence based research involving millions of students, focusing upon what actually works best in schools to improve learning. The Senior Management Team, with the support of the Governors, believe that this will help our school continue to adapt to teach our children in ways that will allow them to reach their full potential.

Another way that St John's Green is ensuring that the school teaches to a high standard, consistent with the expectations in the National Curriculum, is by working more closely with other schools. We are in a triad with Kendall and Cherry Tree Primary Schools, and teachers from the schools get together for joint training sessions, to jointly moderate their marking, and to ensure comparative levels of assessment. The Governing Bodies are also starting to work together more closely and learn best practice from each other. Collaboration makes us stronger, and I hope you will see results in the coming years as our children continue to do well.

Alongside the above, the school has joined 'Earwig', which gives all parents online access to the different types of learning that their children are participating in within school. We also continue to have regular 'Open Morning' and 'Open School' sessions, where parents are able to come in and learn with their children.

## **Further Information**

More information about the topics in this letter, and further details of the activities of the Board of Governors, including the minutes of our meetings, can be viewed on the school's website. As ever, we welcome constructive comments. You can contact us by posting a note addressed to me at the reception area of either school site.

Best wishes,

Nicola Roberts  
Chair of Governors

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