



18 July 2017

Dear Parent,

As the school year ends, I would like to mention a few items to you.

Members of the Governing Body spent the day in school on Thursday 6th July. Our visit included discussions with Y6 and School Council on, amongst other items, what they like about the school, and what they would do to improve it further. Additionally, we visited the classrooms to see staff and pupils 'in action', reviewed the use of space and displays of children's work, had lunch with pupils, and spoke with staff of all levels. Our observations were shared and discussed at the Governing Body meeting that afternoon, and I will share with you the highlights:

- Pupils were focussed and engaged in lessons
- Behaviour was exemplary
- Children were very confident in talking to us, but this never tipped over into 'cockiness'
- Pupils value the efforts of their teachers, appreciate the opportunities for extra-curricular activities they receive, and mentioned that 'teachers make learning fun' [a quote from School Council].
- Y6 and School Council told us they feel happy and safe in school
- Displays around the school are of a very high standard
- Governors agreed with the school that the Reception area needs investment to create a better environment for early years learning – this will be a focus for next year
- Good progress has been made in addressing the concerns, expressed by pupils previously, around the quality and portion size of school dinners

Our observations chime with the view of our recent Ofsted which classified ours as a good and improving school. Additionally, every term the Senior Leadership Team and I meet with our Improvement Partner – an ex-Headteacher who challenges us to raise standards further, and tracks our progress in doing so. Her view accords with that of Ofsted and of governors. The very fact that we have this Improvement Partner shows the school's commitment to do still better – there is no complacency from staff or governors.

The school's recent SATs results show that attainment and pupil progress are very strong, and the School Development Plan will, I believe, strengthen the education of our children still further. It is pleasing that Ofsted are acknowledging that schools need to be more than exam factories to achieve a successful inspection outcome in future. This will play to the strengths of Ickleford Primary in areas such as sport, art and music and the non-core curriculum subjects.

Continued overleaf

The children, and your support of them, are, of course, critical in achieving all the above. However, we are hugely fortunate to have such a skilled and dedicated staff who are essential to the pupils' success. I witness at first-hand and on a frequent basis the commitment of the teaching staff towards your children which often includes working in their own time. It's great that the children appreciate this (see above), and I'm certain that most parents do too. I'm sorry to say, though, that this is not universal, and the magnificent work undertaken by our staff is not acknowledged by some. Unfortunately, several of our teachers have, at times, been treated with contempt or subjected to verbal assault either in person or on social media. Nobody deserves this – and sadly, from conversations with other Chairs of Governors, I know it's not unique to us. In addition to being unjust, this lack of respect makes recruitment and retention in the profession a real problem – with inevitable impact to children's education.

I wish our leavers – pupils and staff – all the best for their futures. Particular mention goes to Ann Lawton who retires as our school crossing patrol officer this week. I offer her thanks for many years of service which went far beyond that of being our 'Lollipop Lady'. My thanks also go to all our staff and governors for their fantastic contributions to the school and pupils. And I wish everyone a happy summer break.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Miles Maxwell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Miles Maxwell,
Chair of Governing Body, Ickleford Primary School