



17<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Dear Parents and Carers

### **Annual Report to Parents 2018/19**

I think it is fair to say that this has been a very busy year!

It was lovely to see the children start last September, all in the same purple uniform. It was heartening to see their enthusiasm for a playground without a fence – but with a lovely laurel hedge around Key Stage 1. This was undoubtedly a great boost as Governors started the task of working with our new Headteacher to move from being two separate establishments to one coherent school delivering on the promise of our Vision Values:

*“ We are committed to doing the very best that we can to make sure that every child succeeds. We have a shared responsibility to ensure that we are doing the very best for our children and aim to meet the individual needs of each child wherever possible”.*

During the Autumn term we received important reports from external experts in their field so that we can plan effectively for the future of our school. The reports covered teaching across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, our SEND provision, staffing structures and also the facilities that our children use.

Manda has discussed with us how to create a unified, Quality First, teaching style across the school. We agree - as I am sure you do - that this is crucial so that our children progress smoothly from year to year. Our Assistant Heads each lead across two school years. They plan together and then work with their teams to continue to spread best practice in teaching across the school. We have invested in staff training since September and have doubled the training budget for 2019/20.

We were aware that, while the amalgamation was still being discussed, both the Infant school and the Junior school had held off from some necessary investment in classroom IT and around the site. A governor with IT experience worked very closely with the school on a tender process to purchase new equipment which was installed during the Spring term. This is the first phase of an investment programme to modernise IT for teaching and learning.

We are an inclusive school but this year has been challenging. Staff have worked hard to bring together different SEND record-keeping systems, to establish where we are in recognising the needs of some of our young people and to secure necessary additional support. When planning for the next academic year Governors agreed with Manda that we should maintain the current strong team. We are very pleased that Lena, Karen and Sai will continue to champion children and families in the next academic year and develop our inclusive practice.

There will be some changes to the staffing structure from the Autumn term which will also help to develop teaching practice and SEND provision. During the Spring and Summer terms Manda, with

the support of the Governing body, has re thought how our teaching support staff are used. The role has changed significantly over the last 20 years and there has been much research into how teachers and support staff work together most effectively. Going forward, our Teaching & Learning Support Assistants have a new job description. They will be better paid to reflect the importance of their work. They will have time to plan with their teacher before the start of the day and review together at the end of the day. They will be able to join in staff training and other development opportunities. Staff have been fully consulted throughout the process, and recognise that the changes are being made to benefit pupils. Some will continue at Torridon next year. Other people have decided to take the opportunity to leave with a redundancy payment. Governors are very grateful for the support they have given to the Infant, Junior and Primary schools and we wish them the very best for the future.

There are frequent news items about the pressure on school budgets and Lewisham schools are not exempt. Manda, Joy (our finance manager) and I have worked closely with the local authority to set our first three year budget as a primary school. There is no denying that we will have to spend carefully, prioritise and make sure that all the services we buy in offer excellent value for money. However we have not had to compromise on our staffing structure and we can make a start on refreshing the site.

There has been so much going on that Governors have had less opportunity to get out to talk to parents. I know that there has been some concern that overall it has been more difficult to talk to the school Senior Leadership Team. They are out in the playground at the beginning and/or end of the day and are continually looking to improve coverage of our large site. One of our aims for the next academic year is to work more closely with our Parent Teacher Association and generally to improve contact with parents. Governors have started this work with recent Focus Groups on our Vision & Values.

Thank you all for the support that you give to the school. You and your children respond with generosity to the charity fundraising appeals and the dressing up days. You have supported the PTA fundraising to extend the hedging around the site. It was great to see families enjoying the Carols in the Playground in December. In April Diversity Day, organised by our brilliant School Council was very well supported by families bringing in different food for all to share. You come in to hear children read and Torridon Tots is organised largely by parents. Thank you to all of you who attended Carnival - in spite of the rain! The art work, costumes and the dances prepared by each year group and our Lighthouse pupils were colourful and energetic and more than made up for the lack of sun

I have met some parents at the Sharing Assemblies and at SEND Coffee mornings. I was also able to join part of a meeting with our local community police officer. This had been organised to share with you what Andy would be saying to older pupils about keeping themselves safe. This had been organised in response to knife crime in the area but you shared your concerns about a wider range of issues such as internet safety and the impact on black boys and young men of disproportionate stop and search. Governors are anxious to start these conversations again in the new school year.

As well as reviewing teaching and learning across the school Governors reviewed their own operation with the support of a consultant paid for by the Local Authority. She encouraged us to change our Committee Structure to ensure that there are Governors tasked with linking with children and with getting to know the aspirations and wishes of our families and the local community. We will do that from September.

We have some “Good-byes” to say at the end of the school year. We are very sad to say goodbye to Lynne Pope who has worked so hard for our children. Antje Ayala-Torales is standing down having been a governor for 14 years She was Chair of Resources at the Junior School and this year our very diligent link governor for safeguarding. Katie Belfield (Parent Governor) is resuming her teaching career, Jenny Wood is moving out of London and Nadine Bernard is stepping down as a Parent Governor but will stay as an Associate Member. Earlier in January Jo Honeybone made the difficult decision to step down as both the Chair of the Governing Body and as a governor. Jo worked immensely hard as Chair of the Infant Governing Body but a promotion at work involving more travel meant that something had to give! I must also mention Joy Ahwieh – not a member of the Governing Body but invaluable for her careful management of the school budget and advice on the affordability of the projects we consider. Joy is leaving Torrington to return to the law.

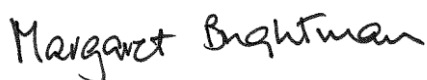
I have met our new parent governors, Michelle Weise Henry and Catrine Rogers and I am delighted at the new skills that they will bring to the Governing Body We have also been able to fill the vacancies left by Jo, Antje and Jenny. Our new colleagues, Ruth Hallesy, Helen Robinson-Povey & Maxine Whittaker have many talents including accountancy and community engagement.

A special Good bye and Good luck to all our Year 6 pupils - our very first Torrington Primary Year 6 - who move on this summer.

During the summer we will start a programme of modest site improvements. Our staff will come back to an improved, single, staffroom. This will considerably improve the informal opportunities for staff to discuss and develop our exciting curriculum developments and how they are delivered across the year groups. We will be replacing internal classroom doors, a first step in refreshing the classrooms. We will be making further small improvements to our IT systems including improving wifi coverage across the site – this small change will make a big difference to the delivery of the curriculum. Some of this work is supported through successful funding bids. We hope to increase our funding bids in the coming year, especially so that we can develop the school’s outdoor areas.

I hope this has given you a flavour of the Governing Body’s work over the year. I am sure that I have not covered everything. Next year will see us continue to develop our teaching force, improve the school facilities but above all value our children *to enable [them] to be emotionally intelligent, resilient and brave, and provide them with the academic foundation to enable them to be outstanding individuals in all aspects of their lives.*

Have a wonderful summer



Margaret Brightman  
Chair of Governors