

Report from the Chair of Governors

This year has seemed to rush by, with some changes and achievements and overall optimism that the future appears to hold much to be excited about.

From a governance perspective there have been some changes in personnel, but thankfully not in organisation or scope, which has allowed those transitions to happen smoothly. We have said farewell to our previous Chair of Governors, Martin Hibbs, who led by example, creating a very positive and collaborative atmosphere between the Governing board and the staff. I want to take this opportunity to thank him again, because of how freely he has given his time over many years, how this has benefited all the pupils, and how it has nurtured a good working environment. This has eased my transition into the role. We have also said farewell to Louise Blondell and will shortly welcome Fiona Froy in her stead. I thank everyone who has taken on these roles over the years for their time and commitment.

Des has completed his second year, and there are notable successes which we should reflect on; OFSTED's visit and subsequent very encouraging report, and more recently the fantastic SATs results. This feedback is core to understanding if the school is working well and they have a strong influence on pulling in extra pupils from marginal areas outside the core catchment which is so important. As has been the case for an extended time, the enthusiasm pupils show in particular for reading is evident in the SATs results and OFSTED feedback, and this is a reminder of the importance of the volunteers who give their time for, amongst other things, reading with the children which they so clearly benefit from. This is in addition to other things like nurturing the outdoor learning areas; all these aspects provide further outlets for the pupils to reinforce their learning and wellbeing.

Turning to the less formal achievements of the student body, I expect I join all who watched in congratulating those involved in the production 'Pirates of the Curry Bean' for their enthusiasm, effort and comic timing! With Webburn delivering the Christmas nativity so beautifully, I think the approach of having these two productions was successful.

A big part of the bread and butter business for the governing board is finance, and no-one will have survived the election without hearing about how tight money is in education. This impacts all schools, and Widecombe being small, pupil numbers are bound to rise and fall from year to year adding to the juggling act. Our size fell last year with a small reception intake and a bigger year 6 leaving, so we were fortunate in these circumstances to receive a very helpful and significant donation from a member of the extended school family which made the difference to allow us to preserve our staff structure for the coming year. This was particularly vital as our new reception intake this year will be very healthy in number, but that increase does not find its way into the school's funding until the following year. We remain hopeful that the pressure on politicians will result in a better funding settlement overall. In the meantime, we are especially glad for the committed and understanding community around the school who provide support in terms of time and money to deliver good staff to pupil ratios and do the extra things which make Widecombe special.

The Friends continue to provide wonderful support through their hard work which is worthy of praise. Their efforts demonstrate the school community is alive and well and the outcome is funding for things which all our kids benefit from. These tend to be the broader activities and resources which are key in producing the rounded children I think are the hallmark of Widecombe. Also, activities like breakfast butties before sports day act as a great catalyst for catching up with other families and reinforcing those links as well as raising vital funds.

We now bid farewell to our year 6 leavers who are an absolute credit to the staff and themselves and who have bright prospects for the coming years; I wish them well in their new endeavours.

I must end by paying tribute to the energy and dedication of all the staff, and that of the pupils and families, and I hope everyone has a well-deserved break in preparation for the new challenges next year.

Chris Elliott, Chair of Governors