

## Aspire Letter to parents

July 2017



Dear parents,

As we move towards the end of the summer term, it is the right time to reflect on the first year of the Aspire Learning Trust and the successes of our schools and the children and young people within them. The Trust was officially formed on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 and so much has taken place since then. We have a new Board of Directors who oversee the performance of the Trust and the three schools within it. These Directors are fully committed to enabling every child to fulfil their potential and you can read more about each of them and the Trust on the Aspire Learning Trust website:

[www.aspirelearningtrust-cambs.co.uk](http://www.aspirelearningtrust-cambs.co.uk)

Each school has also retained their Local Governing Body and we are fortunate to have such a dedicated group of local people who want to play a part in the education of the children in our schools. We have parents, local business people, senior leaders from other schools, plus the recently retired, all acting as Governors, so if you feel that you have something to add, please let me know and I am sure we can find a place for your talents. The Governors role has a focus on school improvement, with the overview of the financial and HR matters being taken at Board level.

All three schools are popular with parents with Park Lane Primary and Nursery School and Sir Harry Smith Community College oversubscribed again for the coming September. The new reception class at New Road is filling up fast and we are aiming for at least 28 to be in the class in September. Plans are underway to grow New Road School to meet the increasing demand in the town, with all classes going up to 30 within the next few years. We are also working with the LA to look at the possibilities of further expansion through a new build scheme to increase the capacity at the school. I will let you have more details when we get confirmation from the Local Authority.

We all recognise the important of having good teachers in the classroom and we are delighted that all three schools will be fully staffed for September 2017. We have so many excellent teachers working in our schools and we are very pleased that, apart from one retirement, the primary teachers who have served the schools and their children so well this year, will all be back with us in September. I also know that the recruitment for new staff at Sir Harry Smith Community College has gone extremely well and we are delighted with the quality of the staff joining us in September. Three very longer serving teachers will be retiring this summer and I want to wish all the best to Mr Jones, Mrs Ashworth and Mr Darters for their future retirement plans; they have made such an impact on all the students they have taught over the years.

All three schools have had external visits this year. Park Lane Primary and Nursery School have had two visits from Ofsted, with the first one recognising that although the school was improving, the standards were not good enough yet, therefore it required improvement. We were then delighted with the monitoring visit report from earlier this term, which concluded that the school was making rapid progress towards in securing the improvements needed for the school. The improvements in handwriting, presentation and the curriculum were really worth noting, as was the clear increase in expectation demanded by all at the school.

Both Park Lane and New Road schools were also visited by a representative from the Department for Education who was very positive about the work taking place within the schools and the work of the Trust in supporting this improvement. The same visitor also came to Sir Harry Smith Community

College and was also impressed by what she saw on her visit. She felt that the Trust had a made a good start, was listening to the needs of the two schools, that governance was aligned and that the leadership in each of the schools was strong.

According to the Ofsted schedule, New Road School will not get a full inspection until it is in its third year as a member of the new Trust but we are hoping to have some form of monitoring visit to ensure that we have an external Ofsted view that the school is making the appropriate progress. I can assure you that we are monitoring the progress of the school ourselves and also use a very well respected Local Authority external advisor to ensure that the targets set to get the school to Good are met.

Over the summer we are having building work done at both primary schools with the installation of a number of energy efficient systems, such as new lighting, solar panels at Park Lane, modern energy management systems and new hot water systems, to help save money and to also to bring the schools up to date in terms of their environment. Park Lane is also having a bit of a makeover, so I hope that you will be able to see the difference in the classrooms when the children return in September.

Over the last few weeks the year 6 pupils have completed their SATs and the year 11 and 6<sup>th</sup> form students have been taking their GCSE and A level exams. The atmosphere amongst the year 6 pupils was one of quiet confidence, where it was clear to see that all were very well prepared for the week of tests. At Sir Harry Smith Community College, the examinations have gone very well, with both staff and students working incredibly hard to ensure that the students have the best opportunity for success.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff in the three schools for all the work that they do every day, for the children and young people in their care. We do have some exceptional teachers and support staff who really do care very much for every child. Mr Litton's leadership of Park Lane and New Road has already been highlighted out by Ofsted and I would also like to thank him for all he has done for the schools this year. As I have moved into a new role this year, I have been delighted with the smooth handover to Miss White, the new Principal at the College, who I am sure will lead the College to further success over the coming years.

It has been a real privilege this year to be able to spend time in all three schools, and to see some wonderful examples of excellent teaching, whether it is with the reception children at the start of the school careers, or in the sixth form, with students ready to embark on the next stage of their lives. The atmosphere in all the schools exudes positivity and an insistence on everyone meeting the very highest of standards. The behaviour and the way the pupils and students treat each other and others is of the very highest standard.

Thank you very much for your support this year and I can assure you that the Trust will continue to strive to provide the very best education we can for your children.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Digby  
CEO  
Aspire Learning Trust.