

Dear Parent/Carer

As we begin a new year, I am writing to inform you of what has been taking place within our three schools over the last term.

In a year when we are expecting Ofsted visits to all three schools, the first one to be inspected was **New Road School** in December. We are delighted to inform you that the school has been moved out of the 'Special Measures' category, which it was placed in back in September 2015. We still have areas to work on and fully agree with the judgement that the school still requires improvement. The Early Years Provision and Personal Development, Safety and Welfare have been judged as 'Good' and the Inspector felt that the school is making good progress towards providing the very best education for all of the children who go there. The staff and Mr Litten were praised for their hard work and determination to keep improving and it was acknowledged that the Trust had provided good support in the four terms it has had responsibility for the school.

**The key strengths of the school according to Ofsted are:**

- *The Headteacher has managed the recent turbulence in staffing well and has put in place a strong leadership team supported effectively by high-quality staff development programmes.*
- *The new trust has taken decisive action to improve outcomes by strengthening governance, using high-quality support from an external adviser and sharing good practice between both primary schools in the trust.*
- *The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy learning, are well cared for and feel safe.*
- *All groups of pupils make good progress in the Early Years from their different starting points.*
- *The curriculum is a strength of the school. Thoughtful and stimulating activities have been introduced which are having a positive impact on the progress pupils make.*

We are still determined to continue to move the school forward quickly and have a clear plan on how to do so.

We have also been informed that the expansion plans for New Road School are moving ahead quickly with the appointment of Kier Construction as the main contractors for the development. The aim is to build a two-storey extension parallel to New Road and then refurbish the rest of the existing building. There will also be a new nursery building and enhanced play facilities. When we have more detailed plans, I will pass on further information to the New Road parents. I have worked with both Kier and the architects, RH Partnership, on the building programme at Sir Harry Smith Community College and I have full confidence in them to provide excellent new facilities for the pupils at New Road School. At the moment, the plan is to complete the design work and planning process in the next twelve months or so, with building work starting in April 2019. The aim will be to have all of the work completed for the start of September 2020.

**Sir Harry Smith Community College** are also awaiting their next Ofsted Inspection and in the meantime, received a Cambridgeshire Local Authority Review last term. This was extremely positive and the consultant agreed with the College's self-evaluation and was impressed by what he saw on the day.

- *“The Principal (recently appointed since the previous Ofsted inspection) has demonstrated unstinting commitment to school improvement and has been supported in doing so by an able senior leadership team. Staff are clear about, and share, the Principal’s vision to provide a high-quality education that meets students’ needs and aspirations. Staff are optimistic about the future and morale is high. Staff, students, parents and the trust work together effectively. School improvement plans are highly detailed and contain a range of useful strategies.”*
- *“Students enjoy school, behave well in lessons and get on well with each other. Sixth formers get involved across the school and enjoy working with younger students.”*

A new teacher has been appointed for Computing and ICT and two staff members started their maternity leave last term but we have high quality replacements to cover their lessons for their period of absence. The College held a very successful pantomime at the end of last term, alongside the traditional Christmas Concert in St Mary’s Church. The Year 11 students also organised their annual Children in Need charity day and raised over £1500, which is a wonderful effort. The students also helped to fill over 50 boxes of food for the Whittlesey Emergency Food Aid to distribute over the Christmas holidays to local families in need.

I was fortunate to attend the **Park Lane Primary and Nursery School** Christingle service in St Mary’s Church and the sight of all the pupils holding their oranges and candles when the lights went out was something to behold. Park Lane School also had a busy term with nativity plays and Christmas shows taking place alongside exciting day to day learning in the classrooms. The new curriculum introduced last year is certainly engaging both teachers and the pupils and the visits linked to each topic have opened pupils’ minds to wonderful new experiences. I was invited to go with Year 6 on the visit to Duxford as part of their topic on whether it is ever right to fight and the pupils and I had a great day.

We have also commissioned an external education consultant to support and challenge the school and she feels that the school is making good progress. The impact of effective leadership can be evidenced by:

- *Senior leaders have continued to address the key areas for improvement. Leaders are undertaking frequent monitoring and staff are responding well to feedback. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is continuing to improve and there is greater consistency.*
- *The behaviour of the pupils and their attitudes to learning are continuing to improve. Where teaching is the most effective, expectations of pupils are high and consistent, pupils are fully engaged in their learning and are taking a pride in their work.*
- *The continued improvements in the presentation of pupils’ work across the school. Pupils are now taking greater pride in their work.*
- *The confidence pupils have in being able to discuss their learning with adults.*
- *Consistency of curriculum coverage across the year groups – including learning outcomes and environments.*

We are looking forward to having another Ofsted visit soon so that we can show how far we have come since the last inspection.

Over the summer holidays, new lights and heating controls were fitted within the school and the new lights in particular have made a real difference. We have also thrown out much of the old and tatty

furniture and have brought in new up to date replacements. A programme of painting and decorating has also taken place in the school, alongside the refurbishment of the toilets in the playground.

As a former PE teacher, PE and sport have always been very important to me and I am delighted with the improvements that have taken place in all three schools so far this year. We have a new PE team at SHSCC who have reinvigorated both PE lessons and the extracurricular programme on offer to the students, which involves clubs and after school matches and tournaments against other schools, as well as trips to major sporting events. Mrs Bowden has taken responsibility for PE and Sport across the two primary schools and has made a real impact in a small space of time. It has been good to see the smartly turned out and very enthusiastic teams from both schools and also to see them being successful in local tournaments is great. I look forward to seeing more success in the future.

In terms of Aspire Learning Trust which oversees the three schools, we are looking to grow the numbers of non-executive Directors or Trustees. These are the people who ensure that the Trust is going in the direction that was agreed when it was set up and also hold me to account for the performance of the schools. We have local business men and women on the Board and have recently recruited a former local primary headteacher and a retired secondary headteacher to the role. We are looking for people with backgrounds in professions such as solicitors, financial managers, business executives or accountants who may be interested in working for the good of the children and young people of Whittlesey as Directors of the Trust. If this is of interest to you, please contact John King at [john.king@sirharrysmith.cambs.sch.uk](mailto:john.king@sirharrysmith.cambs.sch.uk)

2018 looks to be another exciting and very busy year for the education of the children and young people in our schools and I look forward to sharing our many successes in the future with you. In my role I am very lucky to be able to see the development of our youngest children, aged three, in nursery provision, all the way up to our Sixth Form students preparing now for their summer exams and either a place at university or the world of work. We have so many dedicated and extremely hardworking staff in our three schools, who will do everything they can to ensure the best education for your children and it is a privilege to work with them.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Digby', written in a cursive style.

Jonathan Digby

CEO  
Aspire Learning Trust