



Oaklands Infant School

Headteacher Mrs Hannah O'Neill BA QTS

Butler Road, Crowthorne, Berkshire RG45 6QZ

Telephone: 01344 774644

e-mail: admin@oaklands-inf.wokingham.sch.uk www.oaklandsinfants.org



14th December 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

It's that time of year again where we strive to find a balance between the joy of watching the children perform their Christmas production and the chaos we all feel in the run up to Christmas. For me, it is the utter despair of the morning clean-up courtesy of Elf on the Shelf.

It has once again been an incredibly busy and eventful year at Oaklands Infants School. From a governance perspective we have recruited a number of new members in 2022 which has led to an increase in both capacity and strategic expertise. I am very pleased with the current status of the Board and am confident their impact will be felt in the months to come.

Moving into 2023, you will receive an annual report from myself detailing Board activity, performance, and objectives. Please look out for this when we return to school in January.

When I wrote to you back in June to inform you that Hannah O'Neill would be leaving us at the end of the calendar year, I said that there would be a time to reflect on her legacy and character. That time is now.

Hannah leaves us next week to embark on a new venture away from Crowthorne with her family. What she leaves behind for all of us is a legacy I myself can only aspire to.

Hannah joined Oaklands as headteacher in 2017. With her she brought a new deputy head and a strong will to create positive impact and change. Hannah has worked tirelessly to this end and the school we all know, and love is a thriving testament to her success.

I became a parent governor when my daughter started at the school in 2018. In fact, it was Hannah that ultimately swayed our decision to send our children here over any other school in the area – her strength of character, caring nature, focus on providing the children with a modern, holistic experience and her natural authority were all clearly evident during our first parent tour of the school.

In that time as a governor, I have seen these qualities drive every decision she has made and it has been a true privilege to be able to support her, even in a small way. But I've also seen the toll the last few years have taken on our community and as it's leader Hannah has carried much of the burden on her own shoulders.

Many of you won't know this but it is not uncommon for Hannah to arrive at school whilst many of us are still sleeping. This isn't due to insomnia but simply because she insists on every single day being a positive experience for our pupils. And that takes planning, preparation and commitment found only in the best of people.

During the pandemic Hannah was at school every single day to ensure that children of key workers were cared for and as that list grew longer as lockdown continued, her presence never diminished even though she, like many of use, had a family to care for at home.

This unique dedication continued as restrictions eased and she has led her team in providing greater levels of care and education in response to the effects of prolonged absence and social isolation has had on our children.

Most recently, I was on site during what I can only describe as a demanding and intense Ofsted inspection. Hannah was remarkable over the course of those two days and was a pillar of strength to staff and governors alike.

This is made all the more incredible by the events of the day before the inspection.

For those of you unaware of the process, Ofsted telephones the school 24 hours in advance of an inspection to notify them of their impending visit. On this particular day Hannah and her husband were saying their final goodbyes to foster children that had been in their care since before the pandemic. On a personal level I am not able to fathom the emotional toll of this but to her unending credit Hannah stepped up with unparalleled professionalism and met the inspector with a welcoming smile at the start of the very next day without taking any time for herself.

If it sounds like I am only focusing on the positives in this letter it is because that is all I have. Hannah O'Neill is a fantastic human, a wonderful and commanding headteacher and my dear friend.

She will be missed, greatly, by many.

I was directly involved in appointing Ellen Weston as Interim Headteacher for the first part of 2023 and I couldn't have any greater confidence in the leadership she will bring to our community. I look forward to talking to you all about this as the year progresses.

But for now, please do take some time to wish Hannah good luck if you see her on the school gate or playground in the coming days. She has earned our thanks and she has earned the very best of luck as she looks ahead to the future.

Best Regards and a Merry Christmas on behalf of the governing body.

Mat Parker
Chair of Governors

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mat Parker', with a stylized, flowing script.