



# CHILTON FOLIAT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Church of England, Voluntary Aided  
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Headteacher:  
Mrs Denise Weston

17 October, 2016

Dear Parents, Guardians and Staff,

I am writing to you all on behalf of our Governing Body. Several times a year we produce an update to keep you abreast of some of the key areas of our work. Most importantly, our role is to ensure our school is a safe place to work and learn, and holding the school to account, confident that our pupils are progressing and attaining to the best of their abilities.

This term has flown by. We had many newcomers to the school in September, and hope everyone has settled happily into their new learning environment, including the delightful Mrs. Jepson who has joined our great teaching team. Typically a school with less than 90 pupils would not have four full-time classes, but as a Governing Body we strongly believe that investing in the best teachers is the key to ensuring our pupils get the most from their education. Naturally this approach puts pressure on other areas of our budget, so hence we are grateful to those who volunteer their time in so many ways. It truly makes a difference.

We hope to attract more pupils over time, enabling us to invest in technology and other resources for the future and an Open Morning will be held on Thursday. In addition to offering September 2017 reception places, we are also keen to attract Key Stage 2 pupils (Year 3 and up). Word of mouth is always the most powerful way to deliver the message, so please spread the word! It's worth noting that for the second year in a row we had 100% of parents say they would recommend our school!

## Academy Update

In the spring of this year we hosted several consultation sessions to discuss converting to an academy, and Dr Patrick Hazlewood, Chief Executive Officer of Excalibur Academies Trust provided further insight into the Excalibur vision and how it would benefit our pupils and staff. As a Governing Body we are delighted with the enthusiasm behind developing our relationship with Excalibur, and Patrick and his team remain fully supportive of our school joining their high-performing multi-academy trust (MAT). The Governing Body believes there will be significant benefits to joining, and the key areas are noted in the attachment to this letter.

Despite the proactive efforts of the Governing Body, the conversion process has stalled to our 'VA' (voluntary aided) status (a basic explanation also attached). The Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education is being stringent on the criteria of the proportion of church-nominated individuals on the Excalibur board before permitting us to have the documentation we need to enter the next phase of the academy conversion process. In the meantime, ironically, other church 'VC' (voluntary controlled) schools **have been, and continue to be** allowed to join the Excalibur without these conditions needing to be met. We are in discussions with other VA schools around the country, some converted, and some going through the same challenges we are. There are a lot of passionate people behind this campaign, and I very much hope we can gain the outcome we want for our school without the need for a national petition or political lobbying. Our pupils and staff deserve the same opportunities as those in VC schools – or any other school, for that matter. Discriminating against our VA status is wrong, and we hope to be able to inform you of positive progress soon.

### **School Facilities**

Following successful bids for government funds, we have seen many improvements to our building. These included a new surface to our roof, a new heating system, replacement of the boundary fence and new hedges, a refurbished and more secure entry to school, and a freshly decorated Fallow class to name a few! Thank you to everyone who played a part in this, and thank you all for your patience. These improvements, many of which are not visible, make the school warm, dry and safe – key to an amazing environment to work and learn!

The Friends have done an outstanding job of raising money for the school, and the children love the new tipi and play equipment (with huge thanks for their work on grants too!!) Further investment in ICT is the focus for the foreseeable future. Please make contact with me or Mrs. Weston, if you can support us with your expertise or ideas in this area!

### **More Money!!**

Hopefully that header caught your attention! Recent statistics have been shared that nationwide, that due to changes in how meals are distributed in schools, many pupils, whose schools would be eligible to access additional funding are not receiving the funding. Parents/guardians are not completing the documentation, and therefore approximately £1,300 per pupil is lost to schools, which could otherwise support their education. **Please complete the attached paperwork regardless of your personal circumstances and return to the office**, or contact Mrs Weston in confidence if you would like to discuss it further. If several pupils meet the criteria these funds would make a huge difference! (The documents will all be shredded once this confidential process is completed!)

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you all for your support and enthusiasm for our wonderful school. Have a terrific well-deserved break! Fully recharged batteries will be necessary, as next term will be even more hectic with Christmas around the corner!

Sincerely,

Samantha Wolcough  
Chair  
On Behalf of the Governing Body

## Governing Body's Parent Update Letter - More Information

### **Excalibur**

Excalibur was founded in 2012, and has grown steadily since then. It has an exceptional academic track record, because above all else, it is focused on delivering an outstanding education to each pupil across the Trust. There are currently seven schools within the Trust: 4 primary schools (Burbage Primary School, Easton Royal Academy, Oare CofE Primary School and Ogbourne CofE Primary School) and 3 secondary schools (St John's in Marlborough, Fairfield High School in Bristol and since October 1<sup>st</sup>, John O'Gaunt in Hungerford).

Excalibur's vision for education revolves around all aspects of a child's development – stretching them to achieve through a consistent education journey from the age of 4 to 18. It's philosophy is built around ensuring that each academy (school) maintains its unique character, and as a Church of England School, we can therefore continue to ensure that we honour the school's church heritage and teachings.

In addition to the academic aspects of Excalibur, it has a core team providing support services in areas such as HR, health & safety, special projects etc. This enables each academy school and their local Governing Body to put more focus on the education of its pupils, and less on the important but peripheral aspects of school management. Having met with this team, and seen evidence of their capabilities and experience, we feel this partnership will enhance many aspects of school life in a way that the Local Authority no longer can.

Do feel free to read more on Excalibur's website: [www.excalibur.org.uk](http://www.excalibur.org.uk) particularly the tab – 'Join us' then 'What we offer'.

### **Voluntary Aided (VA) Status**

It is worth noting that our VA status is due to the Education Act of 1944, when school managers of church schools had to make the decision to become either Voluntary Controlled (VC) or VA. This was driven by the state of disrepair of church schools, and the new school status would primarily impact how funds were secured for maintenance.

VA and VC schools have the same responsibilities as far as delivering Christian values and teaching to pupils, and both are equally accountable for that, and duly inspected by SIAMS to ensure that is the case. It is extraordinary that the decision school managers made 72 years ago is having a major impact on our children's opportunities today within an entirely different education landscape.