



SIDEMOOR FIRST SCHOOL AND NURSERY

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HEADTEACHER
Mrs Mari Jones

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Dear Parents and Carers,

I would like to take this opportunity, as we near the end of another busy term, of updating you on where the school is in relation to post Ofsted actions and its journey of improvement to ensure that the school is even better than before. As I reported at the Parent Meeting in November, the governing body, senior leaders and the staff have made a very positive impact on the progress of the school in relation to our post-Ofsted Action Plan and this momentum has continued through the Spring term. I was awaiting the outcome of a Local Authority Teaching and Learning review that was carried out last month to update you further, so I apologise if this letter appears to have been a long time in coming.

We have continued to maintain the pace of improvement with which we began and the Governors and I have been boosted by the overwhelmingly positive responses from the parent questionnaires. Staff and pupil well-being is one of my main considerations, whilst also acknowledging that your child only gets one chance at their primary education, and we need to ensure they all achieve their potential.

As you were made aware, the school is under an academisation order and, with this in mind, we need to be able to express the Sidemoor aims and ethos to academy trusts who are interested in sponsoring the school. Staff and Governors have been reviewing the Mission Statement and Aims of the school and we have agreed that the Sidemoor Seeds of Success that are displayed around school for the teachers and children to refer to need to have a higher profile so these will be promoted more actively and you will hear more about them next term. We are currently in the fortunate position of having two trusts who have expressed an interest. They have both had the opportunity to present to the Governors and Leadership Team and we are arranging to visit them early in the new term. We will then be able to express a preference, although it is ultimately the decision of the Regional Schools' Commissioner which trust we are to become a part of.

In the meantime we continue to work with Paul Gibbs, the mentor headteacher whose support we have commissioned, and also with Geraldine Tidy, the School Improvement Advisor (SIA) who provides support and challenge. It was Geraldine Tidy, with another SIA and Paul Gibbs who carried out the Teaching and Learning Review, the findings of which are outlined below:

Teaching and Learning Review

What is going well?

Teaching is improving. Where stronger teaching was observed, the following elements were present:

- ✓ Clear, purposeful learning environments linked to current learning
- ✓ Clarity of learning objectives and success criteria, regularly referenced during the lesson
- ✓ Pupils actively using the learning environment to support their own learning, for example in KS2 working walls are used effectively to model and scaffold pupils' learning
- ✓ Reinforcement of vocabulary
- ✓ Re-focusing of learning and use of purposeful strategies to move learning on
- ✓ Skilled questioning to check for misconceptions
- ✓ Effectively deployed Teaching Assistants, who demonstrated effective questioning skills to support small groups of children. This actively promoted independent thinking rather than over-reliance on the adult



- ✓ Pupils demonstrated positive learning behaviours, were keen to participate, and share their thinking
- ✓ The **SEND leader** has developed and implemented clear systems and structures within the school which have resulted in:
 - Increased teacher knowledge of Quality First Teaching strategies
 - Focussed and appropriate professional development and support for teaching assistants
 - Clear, detailed provision map which identifies individual pupil costings
 - More strategic planning of interventions and measuring of impact
 - More robust tracking of achievement data which provides a clear picture of the progress and attainment of pupils with additional learning needs

Governors demonstrated a clear understanding of the school's revised approach to supporting the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, and were able to talk confidently about the increasing impact of their parent/family engagement strategy.

Governors have demonstrated:

- ✓ Clarity of core purpose and depth of understanding around strategic leadership
- ✓ Clear strategy underpinned by vision and values; particularly those which underpin the quality and clarity of pupil achievement data
- ✓ Developing clear systems and structures
- ✓ More focused challenge of school leaders
- ✓ Targeted monitoring visits and increased knowledge

What needs to be further improved?

- Teachers to always use their prior knowledge of what pupils already know and can do to inform the level of challenge
- Ensure that tasks are open-ended
- Ensure that the classroom and resources provide a consistently high quality, language-rich learning environment
- Agree a consistent, systematic approach to delivering phonics which provides rigorously planned opportunities for pupils to practise blending, segmenting and application of these skills in reading/writing
- Leaders to ensure that work is well matched to the needs of pupils through drop-ins and forensic book scrutiny
- To ensure that the strong systems developed by the SEND leader impact on the practice in all classrooms
- Further develop moderation and assessment to ensure consistency in achievement data and work in the books

We will continue to work hard on these areas for improvement prior to a follow-up review in May and a monitoring visit by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) which we are awaiting. During this academic year we have had two SEND reviews, a Looked After Child review and a Pupil Premium review, all with external bodies, which have identified many strengths and given us further focus with Next Steps in our improvement journey.

Training has focused on the development of monitoring, coaching and feedback skills. Regular Pupil Progress Meetings ensure that any children who are at risk of falling behind are identified quickly and targeted to make progress, with staff being held to account for this. We also identify those children who we feel can be targeted to make accelerated progress and achieve even better results. We are carrying out more regular assessments in Reading, Maths and Phonics and using the outcomes to inform teaching and interventions as appropriate.

Parent Questionnaires

The following is a summary of responses received from the questionnaires handed out at the recent Parents' Evenings:

- The standard of teaching and provision has improved since September 2017

Agree	67%
Disagree	4%
Don't Know (mostly Reception parents)	29%

- My child enjoys school



Agree	97%
Disagree	3%
Don't Know	0%

- My child feels safe at school

Agree	98%
Disagree	1%
Don't Know	1%

- The school informs me of my child's progress

Agree	79%
Disagree	10%
Don't Know	11%

- School staff are approachable

Agree	93%
Disagree	2%
Don't Know	5%

There were many positive comments about the progress being made as parents said, "I believe you are all doing a great job, thank you", "Keep working on improving as you are" and "The teachers and assistants have excelled this year".

The governing body and I are unable to respond to all the comments individually, but saw some themes for improvement around homework and our communication which will be addressed next term. All your comments have been read and other suggestions of improvements that are within the school's control will be investigated with future questionnaires and parental feedback monitoring our success.

Staffing update

Having been a teacher at Sidemoor for five years, Mrs Rebecca Bush has made the decision to leave at the end of this term and will be missed as one of the Blue 1 teachers. During her time at Sidemoor she has been a valued member of both the Key Stage 1 and 2 teams. I have appointed Mrs Jessica Lacey as Mrs Bush's successor in Blue 1. Mrs Lacey has been teaching in Reception for the past term and has already become a committed member of the Sidemoor team.

I have also received a resignation from Mrs Pamela Barker as Foundation Stage Early Years Leader. Mrs Barker has been a teacher at Sidemoor for the past 10 years but, prior to this she was a TA in Early Years for a further 10 years so she has had a very long association with the school. She became Early Years Foundation Stage Leader in 2011 and has excelled in this post. Since having her own baby, Mrs Barker has found it increasingly difficult to balance the demands of a challenging job, on a part time basis, and family life. She has decided to retrain as a child-minder and I know that she will excel in this role.

The governing body and staff continue to be totally committed to working with you and the local authority to make the improvements that are required and, with your continued support, we believe that the school can make rapid progress.

Yours sincerely

Mari Jones
Headteacher

