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*Learning Together, Believing Together*

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Friday 18th March 2016

Dear Parents / Carers,

I am sure you have been aware from recent news reports that the future of education in England is a changing landscape. The recent news that two small Lewes schools will close by the end of next year with children being distributed to other local schools is further concerning.

Further messages coming from the government and the local authority are that every state school will be made an academy by 2022 and that all schools with less than 250 children will not be financially viable in three years.

Small schools are under increasing pressure. What the future holds is uncertain. It is already very difficult to deliver consistently high quality teaching in all rural communities. The constraints of small school budgets and the availability of high quality teachers through the system threaten the long term sustainability of outstanding rural schools across the country.

Sussex counties cover a very large 'rural' area with particularly high volumes of small schools compared to the national average. Sussex also has a high number of primary schools operating without a substantive Head Teacher, and in many cases without a Head Teacher at all. Consequently, small schools are being encouraged to work together to form 'federations' where resources can be used most effectively enabling them to be sustainable over the longer term.

Through some years of change and challenge, Barcombe C of E School has reached a stage where it is considered outstanding both by Ofsted and the Diocese.

Our challenge now is to build the foundations of the school to a position that ensures it will be impenetrable to the challenges that all small schools will face throughout the coming years.

It is with this strategic vision that the Governors and the senior leadership team have actively discussed a variety of options that would ensure a long term secure, stable leadership for the school with happy children, parents and teachers in a setting that ensures high quality learning, progress and attainment. The options are:

- Maintain independence and risk being directed by East Sussex County Council to work with other schools.
- With other church schools become a multi-academy trust led by the church.
- Become an academy.
- Federate / Collaborate with other local schools.

With this in mind, the governors and senior leadership team have agreed to enter into a collaboration agreement with The Federation of Hamsey and Plumpton Primary Schools for one academic year. The collaboration will be for the academic year 2016-17 and will commence from September 2016. The governors and leadership team will be communicating with parents and children throughout the year with the intention to either form a federation of the three schools, become an academy or revert back

to being an independent small village primary school. With the challenges outlined above as key factors in this decision, it would seem unlikely that continuing as we are is a viable option.

The governors, leadership and the whole school team are extremely positive about the prospect of working alongside colleagues from other local schools.

The collaboration will:

- Continue to ensure Barcombe pupils receive an outstanding education.
- Allow children to access a larger pool of high quality resources.
- Ensure stability and sustainability of high quality leadership.
- Ensure stability and sustainability of high quality teachers.
- Ensure that teachers feel less isolated with opportunities for planning, assessment and moderation support.
- Provide higher quality support and CPD to all staff due to larger budget share.
- Enable a sharing of talent from across local schools.
- Facilitate communities working separately and together creating diversity and opportunities for children to meet new friends.
- Increased support for children in transition to secondary schools.
- Improve financial stability.

### **What will be the noticeable changes?**

Mr James will be the Executive Head Teacher of the Federation / Collaboration and will be physically onsite regularly throughout the week. He will only ever be ten minutes away in case of an emergency or an immediate need.

Mrs Force will become the Head of School. She will have three days per week teaching role and two days per week management role.

Miss Stocker will become the Deputy Head of School. She will continue her current teaching role.

This opportunity for collaboration has become available to us only quite recently so there are of course plenty of questions and detailed plans to address for this change; however, we are very confident we will be ready by the end of this academic year for a successful transition to this model. I would be very happy to discuss the planned arrangements with you on the dates below, and will communicate with you in more detail over the summer term once we have finished more detailed planning to let you know how we aim to continue the great success of the school in partnership with Plumpton and Hamsey next year.

If you require further information regarding the arrangements I will be available to meet parents on:

**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March - 3.30pm (Sports hall)**

**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> April – 7pm (Sports hall)**

I look forward to meeting you and discussing any thoughts or concerns you may have.

Best Wishes



Mr S James  
Head Teacher

