



Essendon C of E (VC) Primary School
Caring and Learning Together

Headteacher's Annual Report to the Parish Council

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

Hebrews 10: 24-25

April 2018

Contextual Information

The school is a smaller-than-average sized rural Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) primary school. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium) is above average. Approximately a quarter of the pupils are from the travelling community. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils.

Results

The school continues to have excellent results at all Key Stages. In particular, we are very proud of the **progress** our pupils make from their relative starting points. Published data and percentages are almost meaningless in a very small school – one person being absent on the day of a test automatically reduces by 10% our apparent success when compared to the National benchmark. Similarly, if there is only one pupil with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in any given year then the school appears to have either 100% of pupils with SEN meeting the expected standard and exceeding National expectations or 0%, all depending on that one pupil's results on the day!

However, we know all our pupils as individuals and we can see how well they are doing. We know what they could do when they joined the school either in Early Years or (as many pupils at Essendon do) later on in their school career. We measure their progress from term to term and ensure that every single one of them is making excellent progress.

Ofsted 2017

We were delighted that our hard work and the key strengths of the school were recognised by Ofsted in 2017. It was great to have an Inspector who understood small schools well.

Here's just some of the positives Ofsted identified ...

"Pupils develop well both academically and socially."

"The quality of teaching throughout the school is at least good."

"I saw evidence of the most able pupils being stretched."

"Pupils are able to work independently."

"Leadership of mathematics is now particularly strong."

"The provision of mathematics throughout key stage 1 and 2 [is] a strength of the school."

"Pupils are very well behaved, both within the classroom and in the playground."

"In lessons, pupils are eager to learn."

"The split nature of each class (whereby two year groups study together) works very well."

"Pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum, including opportunities to learn about the outside world."

"Child protection concerns are taken seriously, appropriate action is taken when necessary."

"Pupils feel very safe at school."

"Pupils I spoke to stated categorically that bullying did not happen at Essendon."

"Children's skills are developed throughout the early years, ensuring they are ready for learning in Year 1."

Governors

The development of the School's governing body has been a particular focus this year and, we have successfully recruited four new active members to the team, each with differing and complementary skills. Lesley Reith, who has been Chair of Governors for six years has been able to pass the baton onto one of our newer Governors, Pete Hanna (who is also a parent of a pupil at the School) allowing Lesley to concentrate on those areas of school life which she is most passionate about and making for fantastic succession planning as she supports Pete in his new

role. The School owes Lesley a huge debt of thanks for all her hard work over the years and, in particular, aiding the successful transition between Headteachers.

We are very fortunate to have such a committed and hardworking Governing body. They are a constant source of support to the school staff and, in particular, the Headteacher.

Staff

The School is now in a very stable and settled position with excellent and experienced teachers across the whole school and a very strong leadership team. The Headteacher is now nearing the end of her second year at Essendon. The internal appointment of Antonia Wild to the position of Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for Inclusion has meant that the School is now far better placed to meet the difficult and complex needs of some of our most vulnerable pupils and really helps in living out our ethos of *Caring and Learning Together*, focusing on the whole pupil and their wellbeing and emotional needs, not just their academic progress. The Leadership Team is developing all the time, working closely with governors and enabling delegation and a distribution of jobs by the Headteacher. The result is a successful and sustainable way of working with great succession planning.

Teaching is good or outstanding in all classes and our staff are flexible and fantastic team players. We have several “job shares” which has worked hugely to our advantage this year – we have had more personnel to share the workload and inspire and help one another and we have also been able to cover any staff absence internally.

We also have a wonderful combination of support staff, some of whom have worked at Essendon for a very long time and have welcomed and supported new staff members who have joined the school this year, either to work on a one-to-one basis with pupils with special or additional needs or to support pupils in class. Again, their commitment to the school is exceptional in terms of the hours of their own time they give freely to support the school and their adaptability in covering absence or supporting their colleagues or the pupils whenever needed.

As school budgets continue to be slashed and funds available for our children dwindle, many schools are facing redundancies for staff. The leadership team and governors at Essendon are committed to fighting to retain all our staff as we know that it is their hard work and love that make it the wonderful place it is.

Premises

One of the School’s greatest assets, its premises, is also one of its greatest liabilities! The Grade II listing means that building works are never easy or cheap and the extensive grounds are difficult, expensive and time-consuming to keep up. However, both our extensive and spacious building and grounds are a wonderful resource for our pupils and this year we have undertaken several projects to further enhance their use.

We have tarmacked a track on the School field to facilitate pupils (and staff) running “the daily mile” each day.

Following the installation of the security gates last year, we are now working on transforming the woodland area to the front of the school into an outdoor learning resource. This is a massive project requiring significant funding and co-ordination. Our own Site Manager, Shaun Childs, the Essendon School Association, governing body and members of the local community are working together to raise funds and complete the work needed.

We have re-structured and redecorated our library and re-stocked it with both fiction and non-fiction books to help instill in our pupils a love of reading.

We have also taken on an exciting new venture to bring our school meals “in house” using, wherever possible locally produced, fresh high-quality ingredients. We have appointed a Catering Manager and Assistant Cook who served their first meals to the school this week. We look forward to inviting members of the local community to lunch very soon!

Essendon School Association

The school continues to be supported by a fantastic Parent-Teacher association (Essendon School Association). They are pivotal in providing financial support, enrichment opportunities and supporting the teaching team. We could not be more grateful for their hard work (without which some of the resources and activities we take for granted would not be possible).

They are already busily planning the **May Fayre which will take place on Sunday 20th May**. Please do come along and support us.

School Roll

Year	September 2014	September 2015	September 2016	September 2017
Nursery	7	9	5	5
Reception	15	11	11	13
Year 1	15	15	10	16
Year 2	14	15	10	14
Year 3	11	13	15	10
Year 4	8	11	14	12
Year 5	15	9	11	13
Year 6	13	14	10	12
TOTAL ROLL	98	97	86	95

The drop in pupil numbers just before the arrival of the new Headteacher reported on last year appears to have been arrested and we have been blessed with lots of new families joining the school in all year groups. However, the government and Church of England have made it clear that they consider very small schools to be unviable and there is significant financial pressure on small schools. We cannot therefore afford to be complacent. We know how important Essendon school is for the community it serves and that the education its pupils receive is second to none. The School continues to be grateful for any promotion and support that the Parish Council is able to lend. We are also working closely with our sister schools in neighbouring villages to explore ways to work cooperatively to the financial and educational benefit of all the schools.

Extra-curricular opportunities

As well as ensuring that we continue to offer a wide variety of extra-curricular clubs (art, sewing, football, singing, board games, tennis, yoga, lego, French, worship and breakfast club) this year, as planned, we have invested heavily in enriching and life-improving experiences for our pupils. Pupils have had a range of trips out and workshops at school.

Harefield Class at Shakespeare's Globe



Harefield Class at Paradise Wildlife Park



Police Safety Talk in Key Stage 2



Warrenwood Class at Tring Natural History Museum



Homewood Class at Watford Mosque



Community Cohesion

We have continued to build on the first steps taken last year to work more closely with, and involve ourselves more in, the life of the local community. We enjoyed our Sports Day on the Cricket Club field tremendously and it was wonderful to see so many local residents in attendance.

We repeated the very successful Christmas biscuit give away and invited all our neighbours to join our Christmas church service. It was lovely to meet one lady who'd never been into St Mary's before but felt welcomed by our invitation to join us.

We are working closely with a team from St Mary's church which we hope will provide ongoing cohesion and collaboration during their vacancy following Reverend Pauline Higham's departure at the end of April.

The Happy Apple Toddler Group which runs at school each Thursday morning (thanks to Emma-Jane Daniels, one of our parents, and her team of volunteers) continues to be very popular and a great resource for young parents who have fewer and fewer affordable local groups during the week.

Now we have our own kitchen staff and the most time consuming of our major projects are behind us, we look forward to being able to invite the local community into school more often. We are currently looking at inter-generational projects, coffee mornings and regular lunch opportunities.

70th Birthday Party

In December 2018, the School will be celebrating its 70th birthday. The whole school will be studying 1940's Britain and World War II as our topic in the run up to our birthday so that the pupils are well-informed and able to get the most out of the celebrations. We are fortunate to have The Bishop of St Alban's leading our act of collective worship and are hoping to have a member of the Cecil family to plant a commemorative tree. The school will be decorated for Christmas 1940's style and pupils and staff will all be in 1940's dress. We will be holding a party to which you will all be invited ...

Save the date

Friday 14th December, Essendon School's 70th Birthday Party

Next steps

Building on the successful work to articulate what people thought makes our school special, resulting in the strapline, **Caring and Learning Together** this year we have been discerning what is our vision for the future at Essendon.

We are only as successful as we are because we are all, pupils, staff, families, governors and friends, constantly striving to make our school better. We are conscious that we need to be continually challenging ourselves and each other and looking for ways to improve whether that's in the way we deal with other people, the way we teach our pupils, the financial savings we can make or anything else.

However, we also know that the last thing we want to do is to lose the loving and nurturing feel we have created. We need to be supportive and caring in the way we challenge others.

The School has therefore adopted the following bible verse which we feel summarises what we all want next for our school,

“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works”

Hebrews 10:24

We look forward to your help in making our vision a reality. We always enjoy showing people round the school and to hearing suggestions or ideas for how we could be doing things even better. Please do call the school office 01707 261 209 or email head@essendon.herts.sch.uk to arrange a meeting with Charlotte.

Thank you for everything you do for this village and our school.