



CRABTREE JUNIOR SCHOOL

CRABTREE LANE, HARPENDEN, AL5 5PU

HEADTEACHER

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Dear Parents and Carers

The significant upturn in the weather this week has suddenly brought the summer holidays into focus and made me realise the year-end is days, and not months, away. It has been another amazing year to observe as a parent and governor at Crabtree Juniors and I hope, like me, you are all looking forward to the break and the chance to recharge.

As always, we had a very strong turn-out at the school opening evening last week. What felt like a chance to casually wander round the classrooms and informally meet next year's teacher a few years' ago now increasingly looks like one of our bigger events of the school year. So a huge thank you to everyone involved for their hard work to make that happen. As a governor, I have the privilege of sitting in on the occasional lesson and know how much effort the staff put in to the everyday life of the school. I see that in the happy and engaged children in every class. However, even with that exposure, it is so impressive to walk round the school on the opening evening to see the breadth of pupil work showcased by the teachers in each classroom.

Academically, this has been an incredibly strong year for the school. As you will have seen from your reports and parent consultations through the year, we are now working to the government's new curriculum: a "life without levels" which also comes with raised national expectations across every year group on what skills pupils should have mastered. Crabtree's staff has worked exceptionally hard to deliver on this, adapting lessons to meet those higher expectations and putting in place an assessment framework to make sure pupils are on track. The school has managed this change expertly and our SATs results are right up there with the best in the country. It may be hard to make comparisons either locally or nationally for a few years while the new SATs bed in and schools respond at different speeds, so any league table of pupil performance is probably going to reflect as much a school's ability to rapidly manage change as its quality of teaching and learning. But hopefully this will give you confidence that your children's education is in safe hands.

You would not have got through the front door at the open evening without seeing that Crabtree Juniors is more than just about those academic achievements. The art display in the main hall was certainly worth pausing over. Hopefully those creations have pride of place on walls across Harpenden, though I hope you also had the opportunity to see all 250-plus together in the school hall. We were also treated to a performance by both the school orchestra and school choir and a big thank you goes out to Mr Bishop and his growing team of volunteers who have given the children a fantastic exposure to such high-quality music. There is only so much you can squeeze into one evening and, despite the lack of space and time for them to make their presence felt, I'd also like to thank the PE team for again extending our pupils' opportunities far beyond the academic.

So a big thank you to our army of staff and volunteers across the classrooms, playing fields, dining room and office who help the children to realise their full potential this year and every year. We have said goodbye to a number of members of staff who have moved on to new adventures this year: Tracy Clements, Laura



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Wright, Jacqui Eastlake and Sarah Kelly all made significant contributions to the school and will hopefully enjoy further success. Some of you will have had the opportunity to meet Leanne Williams last week, who will be joining us in Year 5 and as Assistant Head. The success of the school in responding to what feels like ever-changing government targets means we are often called on to support other schools to adapt their systems or to temporarily provide direction to a school during a head teacher vacancy. Next term, Mr Patrick and his team will be supporting a school in Shenley as they recruit a new head teacher, and so this depth of leadership is key in ensuring Crabtree continues to hit its own performance targets as we support others.

I would also like to thank the PA for all their hard work and support over the last year. The smooth running of the many events through the year is testament to the PA's hard work, the support of parents behind the scenes and on the day, and, it goes without saying, you all turning up and spending freely. Your willingness to give generously of your time and money is one of the strengths underpinning our school community and allows us to give the children that enriched curriculum across the arts, and fund IT equipment expenditure that can be hard to carve out of flat government budgets.

Over the second half of this school year, a number of parents have driven a working group to look at options for improving the outdoor space at Crabtree. Due to deteriorating drainage, the playing fields are churned up by the fireworks display and then usually stay off limits to pupils until the dry weather returns in the Spring. We know from parent feedback that this is a significant source of frustration, so have been looking at options for fixing the field drainage and also extending the playground. We will update you all next half term about our plans here, but in the meantime you will have hopefully seen a request in this week's newsletter for help in driving this work forward. Mr Patrick would love to hear from anyone with experience in fundraising, or PR and marketing, and any structural engineers or landscape architects to discuss how you can help us deliver on the plan to get the children outdoors and active for much more of the year.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of you who completed this year's parent survey. A presentation of the results is available on the governors section of the school website (link [here](#)). The feedback is always highly valued and helps identify areas for further development or where your experiences of what we are doing do not match up with what we were trying to achieve. Work over the last two years to focus on music and the arts, refresh expectations of pupil behaviour, and improve pupil reports and parent consultation evenings have all come from survey feedback. Over 95% of you are happy with the school, and feel your child is happy, safe and well looked after at Crabtree. Significantly more people strongly agreed with these statements than in previous years, which is obviously very pleasing to see. In addition to your kind words acknowledging the hard work of the teachers and staff, many comments pointed to the benefits the children obtain from the focus on music/arts, and broader opportunities in sports and gym. These will remain as strong a feature as ever next year.

And so I would like to close by wishing all those leaving Crabtree a wonderful onward journey. We wish the children in Elm and Elder much success and happiness in their new secondary schools next term and hope their experience at Crabtree has been an enjoyable and rewarding one. Our thanks go to our excellent and dedicated staff team and our wonderful pupils and parents and I wish you all a fantastic summer break.

Very best wishes



Phil Kendall