Dear Parents & Carers

Welcome to Parkfield School. As I write this introduction I am less than a month into my 16 month secondment to the school. Parkfield is something of an enigma. If you walked past it on the street, you wouldn’t give it a second glance. But hidden behind the worn out office block façade is something special, a little miracle, a hidden gem. If ever you needed proof that appearances can be deceptive, Parkfield is that proof. It is a generous place, full of life and learning. It is warm, caring and inclusive. The staff spend themselves everyday living up to our motto of ‘nurture, inspire and enable’. It is a special place.

However, it is important to own our journey. Those who have been with the school from the start have memories of scout huts, potential new sites and of the disappointments of not getting to our new site at Hurn on time. Yet the fact remains that the school continues to move forward, improving in all aspects.

At the time of writing this introduction, our part of the world is slowly moving from Spring to Summer. As each day passes, the days get lighter and warmer and nature responds once again by bursting into new life. This poem by Philip Larkin seems to capture so much about this moment and perhaps about the Parkfield journey.

The Trees

The trees are coming into leaf   
Like something almost being said;   
The recent buds relax and spread,   
Their greenness is a kind of grief.   
  
Is it that they are born again   
And we grow old? No, they die too,   
Their yearly trick of looking new   
Is written down in rings of grain.   
  
Yet still the unresting castles thresh   
In full grown thickness every May.   
Last year is dead, they seem to say,   
Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.

Philip Larkin

I love this poem by Philip Larkin, it beautifully and simply captures the essence of change in nature, ‘the trees are coming into leaf’. I particularly like the phrase that speaks to growth in the trees, ‘their yearly trick of looking new is written down in rings of grain’.

This made me think of Parkfield and the journey it has been on over recent years. For many involved right from the start it has been a very great privilege to be part of the growth process, laying down rings of grain for each year. Most of the time this has been an exciting adventure, developing a new school, working out different ways of working, weaving together primary and secondary experiences into a cohesive whole. But we recognise that the disappointment of not moving to our new site sooner has meant that the layer of grain laid down across the last year has been laced with anxiety and tears, a visceral reminder of the struggles that life sometimes brings.

My hope for Parkfield is that it continues to grow, that the coming years will enable us to lay down rings of grain that will bring joy. We recognise that the move to our new site in September is an important milestone and I want to give all members of our community an assurance that this is amongst my highest priorities for my time at Parkfield.

The poem finishes with a wonderful flourish

‘Last year is dead, they seem to say, begin afresh, afresh, afresh.’

Larkin is speaking to the universal truth that transformation is always possible. Last year is dead, it is gone. Tomorrow, next week, next year is a new country full of possibility and potential. As a school community made up of children, parents, teachers, support staff and governors, I want us to walk into the next part of the journey with hope, with Larkin’s mantra as our battle hymn: ‘begin afresh, afresh afresh.’