



# BRANSCOMBE C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL

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10th June 2011

Dear Parents

You will no doubt be aware that schools are being encouraged from central government, particularly since the publication of the recent white paper 'The Importance of Teaching' to seek to develop different models of school organisation. Schools now have a duty to work more collaboratively with one another for the good of the children. Devon Local Authority and Exeter Diocese promote this message and both are in constant communication with schools about the benefits to children and staff of working in partnership.

With this in mind Branscombe Governors have been exploring the different options available to schools. Following careful consideration Branscombe School Governing body drew up some core principles that they wished to follow when considering collaborative working. These were as follows:

- To keep Branscombe school's own identity and ethos and their own governing body
- Any partner school should also be a church school
- The partner school should be a small village school, similar to our own, so that any partnership would be equal and would not mean that schools would merge together.

Due to the resignation of another local headteacher, an opportunity has recently arisen that has prompted much discussion. We are now very excited to announce that, following the principles outlined above, Branscombe CE Primary School will be entering into a management partnership agreement with Broadhembury CE Primary School from September 2011.

A Management Partnership is a formal link between the two schools. Both schools will work closely together, sharing the leadership of one headteacher. It is important to note that a partnership is not an amalgamation or take over. Each school will keep its separate identity and ethos. The governing bodies will remain unchanged. This is purely an organisational change, planned to make the leadership of both schools more efficient.



As this decision was only made last night, the final details of the practical arrangements have not yet been finalised. However, the main aspects of the partnership will be that Mrs Gray will be headteacher of both schools on an equal basis. She will be available to parents of both schools throughout the week, whichever school she is at and staff will be able to contact her at any time. Mrs Gray intends to still teach KS2 children for one morning a week and for the rest of the time Class 2 will be taught by Mrs Crawford, giving continuity to the children.

The staff and governors see this as an exciting opportunity for the teaching staff and children alike. A feeling that was endorsed by the Bishop of Exeter in a letter he wrote to schools recently which said, when referring to collaborations, that they 'provide an enormous opportunity for sharing of skills and resources'.

We feel there are many benefits of this partnership. The two schools are very similar, both have two classes and there are a similar number of children on roll. The ethos of both schools is very similar and they are both in small villages with a strong commitment to community links. The schools are working on similar improvement areas and therefore teachers will be able to work together on professional development. The greater number of staff will encourage more sharing of best practice and inspirational ideas which should in turn vary teaching styles for the children and provide them with new learning experiences. We can also benefit from the use of each other's resources, Broadhembury has two sports fields so we are really looking forward to having joint sporting events and possibly entering a joint team for sporting competitions.

There are obviously financial gains for both schools when working in partnership and so this is good news for the security of both schools. Savings will be made not just through the sharing of a headteacher but also for things like joint procurement contracts and sharing of school trip costs. Staff professional development costs will also be shared and knowledge gained by staff can be cascaded across the partnership through joint in service training days. This will reduce the need for staff from each school to attend costly external training courses.

There will be more opportunity for our classes to meet up with their 'partner children' and they will therefore develop more social skills. We can join with each other's village communities to share such traditions as May Day, Wassailing etc. Towards the end of the summer term we hope to plan a partnership celebration day when all the children can meet and have fun together.

Throughout the summer term the governing bodies at both schools will be carefully planning to ensure a smooth transition. Further information will be given to you through the weekly newsletters.

When myself and Mrs Gray met with Broadhembury governors this week we stressed to them that our aim for any partnership would be a central belief that it must enhance the children's learning. Please be assured that both sets of staff and governors hold this belief very dear to them and we truly believe that this partnership will be a great opportunity for the future of both schools.

If you have any questions or concerns at all please do not hesitate to contact myself or Mrs Gray

Yours sincerely

Amanda Bentley

