

Dear Parents and Carers

## **A Letter From Our Local Cluster of Head Teachers**

### **Chorley and Whittle Alliance**

This year has seen unprecedented upheaval and change in primary schools. These have impacted negatively upon the children's learning outcomes. There are three key areas which the head teachers feel highly concerned about and wish to draw to your attention:

#### **Assessment**

- There is actually no need for SATs tests as teachers can assess children throughout the whole year. Yet the government insists on assessments based on one week.
- The expectations in the 2016 Y6 and Y2 SATs have been significantly higher than in previous years, causing many children to feel anxiety that they cannot achieve.
- The Y6 children were asked about grammatical terms which most adults do not know: fronted adverbials, the subjunctive tense, modal verbs.
- The SATs did not provide enough opportunities for lower ability children to gain marks to show that they had made progress.
- Children who have dyslexia or spelling difficulties may not reach the expected standard at Year 6 even if the content of their writing is good quality.
- In future years, the government intends that Y7 children will re-sit their SATs if they did not meet the 'expected standard'.
- Several mistakes were made by the testing agency which undermined the accuracy of the whole system.

#### **Curriculum**

- The expectations for each year group in the revised National Curriculum have risen significantly from the previous curriculum. This means that, by the end of the year, many children will be assessed as 'not meeting the expected standard'.
- Children (and parents) may feel disappointed by this even though pupils will still have made significant progress. The 'expected standard' expectations could make children feel that they have 'slipped back' when they have not.

## Academisation

Although a 'U turn' on academisation was recently declared, the Education Secretary Nicky Morgan stated that it is still the government's aim to make all school academies. In Lancashire, 94% of schools are good or outstanding. There is no evidence that academies raise standards. The Department for Education (DfE) has been asked continually for evidence but been unable to provide it. Parents should be aware that academisation is still on the agenda despite the government's attempts to reduce media coverage of it.

Within all of our schools, our staff have tried to manage the situation as positively as they can. However, we feel that it really needs highlighting further.

Let us think about the long-term effect that this current educational regime is having upon our children: raising expectations too high and leading our children to feel that they aren't doing well enough. Let us ensure that our children have challenge but enjoy their achievements and success which are realistic for their age.

We, the head teachers of the undersigned schools, have the very best interests of your children at heart. We feel that parents need to be aware of the negative impact that these changes are having upon schools, children and staff. It has seemed recently that the government is more willing to listen to parents' views than the teaching profession's.

You may wish to share your views with your head teacher so that we can collate them as a cluster. You may wish to do so anonymously. We intend to share the views with our local MP Lindsey Hoyle and with the DfE.

We would welcome your responses - please email your school's head teacher.

Yours sincerely

The head teachers from the Chorley and Whittle Alliance

