

Small schools like ours have an important place in the community. Small schools matter because they offer a more personalised learning experience and foster stronger relationships between children, teachers, and the community. This can positively impact a child's self-esteem and overall well-being which in turn leads to improved academic and social-emotional outcomes. But they are not without their challenges.

Finances are one of the biggest challenges we face as a small school. We have to look carefully at how we spend our budget to maximise every penny. We are creative about how we deliver educational impact with limited time and budget and the team has dedicated considerable time over the past six years looking at how we can develop and create additional teaching and break-out spaces and how we can ensure that the school looks fresh, vibrant, welcoming and is a place where children (and staff) are proud to spend their days.

Last year we created the Rainbow Room an additional small classroom for challenge and nurture groups, installed a Trim Trail on our field and installed more energy efficient heating in the main school block. This year we have installed an outdoor gym on the field and we have also just bought a further 30 new laptops for the classrooms and a new interactive whiteboard for the hall.

We have found that as a small school we are often a top choice for parents of children with additional needs. We welcome pupils of all abilities and work hard to ensure we can offer high level support without the additional adult support and budget of a larger primary school.

Following our transition from VC to VA we were successful in securing four separate bids with the Diocese for 90% of the funding for: a new fence along the Moors Path; to repair and insulate the hall roof; to completely re-do the groundworks outside our Reception Class and implement a fully integrated fire system. This significant and much needed funding will enable long term investment in our school and enables us to complete projects that we simply could not do on our own.

The new fence will, I know, not be a change welcomed by everyone. From an aesthetics and 'community feel' viewpoint we understand the difficulty of the change. However, currently we are not compliant with government guidelines which state that schools should have a 2-metre-high secure fence such as metal railings, vertical bar fencing, or welded mesh panels for the boundary of the school. In addition, the school's current perimeter fence presents a safeguarding risk to both our children and staff. Finally, the current school fence has been in a state of disrepair for a number of years with many of the slats broken or missing and many more are rotten. So, the need to replace it is evident and the responsibility to now make it compliant and safe is unquestionable. Receiving the funds for this is both timely and essential.

Less controversial is the new library project, which will be unique, eco-friendly, sustainable and a beautiful reading and working space for the school. It will also in turn enable us to create additional teaching space where our current 'library corridor' is. Next year we also hope to replace the fascia and soffits on our main teaching block.

Working in a small school is incredibly challenging, yet the rewards are immense for adults and children alike. For me, there is no other school I'd rather lead. We must be doing something right as this year we were oversubscribed for the third year in a row.

Helen France (Mrs)

Headteacher