

Partnership Press

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Reflections on my first year as Executive Headteacher...

It is hard to believe that my first year as Executive Headteacher has already flown by. It certainly does not seem a school year ago that I was writing about beginning my journey across our partnership and reflecting on the wisdom of James 1:19: ***“Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.”***

Alongside that, I adopted a personal mantra of ***“Big Eyes, Big Ears, Small Mouth.”*** Looking back now, I can honestly say that this year has deepened my understanding of what makes both of our schools so special. I have seen first-hand the extraordinary commitment, care and support that exists amongst staff, governors, parents, volunteers and the wider community. While every school strives to build a strong sense of community, I can say from my own experience that what we enjoy here is truly exceptional. I am incredibly grateful to everyone who contributes so much to ensuring that our children receive the very best education and opportunities possible.



One of the clearest indicators of this community spirit is the success of our parent support organisations – the PTA and, at Limpsfield, the LSA. The dedication of these teams in organising wonderful events for children and families is remarkable. Not only do these events bring our communities together, but they have also raised significant funds that have enabled us to further enhance the children’s learning experiences. A particular highlight has been the purchase of air conditioning units for every classroom. During some of the hottest periods of the year, these have helped us provide safer, cooler and more comfortable learning environments, allowing children to remain focused and engaged. Many parents have kindly thanked me for this improvement, but the credit does not belong to me. It belongs to all of you – the parents, staff, volunteers and supporters whose generosity, hard work and commitment through the PTA and LSA made it possible. Thank you for everything you do; together, you continue to make a real difference to the lives of our children!

So what next...

For me this image continues to capture the idea that a thriving community is built through connection, collaboration and shared purpose. The network of people, schools, organisations and places coming together reflects the way our schools are strengthened by the partnerships that surround them. As I continue to reflect on this image, I am reminded that education does not happen in isolation; it is enriched by the relationships we nurture with one another and with the many groups that support our children and families. Our churches and other places of worship, educational settings, community organisations and local partners each contribute unique gifts, perspectives and resources that help create a strong and caring network around every child. By working together, sharing expertise and supporting one another, we build communities where children can flourish academically, socially, spiritually and emotionally. It is this collective strength, rooted in mutual respect and a shared commitment to young people, that enables us to provide the very best opportunities and support for the children in our care.



As we look ahead to the new academic year, I hope we can become even more outward-looking, developing stronger connections with a wider range of organisations across our communities. By both offering our support and engaging more fully with the expertise, opportunities and provision that others can provide, we can deepen these partnerships for the benefit of all. In doing so, we will be better placed to serve the members of both our school communities, ensuring that children, families and staff are connected to the widest possible network of support, opportunity and care.

Across our partnership, we remain committed to further strengthening the bond between our two schools and ensuring that we continue to provide the very best outcomes for all children. At this time of year, school leaders and governors reflect on academic outcomes alongside a range of other key indicators of school success, using this information to shape both individual School Development Plans and our wider Partnership Plan. This process began well before Easter and will continue throughout the

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summer holidays and into the autumn term, when we will share more detailed information about the priorities and areas of focus for the new academic year.

As we look ahead to the new school year, we are excited to build on our strengths and further enrich the educational experiences we offer our pupils. A key priority will be **increasing opportunities for outdoor learning across the curriculum**, enabling children to develop their knowledge, skills and confidence through meaningful learning experiences beyond the classroom. We are also committed to **expanding the range of musical opportunities available to pupils** in every year group and are delighted to be working in partnership with Surrey Arts to support this development. Alongside these initiatives, we will continue to **strengthen attendance, behaviour and pupil engagement through relational and inclusive approaches** that ensure every child feels valued, supported and able to thrive. We look forward to working closely with families as we deliver these exciting developments and continue to provide the very best opportunities for all our children.

An important element of both the School Development Plans and the Partnership Plan will be the opportunity for parents, children and staff to contribute their views, helping to guide future initiatives and shape the learning experiences we provide. By working together and ensuring our plans reflect all aspects of provision across both schools, we can continue to strengthen our partnership and support every child to thrive in the year ahead.



Building a sense of Belonging and Community Looking Outward, Learning Together: *Exciting Opportunities for Global School Partnerships*

We are always looking for ways to broaden the experiences of our children, enrich learning and help our pupils understand their place within an increasingly connected world. That is why I was delighted to learn more about the UK's return to the Erasmus+ programme from 2027, creating exciting opportunities for schools to develop meaningful partnerships with schools and learners across Europe and beyond.

Whilst this is still some way from becoming a reality, it has prompted exciting conversations across our partnership about the possibility of developing international school links that could bring children, staff and communities together through shared learning, collaboration and cultural understanding.

This is a cause that is particularly close to my heart. During my time as a university student, I experienced first-hand the transformative power of learning alongside people from different countries and cultures. Later, as a teacher, I had the privilege of working with schools and learners from other parts of the world. Those experiences demonstrated something incredibly powerful: when young people connect with others whose lives may look very different from their own, they quickly discover shared hopes, interests and aspirations. Such connections build understanding, challenge stereotypes and help children grow into thoughtful, compassionate citizens.

The programme is designed not only to support travel and visits but also to encourage sustained collaboration between schools, allowing pupils and staff to learn together, share ideas and tackle common challenges. For our children, this could mean opportunities to work alongside pupils in other countries on projects linked to sustainability, the arts, local history, languages, culture or global citizenship. It could provide meaningful opportunities for children to see how others live, learn and celebrate their communities while recognising the things that unite us all.

These aspirations connect perfectly with the values that sit at the heart of both schools within our partnership:

At **Limpsfield Infant School**, our values of **Peace, Joy and Love** remind us of the importance of building understanding, showing kindness and celebrating the richness of our diverse world. International partnerships have the potential to foster peace through understanding, bring joy through shared experiences and demonstrate love through respect, empathy and genuine connection with others.

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At **St Mary's**, our vision of being **Confidently Me, Belonging Together and Challenged to Contribute** is equally reflected in this outward-facing approach. By engaging with children and communities from different cultures, our pupils can develop confidence in who they are whilst appreciating the uniqueness of others. They experience a genuine sense of belonging within a wider global community and are challenged to contribute positively to the world around them through collaboration, service and shared learning.

Importantly, these ambitions align strongly with the partnership's growing focus on looking outward and helping our children understand their role as active and responsible global citizens. Over the coming academic year, we are developing a structured programme of charitable engagement that will see our schools supporting and learning from a range of **local, national and international charities**. This approach is not simply about fundraising; it is about creating authentic opportunities for children to learn about different communities, understand global challenges and recognise the impact they can have through compassion, service and action.

Potential international school partnerships would complement this vision perfectly. They would enable our children to move beyond learning *about* other communities to learning *with* them. Through shared projects, conversations and collaborative experiences, pupils can develop a deeper appreciation of diversity whilst recognising the common values that connect us all.

As the Erasmus+ programme develops and funding opportunities become available, we will continue exploring how these possibilities might support our partnership vision. There is much planning to be done and many relationships to nurture before any formal applications can be considered. However, the prospect of connecting our children with learners in other parts of the world is an exciting one, and one that has the potential to enrich education for years to come.

At a time when the world can sometimes feel increasingly divided, helping our children develop understanding, curiosity and friendship across cultures has never been more important. Through **Peace, Joy and Love**, through being **Confidently Me, Belonging Together and Challenged to Contribute**, and through our commitment to local, national and international service, we look forward to exploring how global partnerships can help our children learn, grow and thrive together.



I would like to thank everyone across our school communities for the warm welcome and for sharing your views and perspectives on our two schools. It has been a real pleasure to meet so many children, families, staff, governors and members of the wider community, and I hope to create even more opportunities for these conversations in the new school year.

A special thank you goes to the **staff in both schools** for their incredible commitment to our children, and to our leadership teams who have worked tirelessly to balance the day-to-day running of the schools with the strategic development of our partnership. I am also extremely grateful to our **volunteer governors** for their professionalism and support behind the scenes. In particular, I would like to thank our two **Chairs of Governors, Caroline Young at Limsfield and Richard Birkhead at St Mary's**, who have provided invaluable support this year and worked alongside me on several significant projects to help ensure our schools and partnership continue to thrive.

Looking ahead to September, we will be giving renewed focus to how we support, celebrate and engage volunteers across our schools. Volunteers play a vital role in school life, whether helping children with their learning, supporting educational visits and swimming sessions, or contributing through our dedicated LSA and PTA teams. We are also keen to welcome new governors who can bring their skills, experience and perspectives from all walks of life to support the continued success of our schools. Whatever the role, every volunteer makes a valuable contribution, and we look forward to creating even more opportunities for people to get involved and strengthen our school communities.

Finally, I would like to thank those who are leaving our partnership community this year, whatever the reason. Whether you are moving on to a new role, a new school, a new home or an exciting new chapter in your life, we are grateful for the contribution you have made to our schools. You leave with our very best wishes and sincere thanks, and we hope that your next adventure brings you every success and happiness.

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Safeguarding over the Summer Holiday



Our school community plays a vital role as our eyes and ears in helping to keep children safe. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and by working together - **staff, parents, carers, families, neighbours and friends**—we can help identify concerns early and ensure that children receive the support they need.

During the summer holidays, this can be more challenging as the school is physically closed and staff do not have the same day-to-day contact with children and families. However, safeguarding remains a priority, and there are still ways for members of our school community to report concerns.

If you are worried about the safety or wellbeing of a child, please contact the **Surrey Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPA) on 0300 470 9100**. If you believe a child is at **immediate risk of harm or the situation is an emergency**, contact the Police straight away by **calling 999**. By remaining vigilant and sharing concerns promptly, we can continue to work together throughout the summer to help keep all children safe.

Attendance Policy

This year, our schools have been sharing more information with families about our Attendance Policy and the statutory expectation that all children attend school as regularly as possible. High levels of attendance are essential to ensuring that every child receives their full entitlement to education, achieves their potential, and develops the social, emotional and academic skills needed for future success. Every day in school matters, and even occasional absences can have a significant impact on a child's learning and wellbeing.



From September, we will be working even more closely with our colleagues in the **Surrey Inclusion Service** to promote excellent attendance and to ensure that all children are accessing the education to which they are entitled. We remain committed to supporting parents and carers to overcome any barriers to attendance, while also ensuring that families understand and adhere to the Government's statutory expectations and legal responsibilities regarding school attendance. By working together, we can help every child benefit from the opportunities that regular school attendance provides.

The full Attendance Policy, which has been ratified by both Governing Bodies and reviewed by the Surrey County Council Attendance Team, is being shared alongside this communication and is always available on both school websites.

Why Attendance Matters

- Every school day provides important learning, social development, and routine.
- Missing school, even occasionally, can affect progress and confidence.
- Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to make sure their child attends school regularly and punctually.
- Our shared aim is to help every child benefit from the full school experience.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Some absences are unavoidable, such as illness or medical appointments. These may be authorised if the school is informed appropriately. Absences that are not considered reasonable, such as holidays in term time, shopping trips, late mornings, or days off for birthdays, will be recorded as unauthorised. The Headteacher is the only person who can authorise an absence.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Government legislation states that Headteachers may only approve term-time leave in exceptional circumstances. These situations are very rare. Holidays are not considered exceptional and will be unauthorised.

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When leave is taken without authorisation, this may lead to a Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notices (Important Update from After the Easter Holiday)

From after the Easter break, the updated national regulations around Penalty Notices will be fully in place. These regulations apply to all schools and all families.

A Penalty Notice may be issued when:

- A child has 10 or more unauthorised sessions (5 school days) within the previous 10 school weeks
- A family takes unauthorised term-time leave (including holidays), totalling 10 sessions or more
- A child is persistently late after the register closes
- A child is found to be absent without good reason during a truancy patrol

National Penalty Notice Amounts (from August 2024)

- **£160 per parent per child if paid within 28 days**
- **Reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days** (only if no previous Penalty Notice has been issued for that child since 19 August 2024)

If a parent has already received a Penalty Notice for the same child since 19 August 2024, the charge will be **£160 with no reduced rate**.

If two Penalty Notices have already been issued for the child, the Local Authority is required to consider prosecution instead of issuing a third notice.

How we will work with you...

Our approach is always supportive. We monitor attendance closely and intervene early to help families overcome any barriers to regular attendance. This may include:

- Conversations with your child's class teacher
- Meetings with school leaders
- Support with routines, wellbeing, or anxiety
- Partnership work with the Local Authority when needed
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Families will always be kept fully informed if attendance becomes a concern.



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Dates for 2026 / 2027 Academic Year



Key Dates for next academic year (2026-2027):

Autumn Term (2026):	
Tuesday 1 st September 2026	INSET Day – No children in school
Wednesday 2 nd September.	All Children in School (<i>Reception Children start dates TBC</i>)
Friday 16 th October	Last day of Autumn 1 (2-week half term)
Monday 2 nd November	First day of Autumn 2 – all children back to school
Friday 18 th December	Last Day of Autumn 2 / Break Up for Christmas
Spring Term (2027):	
Monday 4 th January	INSET Day – No children in school
Tuesday 5 th January	First day of Spring Term – all children back to school
Friday 12 th February	Last day of Spring 1 (1-week half term)
Monday 22 nd February	First day of Spring 2 – all children back to school
Thursday 25 th March 2027	Last Day of Spring 2 / Break Up for Easter
Summer Term (2027):	
Monday 12 th April	First day of Summer Term – all children back to school
Friday 28 th May	Last day of Summer 1 (1-week half term)
Monday 7 th June	First day of Summer 2 – all children back to school
Friday 23 rd July	Last Day of Summer 2 / Break Up for Christmas

Important Notice:

Surrey County Council has confirmed that, **from 2027, the Autumn Term half term holiday will return to a one-week break.** Please note that for the **2026 Autumn Term arrangements will remain unchanged** and there will still be a two-week half term as previously planned. As a voluntary aided school, we are obliged to follow the term dates set by Surrey, and will therefore adopt this change from 2027 onward.