



October 2020

Dear Interested Parent

Letter from the Headteacher: A few words about Swaythling Primary School

These are extraordinary times. Most areas of life are very different to the way we knew them a year ago. Some things are unchanged- and one of those is the importance of choosing the right school for your child.

We are incredibly proud of our school, and would love to show you around, let you see the excitement the children have in their learning, the joy they experience making friends and playing outside and show you us our fabulous school building. We can't.

But you still need to make this incredibly important decision about which school is right for your child.

However, a school is not the building, it is the pupils and teachers who come here every day, share certain values, and have a shared excitement about learning, and in this regard at least, I hope I can give you an idea of what a special place Swaythling Primary School is. Some important things to say:

1. If astronomically high SATS results are the only thing that matters to you, this school is probably not for you. We are incredibly ambitious for all of our children, and our results are good, but not at the expense of a proper, broad, rich and engaging primary curriculum. As well as great teaching in English and Maths, our children have equally wonderful teaching in Music and French, experience live theatre, take part in plays (even at Christmas in Year 6), enjoy cultural events and learn to get along with people from all walks of life. There are no SATS or league tables in Music, French, or PE (thank goodness), so people generally don't realise what incredible teaching our children get.
2. We are a small school- one class of 30 pupils per year group- so only 210 children in the whole school. However, the building dates back to 1910, when class sizes were 60. This means that our rooms are spacious, airy and well-ventilated- most have doors leading out onto the front lawn. The floor to ceiling height is over 4 metres. The corridor is 3.5 metres wide. The Reception classroom is enormous (it was previously two classrooms that have been knocked into one. We still have a Library. Our playground is massive. We have more space for the children to play than many schools with twice as many children. The same is true of the Hall. If I could show you around, there is a better than 50:50 chance that you would tell me that it reminds you of the school you went to.
3. Being a small school means that we know our children and families in a way that just isn't possible in a larger school. This is why we describe ourselves as a village school, even though we are in a big city. When problems do occur, we can sort them out really quickly, because we have the relationships that make it possible. We have a very active



parents' association (FOSS- Friends of Swaythling School), who do a brilliant job running summer fetes, Christmas fayres, paying for theatre groups etc. They will also make you a cup of tea at parents' evening.

4. As already established- we can't show you around. When we could, the comment that most people make is about how calm it is. That's true. OFSTED noted when they visited in March this year (I know! I couldn't believe it either.) *"Pupils' attitudes to learning are strong because teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The calm and purposeful atmosphere in classrooms allows pupils to work without interruption."* However, we are also a very inclusive school, and like all schools we have some children with real difficulties and sometimes have a bad day. Occasionally they shout rude words, crawl under the table or walk out of the classroom. We deal with them exceptionally well.
5. You know your child better than anyone. This school won't be the right one for everyone. I have two boys, and they both went to a large school, and both did fine. One would probably have done fine wherever he went. The other one also did just fine, but I often think he might have absolutely thrived in the small, friendly, nurturing environment that you can offer in small village school like ours.

It's a real shame that I can't show you around the school myself. I'm incredibly proud of it, the people who work here, and the children who learn here. Give me a call- I'd love the opportunity to tell you more and answer any questions that you might have.

Best regards

John Draper, Headteacher