

A word from the minister about Nursery Schools...

“The Government believes strongly in the importance and potential of the early years, and I am committed to working with the sector to move forward. I recognise the important role that maintained nursery schools play in the early year’s system. I very much look forward to working closely with the sector, and I am confident that we can address our shared interests and find the best way forward for maintained nursery schools and all those involved.”

**Written
Statement from
Robert Goodwill
MP, Minister of
State for Children
and Families, to
the APPG on
Nursery Schools &
Nursery Classes
October 2017**



“Most great learning happens in groups. Collaboration is the stuff of growth.”

Sir Ken Robinson

In June 2017 Governors at Abbey Green, Strong Close and Midland Road Nursery Schools entered into a collaboration. The vision for our collaboration is to:

- learn and build from the past;
- face the challenges of the future;
- secure opportunities for the future;
- aim for all 3 nursery schools to be outstanding, so families choose to bring their families to the nursery schools;
- work together on a long term strategy for sustainability and development.

This partnership is partly in response to the uncertainty about the future of funding for Nursery Schools as a result of the National Review of Funding in the Early Years. However partnership working across schools also brings opportunities to share practice and provide support and guidance where needed.

This issue

A Time of Change- Goodbyes and Welcomes

In September 2017 a number of interim arrangements were put into place to support Strong Close Nursery School due to the retirement of the senior leadership team and I became acting Executive Headteacher across Strong Close and Midland Road Nursery School’s.

This term will see the retirement of the Head and Deputy Headteachers at Abbey Green Nursery School and I will be Acting Executive Headteacher of Abbey Green also from September 2018. Over the last term we have been successful in making a number of leadership appointments at each school – and there is more information about this later in this newsletter. Both myself and the Governors at each school are excited about the strong partnership that is now emerging.

It is hoped that the collaboration will continue to flourish and all three schools will both benefit and make a unique contribution to the collaboration. I am hoping that this newsletter will be a good way to keep everyone informed about developments across the Collaboration

The last term has been a busy time for all 3 Nursery Schools as we make arrangements for the school year ahead. As we await the outcome of National Review of funding for Nursery Schools we have made a number of acting arrangements across the collaboration.

Abbey Green Nursery School

This year will see the retirement of Margot Dixon who has been Headteacher for 14 Years, and Ruth Trattles who has been Deputy Headteacher for 12 years. Both Margot and Ruth will be missed by both staff and families at Abbey Green but they have been working hard to ensure a smooth transition to the new senior leadership team. We are delighted to confirm the appointment of Ginny Robinson as the new Acting Head of School. Ginny is currently Assistant Headteacher at Strong Close Nursery School and currently works with children with Special Educational Needs there. The Local Authority has recently designated Abbey Green as an Early Years Hub for children with Special Need and Disabilities (SEND) and therefore we are delighted that Ginny, with her expertise and experience in this area has been appointed to this new role. Ginny and myself have already met with staff individually and are really excited at supporting Abbey Green in the changes ahead. We are excited to have made 2 other leadership appointments with Stacy Godfrey as Assistant Headteacher and Hannah Kemp as SENCO both of whom attended a recent training event for the Abbey Green staff on working with children with SEND.

Midland Road Nursery School

Midland Road have had several changes in the last year. We have been lucky enough to have had Marie Thomas an experienced Nursery School Headteacher working part time to cover myself as I worked with Strong Close Nursery School. From September Saiqa Azam will be acting Head of School - Saiqa has been Deputy at Midland Road for 5 years and so we know that the school will be in safe hands as my role continues to change. Sara Crowther, Resources Manager, has worked hard in the last year to support myself at Strong Close and her role will expand to include Abbey Green. Personally I would like to say a big thank you to everyone at Midland Road who have continued to work hard and support each other through these changes.

Strong Close Nursery School

It has been a privilege to get to know Strong Close and work alongside a team of such hard working and knowledgeable practitioners and I am pleased to confirm that Helen Jones, Acting Head of School will continue in her role. We have been busy making new leadership and teaching appointments at Strong Close too and are pleased to announce we have appointed Nicola Wood as Assistant Headteacher and Joanna Hanson as Acting SENCO. Despite all the changes and challenges of last year the school had a successful Ofsted inspection, the report stated;

“We observed strong teaching throughout the day. Wherever we looked, children were engaged in their learning”

For me this illustrates all that we strive for every day in our nursery schools, and I know I speak on behalf of governors as well staff when I say it is this that we seek to maintain and develop across the collaboration at all times.

Goodbye and Thank you to Children’s Centre Clusters

There is one group of people I need to pay particular thanks to in this our first newsletter but unfortunately it will be the last opportunity that I have. Many of you will know that the Local Authority are making changes to the management of Childrens Centres and as from October 2018 Lister Park and Airedale and Wharfedale Childrens Centre Clusters will no longer be managed by Midland Road and Strong Close Nursery School’s, but will come under the Local Authority. Over the next few months there will be many redundancies as the Local Authority seek to make financial savings as a result of central government cuts. Whatever the future holds for Childrens Centre staff all that they have achieved cannot be undone and their work to give children the very best start in life will have an impact for years to come.

Sharon Hogan, National Leader of Education

Acting Executive Headteacher

Aire Valley Nursery Schools Collaboration