



Our Ref:

Your Ref:

28th April 2011.

Dear Colleague,

Director's Letter April 2011

A warm welcome back to the Summer term and I trust that despite the numerous Bank Holiday's and Royal Wedding, that the start of term has gone smoothly for you and your school. Firstly, I would like to thank those of you who have been kind enough to welcome me to the Diocese as new Diocesan Director and who have given up your time to meet with me and allow me to visit your schools.

As a former Headteacher, it is a great privilege to be able to visit so many excellent Church schools, meet such committed and talented staff and see first hand the many good things that you are doing with the children and young people in your care. I look forward to visiting more schools and meeting you in person in the term ahead.

Without doubt we are in at the beginning of a new period of educational reform which can feel uncertain and very challenging. The introduction of academies, free schools, teaching schools and the other changes outlined in the new White Paper suggest that we are certainly heading into a period of change within a wider context of challenging financial budgets and reduced funding.

The Education team recognise the need for stability for our Church schools at this time and we are currently working on the introduction of a new way of working with you through a Diocesan wide collaborative partnership which we will launch this term which will be known as the 'Rochester Diocesan Family of Church Schools' (RDFS).

Membership of this partnership will be open to all of our Church schools and academies regardless of size, status or Local Authority. The partnership will be represented by a *Diocesan Schools Forum* with members from VA and VC schools, clusters, partnerships, federations and academy trusts who will work with the Diocesan Board of Education to provide a close network of support to ensure that the needs of all our Church schools are met.

 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

 Diocese of
Rochester

Board of Education

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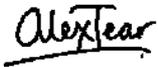
In addition we hope that the partnership will also help to protect our more vulnerable schools, enhance the sense of belonging to the wider Church family and most importantly, help preserve and maintain the Christian distinctiveness and ethos of all our Church schools. I will write to you again later in the summer term with more details.

Many of you will be aware of the Bishop of Oxford's recent remarks about Church school admissions. I have written to all Chairs of Governors and Church schools to re-assure colleagues that the authority for admissions for Voluntary Aided schools remains with the Governing Body. See my separate letter for more details

We now have over 40 schools who have subscribed to the new Diocesan Service Level Agreement for 2011. We are really encouraged by such a positive response which will enable us to provide the services to you that you need in the future. Schools can enter the new SLA at any point in the academic year and it is not too late to return your reply slip or register online. Visit www.rochester-board-of-education.co.uk/schools/sla-access-zone for more details.

Finally, we will be saying farewell to Jan Thompson, Assistant Director for Schools at the end of this term as she retires in July. I know that you will want to join me in thanking Jan for her significant contribution to the work of the Diocese and in Church schools through her support for RE and SIAS inspection and many other areas. We will miss her but wish her well.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Alex Tear
Director of Education