**Dennington CEVCP School - Annual Report to the Parish Council May 2016**

2015 - 2016 has been another tremendously busy year for the school.

The number of pupils is just short of 50 - in recent years the number had gone down to 33 so this is fantastic. Although we have picked up some pupils from Peasenhall and Middleton schools, families coming to look round the school have come from further afield.

A toddler group continues to run every Friday in the school hall – this is very well attended.

We have also run a pop up nursery in collaboration with Badingham Playgroup. This has been highly successful and has attracted families who wouldn’t necessarily have had Dennington in their sights as a primary school. Unfortunately, the revised funding structure for Early Years settings has made it difficult for the Playgroup to maintain the required staffing needed to continue the initiative but we hope that this can be resolved to our mutual benefit.

As always, the pupils continue to take part in events across the county – here are some of them:

TAG rugby at TMHS, High Five's Netball at Fram College, rounders tournament at Debenham, athletics at TMHS, cross country at Fram College, Young Art East Anglia, Potato competition at Trinity Park, Radio 2 500 Words competition, Suffolk Farming School of the Year.

At the Tag Rugby tournament at Thomas Mills High School, one of the competition organisers commented that small schools were starting to outrank some of the bigger schools. Dennington came away with the Bronze medal and won Gold at the High 5’s Netball tournament at Framlingham College. Well done!

It should also be noted that Dennington always enters the Young Art East Anglia competition and that every year at least 10% of our pupils get selected to have their artwork shown in the Peter Pears Gallery in Aldeburgh – this is a fantastic achievement for such a small school.

Staff and volunteers continue to run a number of clubs including breakfast and after school activities.

Children have enjoyed learning opportunities beyond the classroom including the following:

visits to Snape Maltings, the Tower of London, West Stow Anglo Saxon Village and a talk given by the East Anglian Guide Dog Trust.

We maintain a close contact with the church and have regular worship there.

Some of the older pupils opened a French cafe one morning for their parents which was enormous fun. The school has recently been awarded the Bronze Linguamarque by SCC for their work in teaching French.

And if you ever need to know anything about mummification, then talk to some of the younger children who will explain exactly what you need to do.....................they dressed up as ancient Egyptians and spent a very gory morning learning all there was to know!

The playground was re-surfaced and has been re-marked. It looks fantastic and has made such a difference.

You will have seen that the hedge at the front of the school has been removed (thanks to Mr and Mrs Rous for organising this). This was due to visibility issues and valid concerns from some local residents that the hedge often looked scruffy and excessive growth made it difficult to access the pavement. A new fence will be erected shortly.

The Friends of Dennington School (FODS) continue to provide enormous support by raising money which goes towards such things as play equipment, small building projects, costs of school trips. They will be running a stall at the fete at Badingham White Horse on 18th June

so please come along and support them.

**FEDERATION**

The Federation between Dennington and Charsfield is working extremely well. Staff have commented that it gives them access to better training and mentoring opportunities and that they feel as though they are working in a bigger school environment. Subject leaders work across both schools and lesson planning is dealt with jointly. Resources and costs can be shared which is a boon for both small schools.

You will all be aware of the pressures facing schools in England to become Academies. While this has abated for the time being, it will doubtless rear its head again.

The future for small rural primary schools is by no means certain but I would draw your attention to the following words which we wrote as part of the proposal to federate with Charsfield:

*“****The Need For A Strong and Sustainable Future***

*Village schools play a crucial role within rural areas; they represent continuity with the past and provide social and community networks for children and their families. They are directly linked to the sustainability of rural communities (without village schools, families with children could move away).*

*However, the cuts in public expenditure, coupled with the need to improve standards of education (nationally and locally) mean that small, rural schools face an enormous challenge”.*

These words still ring true and the governing body and staff are passionate about the need to retain village schools.

We will talk candidly with schools which have converted to Academies and those who are considering doing so. What we will not do is rush in to any changes – our duty is to continue to provide the best possible outcomes for pupils in our care. Please rest assured that we will not be diverted from this responsibility – we will do all we can to ensure a sustainable and prosperous future for our primary school, for its pupils and for the role it plays within this community.

Emma Cross

Chair of Governors – Charsfield & Dennington CEVC Primary Schools Parnernship