



ROTHBURY FIRST

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Dear Parents/Carers,

'It takes a village to raise a child'

Many of you will be familiar with the lovely African proverb, 'It takes a village to raise a child', the idea that we need an entire community made up of different people, to ensure that all children can experience and grow in a safe, kind and respectful environment. As governors of Rothbury First School, we would like to express our sincere thanks to Mrs Mathewson, the teachers, all of the supporting school staff, the Friends of Rothbury First School, and to you, the parent body, for the effort and continued support you have given. We have much to value and celebrate about our school community, despite the challenges faced this past year.

Highlights of the year, thanks, hellos and goodbyes

It has been heartening to hear of the many activities and successes that children have been involved in throughout the year. The teachers and support staff always work extremely hard to provide such a varied programme of enjoyable learning, whilst at the same time fulfilling the necessary government assessment. Governors are particularly mindful that this has been a difficult year for staff. We thank them for their commitment and dedication to the school.

The Friends of Rothbury First School have been so active in fund raising for various items in school, as well as providing some lovely events and treats. Our hardworking PTA are already working on next year's programme of activities. We are truly appreciative of the work that you do to enhance the children's experience at school.

We saw the end of an era at Easter, when our much-loved school secretary and 'heart and engine' of the school, Mrs Laidler, started her retirement. We trust that she especially enjoys that first morning (along with parents!), when children return to school in September into the capable hands of Mrs Husted, who has been well drilled by her predecessor. We also say goodbye and thank you to Susan Brown and Evie Mackenzie, for the delicious meals they have provided for the children (and governors!) over the years. We would like to welcome Alison Bolton as our new Unit Manager and hope that she is settling in.

School Lunches

The working group on school lunches were pleased with the response to their survey about school meals. Following this, the school would like to invite you all, in the autumn term, to a demonstration of **Live Kitchen**. This is an innovative, award-winning system which will allow you and your children to choose meals and pay online. We will tell you more about this next term, but we are sure you will find it very exciting. As you know, we are hoping to increase the numbers of children taking a school meal, and we are sure **Live Kitchen** will encourage this. <https://live-kitchen.co.uk/>

School Budgets

Along with many schools nationally, Rothbury First School has faced some significant budget challenges this year, due to reasons beyond our control. This has resulted in some extremely difficult decisions. We have tried very hard to make savings that will have the least impact on our children. This year we created an Early Years Unit, combining Nursery and Reception. Teachers and staff across the school have had their hours reduced. To maintain a sound budget for the academic year ahead we have now had to make the decision to have a composite Yr 2/3 and Yr 3/4. This course of action was not undertaken lightly. Governors are keenly aware of parental concern. We are confident that our excellent staff will do their best to continue to provide a fulfilling educational experience. It is something that we will be monitoring closely.

And so it is with great sadness and regret that we must bid Ms Gladston farewell. Her commitment and dedication to our children is hugely appreciated by us all. Ms Gladston has played a big part in transforming the outdoor learning experience for pupils, and her Forest School expertise will be sorely missed. She has set a high standard and example for the school to live up to. Recent research suggests that the most important teacher in a child's life is the one they have in Early Years. We have been so lucky and wish Ms Gladston the very best for the future.

Many parents have expressed their dismay at the reduced budget school has to work with and asked what they can do to help. It is always worth raising awareness by contacting our local councillor, Steven Bridgett and our MP, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, to whom Mrs Mathewson has already spoken when she visited school a year or so ago.

Also, Mrs Mathewson has arranged for the new Director of Education for Northumberland to meet with governors very early in September, again to further raise awareness of issues that the cuts are having, in particular to small rural schools. Any improvement to funding must come from a change in present Government policy, at a national level. If you are interested, both The Times Educational Supplement and The Guardian are good publications to keep abreast of the challenges facing all schools and offer free online access to articles. It is only by us all working together that we can hope to see any change.

Rothbury First School - parents, staff, governors - a great team

Despite these challenges, school is determined to provide the best learning environment possible. Remember that you are able to approach any governor, either in person or via school (details are on website), although your first point of contact should be with either the class teacher and/or Mrs Mathewson. We request that you do not post negative comments on social media. Please bring your concerns into school, where they can be properly addressed.

We hope you all have a lovely summer break and the children return feeling refreshed and ready for the exciting new adventures that lie ahead.

With warmest wishes,

The Governors of Rothbury First School