



Making the difference

Chairman's Report

November 2010

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT to the 2010 AGM

This is my fifth report to an Annual General Meeting as Chairman of the Society. It's my pleasure to report that the school and centre continue to flourish in what has been a very difficult and challenging environment. As in previous years the school and centre continue to maintain their excellence in all that they do in delivering our core services. Allied to that is the recognition that we live in changing times and we stand still at our peril and so we always need to look at how we might do things better. Our partners in education and health look to us as experts in our field who consistently exceed expectations and it is in recognition of this that we have been so successful.

Indeed in the not too distant past the future of Vranch House was potentially at great risk due to the changing political and economic climate. Had we not been such an outstanding organisation we may well not be sat here this evening celebrating our continued existence and strength. As ever my thanks go to the management team and their staff for leading us through the choppy waters of the last twelve months. We are of course not through the economic storm that engulfs all of us and so for Vranch House to be able to report such a healthy set of financial figures is quite remarkable and something to be rightly celebrated.

I'd like, if I may, to reflect on two events that have happened over the year. One is still ongoing; you will have seen it in the car park! More of that later. The other significant event this year was the retirement of Maureen Boon as Head teacher. Maureen served Vranch House for 18 years. Throughout that time she showed continual dedication, professionalism and passion for all the children who were fortunate to benefit from her teaching. I know that all those children will have left or will leave Vranch House with the best possible building blocks that they could wish to have as a result of her contribution to their schooling. Maureen all of us at Vranch House owe you a huge debt of gratitude. I'm delighted to say that Maureen has left such a positive impression on Vranch House that we were able to appoint from within to replace her. In Jane Parsons I know we have the perfect person to step into that role and continue to maintain and develop our high standards in education. The transition has been seamless in my view and I'm delighted that Maureen will continue to work with Jane as an advisor to the school. I would also at this stage like to welcome Michelle Woodgates who has joined us as the new class 1 teacher. I wish her a long and successful time here at Vranch House. Our congratulations to our Head of Therapy, Ginny Humphreys, who has gained a doctorate, to Sandy Chenore, our teacher in Class 3 who has been awarded an Msc and to Dee Down who came to us as a Nursery Nurse and is now a fully qualified teacher with two degrees behind her and a Master's degree in the offing.

The other major event of this year is the current building of the new Children's Specialist Assessment Centre that you will see rising from the grounds outside. This is a reflection of the strength of the partnership we have been at pains to develop with the NHS and Devon County Council and it will secure our future as a provider of

first rate clinical care to disabled children in the area. Now of course we pride ourselves here at Vranch House with our attitude of "just getting on with things" but I can assure you that this venture has been anything but straight forward. There have been many parties who have an interest in this development and many complex discussions have been had and many complex agreements have had to be drawn up. As with all times of change there has been some unease amongst groups and individuals who may be affected by these changes.

At all times I've been assured of the progression of the development by our Chief Executive. I have complete confidence that without his hard work, diligence and foresight this opportunity would not have come to fruition in the way that it has. He has skilfully brought all the stakeholders together and in his usual way led from the front with great ability and energy. I would also like to record our thanks to the Honeylands League of Friends who introduced us to our benefactor, Sir Li Ka Shing of Cheung King Holdings and to Hutchison Whampoa who have supported the project. I know that this extraordinary development will only further enhance the already excellent reputation of Vranch House.

Of course we cannot ignore the current economic conditions; I've been warning of that for over two years now. We have staff working for us who in effect have taken a pay cut due the 0% settlement from both our health and education partners. I can assure them that we deeply value their continued loyalty to Vranch House and the management team I know will continue to do everything they can to reward that loyalty and dedication. However, we have to recognise that we will more than likely be asked to do more for less for some time to come. I have a great deal of confidence that we can do that, but some changes to what we have done in the past may be inevitable. As I say every year, our ability to provide excellent services with a high value for money to the taxpayer will become ever more important. I remain, as always, confident that Vranch House will respond to that challenge.

I finished my report last year saying that I could not promise that this years report would be as positive as last years. Well, I believe given the current constraints it is equally positive, if not more so.

Through our hard work, skill and passion we have had another remarkable year of achievement. My thanks go to each and every one of you for making it possible.