



Making the difference

Chairman's Report

November 2016

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT to the 2016 AGM

I will make this report, my fourth as your Chairman, as brief as I can!

During my time as a Trustee and as Chairman I have learned that Vbranch House never stands still. It is always innovating and improving and must always keep ahead of developments in education and health. A perfect example of this is how all schools must now define their own "Core Offer" or range of services which they will make available to all the pupils in their care. As Vbranch House School provides education and healthcare for children with profound and multiple difficulties it must have the capabilities to meet their needs. I will not list all of these here but those of you with access to the internet can read the Core Offer in full under "What We Do" and then "Education at Vbranch House".

This Core Offer was accepted by the Authority and is now part of our joint contract with Devon County Council and the NHS. In order to fully staff all the services we have employed extra personnel with the result that the charity now employs more people than it ever has in the past (currently 72). We now have a new Head of Education, Ian Norton, who amongst many other talents is a fully qualified Teacher for the Visually Impaired. He has recruited a Visual Impairment Specialist Support Assistant, Jackie Beckford, who is also a graduate and a Nursery Nurse. Our new Senior Specialist Speech & Language Therapist, Tracey Jones, joined us in October and has brought an impressive range of experience and qualification to our school speech therapy and community Augmentative Communication services. Ian will be telling us more about his plans for the school but as a trailer for his report I can say that the Governors and the Trustees, like Dickens, have "Great Expectations"!

We have had a fair measure of change in the management of the school over the past two years. It is more than appropriate that we recognise our debt to Kate Moss, our Head of Therapies, who twice took over the running of the school and somehow achieved a successful transition to two new Heads of Education with no loss of effectiveness to either the clinical department or the school. This was an outstanding achievement and we are all most grateful to her.



Graeme Wheeler will tell us more about the financial performance of the charity over the last year but the headline news has to be the new Hydrotherapy pool. No expense was spared in the design and this is visible in the end result which is quite literally breath-taking. It is not simply a heated pool but a theatre for water-based learning activities which are further enhanced by state of the art air-conditioning, water treatment, hoists and changing facilities. If any of you would like to see the new facility, Graeme will take any interested parties up to the pool after this meeting.

All our other services have performed as you would hope. We see over 2,000 children every year in our clinics and there are 24 children in the school. We have still not received a single complaint and our Friends & Family review places satisfaction of 96% of referrals in the highest of five categories with just 4% in the next category down and none in the lower three. This is another significant achievement and is only possible because of the dedication and professionalism of all our staff. I am sure that you would want to join me in thanking all our employees but I would also like to include the work done by our Governors and Trustees – all of whom are voluntary – in advising and assisting in the management of this charity of ours. We have had another successful year and look forward with confidence to the next 12 months.

Julia Tolman-May
Chairman

