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Press Release

One year on – A primary principal shares her experiences over the last 12 months

“We began the year full of optimism, the academy was freshly painted & bright”

As the world around us continues to change and we adapt to the new way of work, school and socialising, Victoria Richmond, Principal at Oasis Academy Skinner Street shares her views over the last 12 months in headship.

As we reach the end of term one, I am reflecting back on how different the world was a year ago. I had just begun my first full year as the Principal of Oasis Academy Skinner Street having served as the Deputy previously. We began the year full of optimism; the academy was newly painted and was fresh and bright, a new play trail had been installed over the summer and we were all so excited to share it with our children.

The term began full of smiles and joy at being together again, optimism and excitement ebbed from every part of the school. The children settled back in well and school life settled into a routine of certificates, celebrations and pride in our achievements. We shared Christingle services at St Marks with our community and enjoyed the Key Stage 1 and Reception Nativity performances at Kings Church. Our children were blossoming and developing their skills and knowledge more each day. We even had a visit from the National Elf Service, who rewarded pupils with a winter’s gift to read.

Unknown to us, on the horizon a strange virus loomed, and not one of us could have predicted how quickly life would change, the uncertainty at first, many questions with few answers but a strong academy community supporting each other emerged. The day we closed for lockdown felt so strange and so sad, no one sure if and when we would all be together again.

From that day until the end of the summer term the academy remained open supporting the children of key workers and those identified as vulnerable. To ensure our children were supported during this time work packs were sent home frequently and teachers called their children every week to make sure they and their families knew we were thinking of them. Our academy family was still there and just as strong but working together in a new and different way.

The teachers learnt to use new technology so we could offer live lessons to our older children and the excitement we felt at seeing smiling faces even through a screen was immense. Having this renewed contact spurred us on and daily PE videos were provided on our YouTube channel alongside videos sharing stories and a range of other activities.

As the national guidance changed and we were able to welcome more children and families back, we re-opened all year groups and widened the range of online teaching to involve more classes. Children at home and in the academy were still able to connect and learn together regardless of their physical location. In July we said goodbye to our year six children as they



prepared for their next adventure at secondary school. In the academy, plans were afoot to continue our development of the site and teaching.

Over the summer, we had a play ship installed on the playground to represent HMS Victory and to ignite the interest in our children about Medway's maritime history including the many ships built at Chatham dockyard. Our school houses have been renamed after four of these ships: HMS Gannet, HMS Ocelot, HMS Trafalgar and HMS Cavalier.

When we returned in September to begin a new academic year, welcome banners flew over the academy gates to make sure our community knew how much we had missed them. We worked together to develop new routines to keep everyone safe and the first term has flown by. The children are working towards earning new books from our book vending machine, sharing their achievements in celebration assemblies and thriving in many different ways.

The resilience, optimism and kindness our children have shown inspires us all to continue on our journey together and enjoy every moment we create. Our school motto, 'Inspire, Challenge & Achieve' continues to underpin everything we do at Oasis Academy Skinner Street and the last 12 months have certainly provided the opportunity for us all to do all three.

Ends

About Oasis Academy Skinner Street

Oasis Academy Skinner Street is an Ofsted graded 'Good' primary school on Gillingham, Kent. An inclusive school for children aged between 4 and 11, committed to delivering exceptional education at the heart of the community.

About Oasis Community Learning

Part of the Oasis group of charities, Oasis Community Learning multi academy trust exists to deliver 'Exceptional Education in the Heart of the Community.' One of the largest providers of academies in the UK, it is responsible for 52 primary and secondary schools across the country.

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