



## **‘Passionate’ fund-raiser Paul is county’s top caretaker**

A CARETAKER who has raised more than £280,000 for the three schools he works at has been hailed for going ‘beyond the call of duty’.

Paul Herdman, who works at Laughton Community Primary, East Hoathly CE Primary and Chiddingly Primary schools, has been named East Sussex Caretaker of the Year 2017.

As well as working tirelessly to maintain the three sites, Mr Herdman has researched, applied for and secured a total of £285,024 in funding from various sources to improve the schools.

Projects delivered as a result include playground resurfacing, a new roof, play equipment, energy-saving LED lighting and restoration of Laughton’s school clock and bell tower.

He said: “It’s brilliant and came as a complete shock – I wasn’t expecting it at all. The kids are really enthusiastic and I’m really proud that they recognise what I do and enjoy the things I’ve helped to raise money for.”

Mr Herdman also manages to fit into his busy schedule running a breakfast club, leading the children’s ‘eco group’, managing an area of woodland and looking after the school chickens.

Victoria Brown, deputy head teacher at Laughton, said: “Paul works tirelessly for the school and is not only a brilliant caretaker but fantastic with people, with a great sense of humour the children love.

“We feel lucky to have a caretaker who is so passionate about the job and who is so driven to make the school a better place for everyone.”

James Procter, executive head teacher at East Hoathly and Chiddingly, said: “Paul is a friendly, hard-working caretaker and a real asset to our schools, who goes out of his way to be part of the school community.”

The winning nomination included glowing references from pupils, one of whom, Tom, said: “Mr Herdman is very generous with his time and has a massive effect on how happy we are at Laughton.”

Schools across the county were asked to nominate their caretaker of the year, with the winner selected by Stuart Gallimore, East Sussex County Council director of children's services.

He said: "It was clear that all those nominated do an incredible amount of work and are highly regarded by staff, children and parents, but one person stood out.

"Paul not only works across three schools, which is impressive enough, but has raised a huge amount of money to improve the fabric of the schools – that's what I call going beyond the call of duty."

Narrowly pipped at the post was runner-up Mark Cornford, of St Andrew's CE Infants' School, Eastbourne, who has also raised money not just for his school but for the pupil it sponsors at a school in Uganda.

Head teacher Carol Meakins said: "Mark is keen to be involved in every area of school life, acting with integrity and a sense of humour. He knows each child and they know him."

