



Governors' Newsletter – Spring 2015

Governing Body Membership

Welcome to the Spring issue of the Governors' Newsletter. There have been a couple of changes to the Governing Body since last term. Chris Roome has been appointed Vice-Chair, replacing Caroline Downey who took over as Chair in December. Chris is a former headteacher and has been a Governor at Staplehurst School since 2012. We also have a new member, Amanda Jones, who was elected as a Parent Governor last month.

Parent Survey

Thank you to all those parents and carers who completed our recent questionnaire. We received 89 replies which equates to around a 20% response rate. Thanks also to those of you who took the time to provide additional and constructive comments – these are invaluable to the Governing Body and Senior Leadership Team when we evaluate the impact of new initiatives and plan for the future. The feedback was positive which is extremely encouraging.

The questionnaire responses generated a couple of common themes. The school's pastoral care and nurturing learning environment continue to be strengths. Communication between the school and parents has been noted as an improving trend, although there is still room for further improvement. A small number of parents said that they did not receive helpful information from the school about their child's progress. This could, in part, be due to the introduction last September of the New Curriculum assessment levels. Communicating these effectively has been more difficult than anticipated (and there is no Government template to work from), but the school is making every effort to provide greater clarity. We also received comments about the behaviour of some of our youngest pupils not always being of the high standard we expect. Please feel reassured that this had already been noted by the Senior Leadership Team and steps have been and continue to be taken to address it.

As well as caring about what parents think, we are also very interested in getting feedback from our pupils and they have recently completed a similar questionnaire. We will let you know the outcome once their responses have been collated.

Budgets

As you have probably read or seen via the media, all public sector services are operating within an increasingly constrained financial environment and, unfortunately, schools are no exception. As a result of this, all of Kent County Council's schools have seen significant reductions in their budgets

over the last three years. The work of the Parent/Teachers' Association has never been more important and the Governing Body would like to thank the PTA for its tireless commitment to fund-raising for school improvement projects and the parents, carers and children who support it.

The Senior Leadership Team is always looking for additional sources of funding and it recently secured grants from KCC's 'Warm, Safe & Dry' maintenance fund and the Kent Association of Headteacher's collaboration fund. The 'Every Child Counts' numeracy training programme, which is run at Staplehurst for teachers and TAs from other schools, has also provided invaluable revenue over the past four years.

The Governing Body and Senior Leadership Team allocate revenue and capital budgets according to the school's improvement plan priorities. Over the last two years the focus has been on improving pupil progress and attainment by having small class sizes with a correspondingly low pupil to teacher ratio. We have seen that the school's performance is showing an improving trend but, unfortunately, this pupil to teacher ratio will not be sustainable in the long term and we will need to revert to a more traditional class size with possible adjustments to the staffing structure. We will, however, continue to push forward with accelerated learning for all pupils both in terms of progress and attainment.

Governor Day

This term's Governor Day took place on 11 March. Four Governors spent the day in school, talking to staff and pupils, joining classes, assembly and lunch. Monitoring is an important part of the Governing Body's responsibilities and the Governor Days (which take place three times per year) provide a great opportunity to see how the school is doing against its improvement priorities. For the March day Governors looked at marking and feedback, the use of ICT across the Curriculum, and Numeracy. Governors were particularly impressed with the children's enthusiasm and impeccable manners, their understanding of the marking system in place, the high quality of work on display and the improvements to the Early Years learning environment.

Inconsiderate Parking

It is deeply concerning to see how often this subject appears on the weekly school newsletter yet the situation does not appear to be improving. The potential for one of our children (or their siblings) to be seriously injured or worse as a result of thoughtless parking cannot be over-stated or ignored. PLEASE, PLEASE think carefully about where you park and allow yourself enough time to find an appropriate parking space, i.e. not on pavements, double-parked, on zig-zag lines, grass verges or blocking residents' driveways. Can we also re-iterate that parents/carers should not drive into the school grounds to drop off their children for clubs before or after school. Thank you very much.

How to contact us: *If you wish to raise an issue about the governance of the school, please feel free to write to the Chair via the school office or email: clerktogovernors@staplehurst.kent.sch.uk.*