

Higham Primary School Governors News

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome any new parents, carers, staff and pupils who have joined Higham School since the last Governors News in April, as well as providing existing parents, carers, staff and children with an update on Governors matters.

I make no apology for reiterating some parts of previous Governors News as I feel it is important that all parents and carers are aware of the school organisation and in particular what Governors contribute to the school.

In October 2011 we produced the first Governors News following feedback that was received from a parental questionnaire commenting that they did not know what Governors did, their roles and responsibilities and also how they could be contacted.

Chair of Governors

My name is Brian Maynard and at the Governing Body AGM in September I was re-elected as the Chair of Governors for the academic year 2017/18. This is the 6th year that I have undertaken this role and I am so proud to have been re-elected.

I have been a member of the Governing Body for 11 years, originally as a Parent Governor and for the last 5 years as a Local Authority Governor. I was previously the Vice Chair of Governors and Chair of the Curriculum & Standards Committee

I can be contacted via the School Office, please leave any letter with Mrs Michael in a sealed envelope and marked for my attention.

Stewart Mackie is the new Vice Chair of Governors, he was elected at the Governors AGM in September. I would like to thank Father James for his time as Vice Chair of Governors, he is currently assisting Mr Harold Craske, the Mayor of Gravesham during his term of Office.

Purpose of the Governing Body

The Governing Body have numerous responsibilities in relation to many aspects of the running of Higham School. This includes reviewing the quality and standard of teaching, that the School is following of the National Curriculum, the budget of the school, the admissions policy, facilities and premises matters, target setting, communication with stakeholders and parents and most importantly the safety of all staff and children.

Mrs Coombs, your Head Teacher, provides the Governors with regular updates at Committee Meetings and Full Governing Body Meetings and confirms the progress made by the School against its planned objectives.

The Governing Body carry out their duties by way of 2 Committees (who each meet 3 times a year), 3 Full Governing Body Meetings each year, an AGM, a Budget Meeting once a year and Governors Day in March every year, when the Governors

spend the day in school observing classes, school council meetings and even have lunch in the dinner hall with the children.

A key feature of the Governing Body is to have a mix of parents, staff, non parents and Local Authority representation to ensure that the school operations can be looked objectively from a number of different angles.

Higham School's Two Committees are:

Resources Committee

Ms K Howard (Committee Chair)
Mr L Pearton (Committee Vice Chair)
Mr B Maynard
Mr S Walton
Mr G Cousins
Ms N Molloy
Mrs C Donnell

Curriculum & Standards Committee

Ms A Grix (Committee Chair)
Mr S Mackie (Committee Vice Chair)
Mr B Maynard
Mrs C Grattan
Father James Southward
Ms K Howard
Ms N Molloy
Mrs C Donnell

The Head Teacher and Clerk (Mrs Shirley Pearton) attend all meetings.

Mr Stewart Mackie is the SEND Governor responsible for overseeing the teaching of children who have special educational needs and disabilities. He works in tandem with Mrs Grattan (Senco) visiting the school every term, to ensure that this very important area is monitored and reported to the Governing Body throughout the year.

Mr Les Pearton is the Child Protection Governor and Health & Safety Governor responsible for overseeing the safety of your children whilst at Higham School.

Changes

Mr John Latter and Mr Frank Garratt both resigned as Governors at the end of the last academic year due to work commitments and family priorities. They have been Governors for 8 and 6 years respectively and I would like to thank them both for their contributions to the School over that time, primarily on the Resources Committee.

This has meant that we have 3 new Governors. Ms Nova Molloy, who many of you will know from her efforts with the Higham PTA, was elected as Parent Governor in May. Mr Geoff Cousins has joined the Governing Body as a Co-opted Governor due to his experience in finance.

Our final new Governor is Mrs Clare Donnell who expressed an interest in joining the Governing Body at the Parent Governor election. Whilst unsuccessful in becoming a Parent Governor through the ballot, she has experience in education which the Governing Body felt would be beneficial to the school. As there are already 4 Governors who have children at the school Mrs Donnell has become an Associate Governor which means she can attend all meetings and contribute towards the discussions but does not have a vote at Full Governing Body meetings, in line with our Terms of Reference.

I would like to welcome these new Governors to the Higham Governing Body and hope that they enjoy the experience and join in the drive to make this School the best it can be.

All of the Governors give up their time voluntarily. I appreciate their commitment that they all show in ensuring the children who attend Higham School receive the best possible learning experience and the schooling that both the parents expect and the children deserve. Governors will also attend Parent Consultations and will happily speak with any parents who wish to speak to a Governor directly.

School Policies

Like all schools there are rules and regulations that have to be followed.

One of the Governing Body's duties is to set in place and review the school's policies to govern every aspect of Higham School's operations.

These policies are written in line with National guidelines and legislation, Local Authority (Kent) guidelines as well as local standards adapted to Higham School. These policies are reviewed on a regular basis due to amendments in National Government guidelines or general social changes. For example 10 years ago social media channels did not exist unlike today and so our policies now include reference to items being placed on social media relating to the children to safeguard all children.

The policies are prepared by the Head Teacher and discussed at Committee Meetings. Once approved they are ratified by the Full Governing Body and then become this School's rules and regulations for Staff, Governors, parents and pupils to adhere to.

These policies are available on the school website or can be provided upon request, if required.

Complaints

If you have any issues or complaints regarding your child's experiences at Higham School you should initially raise the matter with the child's class teacher.

If you are not satisfied following this discussion then you should raise the matter with Mrs Coombs, who as Head Teacher will look into the matters raised to fully understand the issues. This can be face to face (by appointment), letter, telephone or email.

If following the discussion with Mrs Coombs you are still not satisfied by the actions taken, then you can contact me by letter delivered to the School Office. If I do receive a complaint, I have to investigate the matters raised by speaking to Mrs Coombs and to ask her for the rationale behind her decision and actions. My role is to ensure that the School has acted in accordance with its stated policies and provide an independent investigation into the particular circumstances of the issue raised.

I will then **always** respond in writing to the parent.

The Future

Higham School was assessed as “A Good School” at the last Ofsted Inspection in October 2013. Out of the 4 general measures of the Ofsted Inspection, three were classed as “Good” and one, Behaviour in School, was “Outstanding”.

That Ofsted Report is now 4 years old and a key focus of the Governing Body is not to let complacency creep in and aim for an even better judgement when Ofsted next visit, which I fully expect within the next 12 months

Governors receive regular updates to ensure that continuing progress is taking place across **all** year groups.

Summer 2016 brought the first set of Key Stage 2 results following the National Curriculum changes in 2014 with the “Assessing Without Levels” guidance standards. This was a real test to see if the structures put in place by the Senior Management Team of the School were working. The results were from more challenging SATs tests, where the expected standards were much tougher to reach.

Firstly in 2016 and again in 2017 the results were excellent and compared favourably to other schools in this area. This gives me immense pride but also shows the consistency that schools need to support every child moving through from Reception class to Year 6.

The 2 years results are a credit to the School and are the result of a team effort encompassing the Head Teacher, Senior Leadership Team, Class Teachers, Teaching Assistants, Midday Meal Supervisors, Office staff, Premises staff, Kitchen staff, the PTA, Parents and Governors – but most importantly the pupils. It is vitally important that this team ethic continues.

I can assure you that not all schools in Kent have been as successful as Higham School in the way that it has embraced the National Curriculum changes.

I am sure that you are all aware of the pressures on education establishments from a National Government view, at a time when the finances are being reduced to achieve these standards – Higham School not only embraces these changes and pressures but also produces the achievements to set the children up for secondary education, university, employment and life.

I hope that this Governors Newsletter has helped to provide you with some useful information about the Governing Body at Higham School. I will provide you with a review in March 2018, following Governors Day, regarding progress made from September to March. There will also be a report in the Parish Council annual newsletter publication, where I will be highlighting and celebrating our successes to the wider Higham Community.

Brian Maynard
Chair of Governors
October 2017

