

Chair of Governor's report to Parents Spring Term 2017



Do you know what school governors do? Or – more importantly – do you know what the governors at Burley & Woodhead do?

It's perhaps not a million-dollar question but we hope it's one you might be interested in knowing a bit more about so we are introducing a termly update to let you know about the work taking place to make sure Burley & Woodhead provides an excellent education for all your children.

A detailed report is available on the school website but the following is a brief overview of the main areas we've been working on. Please let us know if there is any other information you would like to see in future updates by emailing us at parentgovernor@burleywoodhead.com or mark.selby@burleywoodhead.com

Spring term 2017

Particular areas of focus this term have been the changes to funding for schools, which will reduce our income considerably, the ongoing concerns around improving security of the school site, and work to improve our effectiveness as governors.

We have also seen a number of changes to our governing body. We would like to say a huge thank you to Dr Win Duckworth and Kate Lewis, who have both sadly had to resign from the governing body due to ill-health and work commitments respectively and to Paul Evans. Paul will also be leaving us during the summer term as we have reluctantly agreed that commuting from Portugal would not be practical!

All three governors have contributed significantly to the school and will be greatly missed, although Kate is very kindly continuing to support us on specific issues relating to her expertise in education. This obviously leaves a big gap for us to fill and we are working to find suitable replacements as soon as possible.

The following gives a brief summary of the work we've done on the main areas that governing bodies are responsible for:

Setting the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction

Last year we refreshed our vision and aims for the school and this year we have been focusing on developing our five year strategy which sets out how we will deliver these.

This will form the basis of the annual School Improvement Plan, which is prepared by the school leadership team and monitored by the governing body throughout the year. Some of the areas we are focusing on this year include: introducing a growth mindset approach to teaching and learning; improving attainment in maths; developing subject leadership roles for teachers; and developing pupil voice and leadership.

Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils

We regularly review data on how our children are performing against the nationally set age-related expectations to ensure the school is providing high quality teaching and learning experiences.

Last term, governors also attended some of the meetings held every term with class teachers to monitor the progress of every child individually. As well as giving us chance to see first-hand how every child's needs are considered, it also helped to verify the information we are given during meetings.

One of the school's main areas of focus this year is maths so this is a subject governors have been paying particular attention to. Link governors have carried out visits to their class to see maths lessons taking place and the approaches being used. These confirmed that new teaching approaches are being followed and that the children appear to be responding very positively.

We have also carried out visits to understand more about the Growth Mindset approach and how this is impacting children, which again showed a very positive response from both children and staff.

One of the other subject areas that the school is focusing on developing is science, and governors received a very informative presentation from science leader Mrs Whitaker. This covered the approach being taken to integrate science into other subjects and to develop children's enthusiasm for the subject with wide variety of innovative and creative methods.

Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

As you will hopefully have seen in the letter we sent out last term, the Government is proposing changes to school funding. This will mean a reduction in budget for Burley & Woodhead, along with most schools in Bradford.

This is a big concern for our school and governors have attended meetings with other local primary schools to learn more about the impact and discuss approaches.

We have agreed the budget for 2017-18, taking these changes into account, and will still be operating within our means. However, the forecasts for 2018 and beyond are less positive and may mean we face a deficit, so we will need to look at ways of reducing costs. Our priority in any decisions taken will be to maintain quality of teaching.

We've also reviewed spend against the 2016-17 budget and confirmed that care is being taken over spending and financial records are being properly maintained.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is also a key responsibility of governing bodies and a regular item on our meeting agendas. Our work on this last term included a number of safeguarding audits, which were carried out to confirm that policies are being followed and included observations on how checks are made on any children not arriving at school.

Making sure the school environment is safe for children and staff is a priority and the main issue continues to be securing our school site. As you may remember, last year the governing body agreed to apply to close the public right of way through the site. This will allow us to control access to and from the site and ensure we are able to fulfil our safeguarding duty towards the children in our care. The vast majority of responses we have had have been supportive of this, including the local Ramblers group who have agreed ours is a special case.

We are still waiting for the application to be reviewed by Bradford Council, despite constant chasing, and understand we are the next application to be considered.

Other areas of work included:

- Complaints and comments - these are reviewed by a governor every six months to check if there are any common themes we need to be aware of. No areas of concern were identified, with the majority consisting of feedback from parents rather than formal complaints.
- Head Teacher Performance – governors are responsible for monitoring the headteacher’s performance and setting annual objectives. This took place in December.
- Health and Safety audits – these were conducted with the lead governor for health and safety to confirm that policies were being followed.
- Staff survey – we received the results of this year’s staff survey to assure that appropriate actions are being taken to address any issues identified. One action for governors is to think about how we can be more visible to staff.
- Policy approval – governors are responsible for confirming that policies are in place and regularly reviewed, and that they are in line with the school’s strategy. Seven policies were approved last term, including the online safety and educational visits policies.
- Governor development – we want to make sure that we are able to carry out our roles as governors effectively and provide the right level of strategic direction and support to the school. Last term, we asked the National Governors’ Association to carry out a review of how we work and identify areas for improvement. We are currently working to address their recommendations which included improving our reporting from school visits, developing a succession plan for leadership roles and developing our five year strategic plan.