

## Governors' report to Parents Autumn Term 2017



This term, we've welcomed a new governor to the team; Katherine Howard joins us as a parent Governor and brings with her skills in education. Because the term of office as Parent Governor for Eleanor Nossiter was coming to an end, we have co-opted her so she can continue to add her communication and strategic skills to the Board.

The role of Governors is spotlighted during OFSTED visits and we were pleased that the work of the board was recognised during our inspection in September 2017. The report summarised that:

- The governing body has a sharp focus on holding the senior leaders to account and challenging the headteacher.
- Governors have a good understanding about the quality of teaching across the school and monitor the school's work through regular focused visits. They have restructured the way they work. They have devised a plan of action to which they hold themselves accountable so that all governors are accurately able to judge the school's effectiveness.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths in teaching and learning. Their strategic plan correctly identifies the need to focus on the quality of teaching and assessment in subjects other than mathematics and English.

### Setting the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction

In setting out our vision for the school, we have a very clear objective which underlies all of our work in school. As it states in our school vision, "*our aim is to develop a school that everyone can be proud of which promotes a strong social, moral, spiritual and academic ethos*". OFSTED recognised in their report that:

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.

This year, there is an increased focus on teaching and assessment in areas outside of maths and English. Outcomes in maths and English at all key assessment points are significantly above national and Governors were very keen to ensure that the teaching team in school focused on these key areas first before developing other areas of the curriculum. Our School Improvement Plan (SIP) has focused on developing thematic approaches to learning and governor monitoring is concentrating on the impact of this work in books and by talking to children.

The Governing Board are keen to continue to develop close links with other schools and, as part of our strategic direction, we have asked the leadership team to ensure the school is outward looking and able to bring the best practice into Burley Woodhead. The school have continued to create close links with the newly formed Eden Teaching School Alliance and we are very pleased to announce that Mr Wilkinson and Mr Deery have been appointed Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs). Miss James and Miss Sowerby continue to lead training for trainee teachers through the Red Kite Alliance and Eden Teaching School Alliance. Taking on these roles really helps to ensure we are developing our staff as well as

our pupils.

## **Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils**

One of the Governor's key roles is to hold the Headteacher to account. We do this annually through the performance management system, where we engage a skilled external adviser to ensure the Headteacher's appraisal targets are focused, specific and targeted on improving school performance. This term, the performance management committee have overseen the appraisal of staff in school, completed last year's Headteacher performance management and started the new cycle.

Challenging the management of school is an important task and questions are raised in meetings on a number of topics to confirm that the strategic vision is being followed and that the school budget is spent in the best way.

As an example, we questioned whether the allocation of funding for learning resources were being directed to best suit the whole school and year group leaders were being listened to when asking for support. How the funds are allocated and what specific items are purchased is a school operational issue, but our questions are to confirm that the decisions being made in the school fit in with the priorities in the School Improvement Plan.

OFSTED inspectors noted the following

- Governors have reviewed the school's curriculum and identified areas for development, particularly pupils' achievement in subjects other than English and mathematics. They are currently focusing on improving the quality of teaching in computing, and this is already making a positive difference.

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

Although central Government has changed some parts of the new national funding formula for schools and pledged some extra money, the changes to school funding will still have a significant impact on small schools. Emphasis will shift from fixed income to a higher proportion based on pupil numbers; as the school is at capacity we cannot increase funding from central government and are therefore looking at other ways to create income. As always, we are very grateful for the support of the PTA who have helped to resource the new computing equipment needed to teach the new computing curriculum.

Governors have met with MP Philip Davies and exchanged letters in which he has pledged in writing that he 'will do everything possible to ensure no cuts to the budgets of any schools in his constituency'. Mrs Siddall and Mrs Lister have also met with the Head of Bradford Schools' Finance and other one form entry schools in the area to look at the forecasted impact of the new funding formula going forward.

Governors are also responsible for ensuring that any ring fenced funding, such as the Pupil Premium or School Sport Premium, is spent appropriately. This is something that the Finance Committee and named governors monitor and challenge through the year. Again, in considering OFSTED, it is worth noting one of their statements.

- Governors scrutinise the use of pupil premium effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well.

## **Safeguarding**

Thank you to all of the parents who responded to the public consultation about the footpath which was open over the summer. Governors have met with members of staff from the Public Rights of Way department and supplied additional information regarding the application to extinguish the footpath. The Rights of Way Officer in charge of our case is now writing a report about their findings to submit to Bradford Council. When this lengthy report becomes available, we will share it with parents.

We have been advised by the Rights of Way Officer that any issues, such as continuing to allow de-facto access to the school site, need to be discussed after any order for extinguishment has been granted.

Away from the footpath issue, our lead Safeguarding Governor has continued to ensure the school meets its statutory safeguarding duty. This work involves checking the school single central record on a regular basis to make sure anyone working in school has had appropriate checks carried out, that staff have had up to date safeguarding training and that safeguarding procedures are being followed properly.

## **Other areas of work included:**

Some of the most welcoming comments from OFSTED were no doubt a result of the 'growth mindset' approach being taught in school:

- Pupils talk about the 'joy of education' providing them with life opportunities. They already have well-defined aspirations and a drive to achieve.
- The school puts great store on equipping pupils with effective life skills and providing them with the knowledge to live a healthy life. They have an exceptionally good understanding of how to learn. They talk about 'making marvellous mistakes' as an aid to learning and how to be resilient, overcoming challenges and not being afraid to 'have a go'.

Governor visits in to school will continue to assess the impact of this approach to learning and its effect on outcomes.

Other work this term has included:

- Health and safety visits to school,
- Ensuring the school is in a position to comply with the new Data Protection law which comes in to place in May 2018,
- Policy approval

## **And finally.....**

Although this is a formal report that follows key parts of our obligations, and in which we have discussed finance, safeguarding, OFSTED inspections etc, we must not lose sight of the reasons why we are doing this. The Governors all want to work with the school for the sole reason to ensure that our children are all receiving the best possible education. We feel the school is a great position and has the capacity to move forward. The support of our parents has always been hugely important to the school and we thank you for your continued support of Burley Woodhead this term, whether coming in to school to support staff with different tasks during the day, attending one of the showcase events or fantastic Christmas productions in reception or Key Stage 1 or giving your feedback in the annual parents' survey. The Governors wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.