

Chair of Governors Blog July 2017

This will probably be the last blog of this academic year and will round up the work of the governors. We have had a tricky year with lots of staff missing for maternity leave and other things but the rest of the staff has stepped up to the plate and final end of year data and exam results show just what a good job they have done.

Today I was at a meeting with Tim Osborne (Head of School Effectiveness) and Barbara Dyer (senior School Effectiveness officer) to talk about the progress of our school during the last year. They gave us a thorough grilling about the data and about our plans but were very complimentary praising the work the school has done. One of the most telling comments was that when they visited the school they were hard pressed to suggest any actions for improvement that could be made that the school was not already doing. They also said that at Pennoweth there was such excellent practice that they could send other schools to learn from it. So a huge “well done” to the staff and to Mr Adams!

The test results look good across the school this year and the governors are very proud of the efforts of children and staff!

During the year, the governors have been looking at safety in the school and safeguarding procedures. It is impossible to take away all risks to children but we have seen at first hand just how hard the school staff works to keep children safe. From a governor’s point of view, allocating funds to pay for the caretakers time to check for risks in the jungle or other activity zones or for funding first aid training is seen as vital. Monitoring visits have been done at playtime to see how the children are supervised and how the children behave. On all occasions we were impressed with behaviour and could see first-hand how the staff looked after the children with patience, diligence and kindness.

During the time since the last blog I have spent an afternoon in each class telling stories and singing which is something I try to do every summer term to give the teachers time for report writing. Each class is very different but the standards of behaviour and ability to listen have got higher each year. All the children were super this year but the most noticeable change has been in the way they are prepared to try new things or to play a silly game and quickly returning to calm afterwards. That is a demonstration of just how hard everyone has worked.

In the summer holidays there will be even more work done on the school buildings and the surrounding area to make the best learning environment for the children and staff. As governors we regularly go around the school and grounds suggesting things that might be done, such as removing slabs and replacing with tarmac, providing shelters or upgrading toilets. Obviously all these things cannot be done at once and many have to be squeezed into holiday times so they do not disrupt learning but be assured the school is working hard at making Pennoweth a great place to work and play in.

As I write this blog we are still waiting to see whether the school commissioner will permit us to join in with the Crofty Academy Trust. We feel that this would be an excellent move having watched their progress over the time they were formed and how joining would help support our school. More news and a chance to air your views will happen in the new school year.

Airing your views takes me neatly onto to governors listening to parents and carers. Your opinions are very important to us and do help us to form school policy and there are effective and not so effective ways of contacting us. We really want Pennoweth to be the best, most friendly, approachable and safe school that it can be!

- governor focus groups which we advertise from time to time
- enquire about becoming a governor and joining the team
- Parent View- online commenting
- by letter or asking to have a chat.

If you have a complaint about any aspect of school from the way work is marked to how your child is supervised or the cost of trips then there is a special procedure to follow and a policy that can be downloaded from the school website. In simple terms it follows this pattern:

- See the class teacher
- if that does not sort it out, ask for an appointment with the headteacher
- still unhappy? Fill in a complaints form and send it to the chair of Governors who will investigate and get back to you.
- Then it is the governors appeal committee
- If it is really serious and things have not been resolved then the local authority and OFSTED as a last resort.

Ideally, a chat usually sorts out most things.

How you can help us:

- keep an eye on the press and social media for mentions of the school and let us know if you see something, both positive and negative.
- Don't let little niggles build into big problems, go and see the staff and sort out the little things before they grow,
- If you are really pleased with something do say so- teachers like encouragement as much as children!
- Think about becoming a governor especially if you have a legal or financial background or you have other skills that will help with strategic planning. If you would like to know more tell the office and I will get in contact with you.

Best wishes

Jim Seth

Chair of Governors