

Chair of Governors Blog June 2019

Dear Pennoweth Family

(Children, parents, folk who work in the school and those in the community who care about the school and our children)

I am sure many of you found Mr Adams' retirement announcement a shock and the comment I have heard most often is, "but he looks so young!" Mr Adams' contribution to Pennoweth life has been nothing short of fantastic during his tenure and it has been my delight and my privilege to share that journey with him and the school in those seven years as Chair of Governors. Being a headteacher is an energy sapping job even though it is also immensely rewarding but being a headteacher is not a life-sentence. The time is now ripe for a new captain to guide the Pennoweth ship through the treacherous waters of government policy, OFSTED inspections and the latest curriculum changes to meet the whims of whoever happens to be running the government education department. This will enable Mr Adams to keep secret the reason he manages to look so young and to take up some other challenges and pursue some of the interests he currently has little time for.

For the school it has meant a few months of uncertainty and more than a little concern that we would not be able to find anyone capable of following in Mr Adams' footsteps let alone building and improving on the work, ethos and environment he was able to put in place.

A committee of the governors got together and after listening to staff, children and others, we made up a large pack of information and the Crofty Multi Academy Trust team helped and advised in polishing it, to paint a picture of our school and the sort of person we wanted to come and lead us.

Then followed a meeting when the chair and vice chair met with Trust leaders to select the people we wanted to interview and last week the three candidates chosen came to the school to complete tasks such as setting a budget, watching and commenting on a lesson, giving a presentation about themselves, talking to the School Council, looking at a school development plan and being under the spotlight.

Teachers, children, representatives of the parent body and of the Crofty Trust all got to comment and make their feelings known. Then, after interview and a really in-depth conversation lasting more than an hour, we offered the post of Headteacher to Cathryn Andrews who was the first choice by consensus across the whole school and across all the tasks at which she universally excelled.



She is currently a headteacher in Sittingbourne in Kent, but cannot leave her school quite yet and will arrive to take up the post in January. You can find out a little more about her here:

<https://www.kentonline.co.uk/sittingbourne/news/head-teacher-says-schools-success-37049/>

<http://kemsley.kent.sch.uk/>

That creates a gap between Mr Adams' retirement and Ms Andrew's arrival in which there is a great chance to explore some ideas and to build on the fabulous teaching team that Mr Adams has created. We are hugely lucky and indebted to the Crofty Multi Academy Trust that we are able to secure the services of Mrs Linda May who is currently head of Treloweth School and previously head of Pencoys School to be released from some of her duties at Treloweth to make sure that Pennoweth keeps moving in the right direction until January. We could have an OFSTED inspection any time from January onwards so, making sure everything is in place, is important.



Mrs May is the one without a beard!

She will be ably assisted by key staff already on the Pennoweth team who will step up to more senior roles for the year. This will give them invaluable experience which can only benefit everyone in the long run. At Treloweth Mrs May's deputy (the one with the beard) will get the opportunity to be headteacher while she is with us for 80% of each week.

This is my last Chair of Governors' Blog as I pass the baton of Chair onto my very able Vice Chair Deborah Reeve on July 3rd. New faces need a new team and fresh eyes. I will still remain as a governor but really, my first joy in school is storytelling and seeing what the children are doing, so I will focus on that and being there for staff and children to talk to when needed. In the Crofty Trust I shall be helping out with some work on training new governors and supporting new Chairs.

This term has been a wonderful mixture of all sorts of activities at school. The SATs tests were administered and governors checked procedures and noted just how scrupulous the school was with security of papers, making sure that children got the help they needed and deserved and, most importantly, made the children feel calm and confident. The writing results were moderated by county and were found to be spot on! Well done team!



The school camps and trips have been very successful and these experiences change and enhance children's lives. Teachers who go on them, notice children blossom away from their usual environment- sometimes children who you least expect, become absolute stars! Our thanks go to all those staff who gave up time to make those trips possible. They arrive back exhausted having been on duty 24/7 for the time they are away – a job you only do if you are really dedicated to making the best opportunities for our children.



The annual Arts Festival at St Andrews Church had an aerial dance group this year and offered a free experience to children in the local area, and many of our children went to see it and to see the representative art work from the school. The wonderful models for the Murdoch parade hung around the church for the week and the rocket flew in pride of place in the church roof. Sadly, it has had to be taken down now to prepare the church for a big funeral next week.

Since The beginning of term the governors have ensured that the safeguarding records are up to date, such as the Single Central Record, which records everyone who works or volunteers in the school and the office is delighted that their work has been checked and verified by external agencies.

Governor visits for Maths, English and Early Years have been carried out where we look at work, speak to children, look at progress data and take the lead teachers through a tricky set of questions. In maths for example, we noted the excellent progress in teaching and the careful outlining of next steps. It is particularly gratifying to see that the work done encouraging girls in Maths, means that the gap between boys and girls is now very small. There will be a fuller round up of findings from visits before the end of the year.

Have you ever considered being a governor?

Currently our Governing Board is made up like this:

Deborah Reeve (Vice Chair & nominated as chair from July)
Karen Brokenshire (Nominated as vice-chair from July)
Enid Ghent
Rob Cooper
Peter Howells (Parent as from September)
Graham Adamson (Parent)
Vivienne Booth (Staff)
Rob Adams (Head teacher)
Jim Seth

We have lost several governors this year due to work commitments and we are very grateful for the time Liz and Ian spent with us; their contributions were very valuable. So, we have a space for another Governor at this exciting time. If you would like to be part of a body that really can influence the direction of the school and impact upon the lives of our children, please do leave your details at the office and someone will be in touch.

It is a hugely rewarding job and the amount of time will vary from person to person depending on what time they have available. Generally, next term there will be one Wednesday evening (6pm-8pm) meeting once every half term and we hope that you will be able to get into school to assist with monitoring at least one half day in each term. Beyond that, there will be some training opportunities and particular working groups that you might like to be involved with.



Yskynna Aerial dance performing to a school group. I loved the comment from one of our nursery children who said she like it when the girl climbed up the curtains!

As the end of the school year approaches we will say goodbye to a number of staff, not just Mr Adams. We are very grateful to Mr Williamson and Miss Kettle, who are moving up country and, Vicky Beale who has come to the end of her contract and to Mrs Stanbridge who has worked in the school for many years and is finally retiring.

Our year six are also getting ready to leave and all the children are getting ready to move to their new classes. A huge amount of thought goes into that move of year groups and the transition week is a vital part of the process, when staff can check that children are just where they are meant to be.

Finally, teachers do not expect gifts at the end of the year but they really appreciate the occasional kind comment, especially when attached to a memory of something that was special in the year. It can be a tough job but our children make it all worthwhile.

Jim Seth