

Chair of Governors Blog October 2017 number 2

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Meetings

The full governing board and curriculum meetings have proved very interesting indeed this term. At the curriculum meeting, to which all governors are invited, teachers Jade Bright, Helen Tonkin and Helen Gaskin came along to take us through the data and how it related to the schools work. A full report will appear with the minutes of the meeting along with the multitude of tricky questions asked by the governors.

Helen, Jade and Helen did a wonderful presentation and fielded our questions with consummate ease demonstrating their in depth knowledge of how things are, why they are like that and what the school is doing next. It is fitting here to note the contribution made by Claire Hitchens-Todd, the maths co-ordinator who was commended for her work in the past year.

Rob Adams, the headteacher, took us through the school improvement / development plan that he had been working on with one of the governors to signpost how, when, why and what monitoring needed to be done across the key areas. Form this base we were able to discuss who was able to do what and begin to map out those things in our calendars.

Academy Matters

We await a number of documents from the Crofty Trust such as

- Finance policy especially in regard of access to reserves held by the school
- Teachers pay and conditions
- Etc

We have a service level agreement (SLA) with human resources at Cornwall LA – so we also await their convening of the statutory TUPE meeting (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) to which the relevant Unions and all members of staff are invited. I will append an ACAS leaflet which helps in explaining the technical aspects.

In the meantime Pennoweth is taking part in various meetings and events with Crofty Trust whilst at the same time ensuring that we still work with and have good relationships with the schools of the Redruth Learning group.

Safeguarding

While in the staffroom recently I had a useful conversation with Ian the School handyman and one of the TAs who is often on duty in the jungle area. The conversation was about the safety precautions

for the area and the ability of staff to manage any potential risks such as falling onto broken bamboo stems.

Ian checks regularly but through conversation it seems that a quick check by duty staff would also be sensible and a pair of secateurs provided in a handy location for any immediate problems of broken twigs etc.

The ongoing dialogue between staff to ensure a safe environment and the constant updating of procedures is to be highly commended. That staff will readily share those conversations with governors is very helpful indeed.

Governor Recruitment

The Governing Board is a hard working group of people who are united in their desire to see Pennoweth school grow from strength to strength. The team membership is fairly fluid with people leaving and joining as the pressures on their lives dictates, after all they are all volunteers and nobody is paid!

Currently we need some governors who are parents and a staff governor who can be any paid member of staff. These days we look for particular skills in governors before inviting them to join the board.

If you know of anyone with legal expertise, knowledge of the primary school curriculum and standards, managing personnel or accountancy we would particularly like to hear from them. However that does not preclude others who may approach the board with some different skills and interests that might compliment those already on the board.

Improving Governance questionnaire

For the most part governors who answered the questionnaire answered most questions very positively however, interestingly the common factor to a number of the governor responses was that they were unsure about whether we advertised for specific skills when asking for new governors. That we have a lack of specific legal knowledge was also a common theme. It does underline the need to interview all new governors and discern carefully whether what they have to offer will compliment the skills already there as well as provide some measure of succession planning.

Hopefully after our last curriculum meeting Governors feel more secure in their knowledge of standards and feel that they had had some training in looking at the data. Although we have not carried out specific one to one governor appraisals in any formal sense we have done one to one learning walks and discussions which acted in their place.

More on this at a future meeting.

Jim Seth

October 16th 2017