

# OLIVER GOLDSMITH PRIMARY SCHOOL

*"Inspiring a love of learning"*

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## ***Oliver Goldsmith Primary School Board of Governors Letter to Parents: Summer Term 2017***

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Governors in what we intend to be the first in a series of letters to parents and carers. We want to keep you better informed on the issues the Board are considering and decisions we are making so you can understand the impact we have had on your children's journey through Oliver Goldsmith.

In terms of how the Board operates, the whole Board meets every term however there are often many more meetings which we have in smaller committees of Governors and with the school. Broadly, the meetings discuss the curriculum, the school finances and budget, the school building and the school's results but we also meet to discuss specific issues, particularly where Governors have a very clear responsibility, in particular ensuring the **safeguarding** of the children and in ensuring we invest our resources appropriately on the **building works** that we signed off this year.

In our discussions we generally use of a range of information to help us understand what is happening in the school. This includes financial reports, school assessment data and reports from the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team. We also value the views of parents and children so we review feedback from parent forums, parent surveys and pupil surveys. The contribution of our Parent Governors is also important as we get to hear, first hand, about what is happening in the school via Parent Governors conversations with other parents in the playground.

The sources of information help build a picture of the key issues and help us focus our attention on how we can make a positive impact. However, we do not only rely on these sources of information and so in addition to the school information we gather, this year the Board has focussed on working to **improve our skills and knowledge as a Board** so that we can more effectively support and challenge the school and ensuring we can demonstrate a real impact on the teaching and learning. To that end we have established Governor links to each of the school faculties with Governors undertaking a number of visits to the school, meeting with faculty leads. For example, Governors met with the SEND co-ordinator and reported back to the Board which has enabled us to develop a good understanding of SEND issues and as a result the Board approved resources to the SEND faculty to fund a part-time school counsellor for some children.

Governors also attended **training** this year to help build our skills and knowledge of the various aspects of school governance. For example, we as Governors attended courses on Safer Recruitment, SEND responsibilities and Safeguarding. Training such as this is really important in helping us understand our roles as a Board, in particular on the statutory **responsibilities of Governors and the school to safeguard children**- one of our most important responsibilities. Safeguarding means protecting children from abuse or neglect, ensuring they are healthy and develop as they should, and ensuring they have safe and caring environment at home. We have two nominated Safeguarding Governors who regularly meet with the



Headteacher to review the school's safeguarding arrangements and procedures. We have undertaken Safer Recruitment training, so we can make sure members of staff are properly vetted and that thorough background checks are made. We completed our safeguarding review in December and are confident that the school's safeguarding arrangements are of a very high standard. We continue to keep Safeguarding a top priority for the Board. Education is a complex area which changes very often, and it is important that we keep ourselves up-to-date with all the regulations and the latest educational thinking.

Governors also try to attend the school regularly to see, first-hand, some of the specific issues that school wants Governors to focus on. For example, Governors undertook a site walk and this helped us make some **key decisions on the physical improvements that need to be made to the building**. As a result, Governors helped develop and approve a plan for financial investment in the school building which included the introduction of a food technology room, a new library and improved access to the Key Stage One outdoor play area. A Governor's survey to teachers on these improvements reported that they have made a "very positive impact" on the teaching and learning. We will continue to focus on ways to improve other areas of the school over the summer and next year.

The Board has also spent a good deal of time looking at the school's data, specifically the formal and informal assessments conducted throughout the year. To support us in **understanding the data** we commissioned a school improvement specialist to provide the Board with bespoke training on Oliver Goldsmith's data (not an easy task!) to help us **challenge the school to focus its resources in the right way**. The data has told us that whilst Oliver Goldsmith has ensured standards remain high in all areas of the curriculum they are also highly focussed on all pupils making excellent progress in these areas as well. We need to challenge the school to improve the outcomes for the most able, most disadvantaged children and those children who are high achievers. As a result of looking at the data during this year we have recognised the schools approach to assessing maths and have challenged the school on how this has been implemented and how the more able are being challenged. As a result, maths moderation has been a focus for the school; ensuring that the more able are clearly identified through tracking and monitoring in pupil progress meetings.

A key responsibility of any Board of Governors is to **ensure the financial stability** of the school and this is something which is a growing concern for us. We are actively focussed on the proposed cuts to schools budgets and will do all we can to mitigate the risks of cuts affecting teaching and learning. This work has already started and the Board's finance committee works closely with the school to ensure savings can be made wherever possible.

Alongside all this activity this year, Governors at Oliver Goldsmith feel it is really important that the school continues to **maintain a strong focus and vision of inspiring a love of learning**. We are very proud of our Headteacher and the teaching staff, who we think continue to bring so much positive energy and enthusiasm to the school. We will continue to work closely with Mr Simmons and other senior school leaders and staff to preserve the essence of what we think makes Oliver Goldsmith such a great school. This will also mean us keeping a close eye on the Government's intentions around the Academies agenda and maintaining good links with other local primaries and secondaries.

If you would like to discuss any of this with a school Governor, please contact the school or visit the Governor pages on the school's website. I hope you all enjoyed the summer fete; I know I did and wanted to pass on my thanks to the PSA for all their efforts in putting on such a great afternoon!

I wish you all restful summer.

Yours sincerely

Hannah Panayiotou  
Chair, Board of Governors, Oliver Goldsmith Primary School

