

Governors' Newsletter 2013

Another academic year is almost at a close, and it is at this time of year that we as governors take the opportunity to look back over the last year, which is always an interesting exercise. This time last year we still had our interim head teacher, and were looking forward to welcoming Mrs Kerton in the September. We have now had an enjoyable and productive three terms working with our new head teacher, and a busy three terms they have been.

We said farewell this year to Mr Pass who had been the site controller at the school since time began. Anyone who worked with Goff will tell you that nothing was ever too much trouble for him and no job was ever impossible regardless of how busy he was. And he was always busy! Goff decided the time was right to leave to pursue other ventures, and he goes with our best wishes and our heartfelt thanks.

Our new site controller Mr Graham Gill has already begun working with much



commitment and enthusiasm, and a real desire to make the school environment a pleasant one for all who use it.

Congratulations to Mrs Poole and Mrs Clements who are each expecting a baby later this year. Their posts will be filled by Mr Will Day and Miss Anne Bennett respectively, and we wish them both well in what will be a truly exciting time in their lives.

Mrs Martin informed us of her intention to retire at the end of this term, and Mr Matthew Jex has been appointed to a key stage 2 post in her place.



We will also be saying goodbye at the end of this term to Miss Nixon who is leaving to pursue her studies.

We wish all the leavers well, and look forward to working with all the new joiners.

In April we welcomed Ofsted through our doors for what was the first inspection since January 2010. In the wake of some fundamental changes at the school, and under a new inspection framework in which the bar has been markedly raised, we were very pleased to receive such a strong and complimentary report. The Hawthorns continues to be an excellent school and an excellent educational establishment of which we should all be proud. Areas on which Ofsted would like us to focus had already been identified within the school and will form a central part of our School Development Plan in the next academic year as we seek further improvement.



Our very active PTA have had another great year, prodigiously raising, and just as importantly spending, money on new facilities for the school. Most recently the new playground equipment was funded by the PTA for which we are very grateful.

I continue to work with a committed and dedicated group of governors who spend a lot of time in the school dealing with a wide range of issues. Recently this has included approaches from the Local Authority with regard to pressure on primary school places, changes in the way



schools are funded, and of course the Ofsted inspection. Governors are involved right across the school, from decisions about the strategic direction of the school to joining in with classes to see how the decisions made in meetings affect the children on a day-to-day basis. There is a particular focus on e-safety at the moment as we make sure we equip the children with the tools they need to stay safe in an increasingly challenging environment. The school is keen to ensure that the children are safe on the internet both within school and beyond. To this end we arrange e-safety briefings for parents, and I would recommend attendance at these, whatever your experience of IT.



Also this year the governors have each adopted a class of children who we will follow through their school career, attending class assemblies and offsite trips where possible. All of this makes for a rewarding experience which I would fully recommend. Vacancies for parent governors will

become available from time to time. These will be announced in the newsletter, and I would encourage you to apply if you are interested in this role. Further information is available on the learning platform.

An excellent opportunity for me this year was to follow in the footsteps of our previous chair of governors, and go with year six on their residential trip to the Isle of Wight. This is an excellent trip for the children which they get a lot out of and will always remember. We are fortunate that the school uses such a good setting for this residential trip, and that the staff who go are so accomplished and dedicated.



The Hawthorns Primary School remains consistently excellent because of the hard work and dedication of all members of the school community. Some have been mentioned above, but this includes all the staff, the governors, the PTA, you the parents and carers, and the most important group for whom this is all about, the children.

Governors will be in attendance at the open afternoon on the 4th of July. We will be pleased to see you there. Failing that we will be flipping burgers on the barbecue at the summer fair. We would be delighted if you could come along -

to the summer fair that is, but the barbecue stall in particular!

Chris Shaw (Chair of Governors)



I'm thoroughly enjoying my role as a community governor from Woosehill Community Church. I love seeing the Hawthorns children, especially their enthusiasm for learning and obvious enjoyment of school. It's also been a pleasure getting to know the new head better. I'm looking forward to next year when reducing work commitments will enable me to spend more time in school.

Doreen Murgatroyd (Community Governor)



It has been another busy year for the Sites and Buildings Committee. In March we bid a fond farewell to Mr Pass who has advised and guided our committee for the past 3 decades. It also meant we had to recruit a new site controller. We have found an excellent replacement in Graham Gill who has settled into his new role very well.

During the past year road safety around the school has become one of the committee's main concerns. It was clear that we had to make pedestrian access into school safer. We now have a very smart new path which runs from Chestnuts to the back gate within the school. This now joins the existing path along Chestnut Avenue with a raised crossing at the junction. This new pathway has been very well received by parents and is a fitting tribute for Mr Pass who was a driving force on this project. To commemorate this further it has been decided that the new path will be known as 'Goff's Pass.'



The Sites and Buildings Committee has also run a road sign competition in conjunction with the School Council. The entries have now been judged and the winners are going to be made



into road signs to put around the school grounds to encourage safer road use. We are very fortunate that the PTA has agreed to fund the cost of these signs. We hope the new signs will be in place before the end of term.

In May I had a very informative day at RHS Wisley with Year 3. Unfortunately as spring was so late this year many of plants were still struggling to bloom. We did however see some wonderfully colourful tubs and hanging baskets. I think the highlight for my group was watching a mother duck guiding her 7 little ducklings across the pond. All the pupils found the hothouses fascinating, especially the beautiful orchids. They also provided some much needed warmth on an otherwise cold day.



The Year 5 Book Club continues to run and for the summer term this has been extended to Year 6. We have read a diverse range of books once again, including 'The Boy in Striped Pyjamas' by John Boyne and 'A Stitch in Time' by Penelope Lively. The pupils never cease to impress me with their enthusiasm for reading and their insightful comments. It is a delight to share their ideas on the books we read and a great excuse to revisit some of my favourite childhood reads and see them through the eyes of a new generation of young readers.

Emma Wells
(Vice-Chair, Chair of Sites and Buildings)



Mrs Coffield and Mrs McKay represent the teaching staff on the School's Governing Body. Part of their role is feeding back any relevant information to the teaching staff and supporting their fellow governors in understanding the everyday workings of the school.

Mrs Coffield and Mrs McKay became teacher governors in September 2010. In her role as teacher governor, Mrs Coffield attends all the Personnel and Finance meetings and Mrs McKay attends all the Sites and Buildings meetings. The two teachers share the responsibility for attending the Teaching and Learning meetings.

Mrs Coffield and Mrs McKay
(Teacher Governors)



How quickly time has flown by this year and it's hard to believe that so much has happened and been achieved in what seems like a relatively short period of time!

As one of the parent governors and with responsibility for numeracy as well, I work closely alongside the teachers and staff and play an active part in school life helping our children to achieve the best that they can. At the same time, we also make sure that all the regulatory 'bits' are fully understood and agreed and implemented as necessary.



I have the great privilege of having Miss Brimley's class as my 'adopted' class and spent a wonderful morning a month ago in class with the children. The children were exceptionally well behaved and polite and were keen to ensure that I participated fully in their morning's activities! To support the numeracy learning, we all went outside into the playground and spent half an hour or so keeping a tally of numerous vehicles and people going past. The children very much enjoyed this and it was great to see first-hand how well they worked together and how they supported each other to ensure that no one missed anything! I am very much looking forward to my next visit so thank you again Miss Brimley's class for making me feel so welcome and proud of you all!

Here's looking forward to the forthcoming summer fair and another enjoyable and successful year ahead for our children.

Karen Blake (Parent Governor, Numeracy Governor)



Amongst all the business and challenges faced by governors come the pleasures and privileges. One of the most important and encouraging events this year for me, in my role



as SEN Governor, was to accompany Mrs Kerton on two learning walks to see children at work in their classrooms. I could see that all the staff involved knew the children well and were ensuring that specific needs were being met on a daily basis, as well as reviewing outcomes and planning ahead. I have also attended training courses and briefings to help me keep up to date with the latest developments in SEN provision and funding.

I have enjoyed joining in with a number of school activities this year including resurrecting my somewhat rusty keyboard skills to play for the Year 5 carol concert at Kennet Court and to accompany the school choir who sang at the Mayor's Inauguration in May.



Governors' Day was another highlight, spending the morning with Year 1, watching their enthusiastic PE lesson and a literacy lesson. It encouraged me to reflect on how hard the staff work to bring Hawthorns children so many opportunities. And then..... there was the story that we governors acted out in assembly, using some wonderful puppets made for us by some of the younger children. I think they must have enjoyed it as they are still borrowing copies of 'The Stinky Cheese Man' from the school library!

I have enjoyed this year immensely and am confident that Mrs Kerton and her team will continue to work as hard as they always do to keep the school moving forward.

Rosie Beech (LA, SEN and PSHE Governor)



The other important action is the focus on 'E-Safety'. We are registered with '360° E-Safety' and working towards our accreditation. Whilst in the school, you should be reassured that the children are fully protected by our IT systems but please be sure that in the use of IT at your home, you are taking the necessary precautions to keep your children safe while using the internet.

Ian Severn (Community Governor, ICT Governor)



There are two significant items to report this year. We have a new Learning Platform based on 'E-Schools Technology'. This system is much more user-friendly than the previous system. The teachers are becoming familiar with the layout and we hope it will be a very useful communication tool with the children and parents. There are many tools to explore in the coming months and, over time, there will be more information available for the children to access during lessons.





I can't believe how quickly this year has passed!

I got married in May and after almost 10 years association with the school being Mrs Ellis, I am now Mrs Shepherd. I received some beautiful wedding cards from staff, governors and pupils. Thank you!

Again for me it has been another enjoyable year as a Community Governor.

The class I have adopted is 2SM, Mrs McKay's delightful year group. Their Christmas production was fantastic. I have enjoyed joining them on a Friday afternoon to help out with their art and I am looking forward to watching them grow and develop through the school years.



On July 3rd I am joining them on their school trip to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, where the children will be building on their 'Take One Picture' programme, looking into their history topic on Victorians at the seaside, as well as learning how drama and art can inspire their work at school. I can't wait!

As well as attending the 'all important' governor meetings, I have again this year had the pleasure of joining the children in a variety of activities. Too many to list but here are a few.

I was a marshal at a number of cross country events during the year, where the Hawthorns cross country team took part. As a result of their effort and determination they gained promotion to a higher league next year and brought silverware back to the school! Very well done.

I joined Year 5 in June on their trip to Ufton Court, just outside Reading. We were blessed with one of the few sunny days this year. The Elizabethan Manor House and the extensive grounds are stunning and the children enjoyed insect catching, a blind trail, photo mapping and orienteering.



I was also invited to join the children for their Christmas lunch. Hats off to the kitchen staff, who produced a great meal for so many. The atmosphere was lovely and the children enjoyed pulling their crackers.

Later the same day I went to the After School Club Christmas Party. The team did a great job of organising activities and games for the children. It was enjoyed by all. Thank you!

I represented the governors at June's PTA Meeting. It was great to hear about all they have achieved this year and listen to their future plans. An amazing amount of money has been raised and spent to enhance the school environment for the children. A huge thank you to all.

Again I look forward to another year with The Hawthorns School.

Judith Shepherd (Community Governor, Out of School Club Liaison, Eco Schools Governor and Sports Governor)



It has been another busy year for the Finance and Personnel Committee and our thanks go to Sandra Carter for all her work with the Committee. It has been a very busy first year for her.

As well as attending meetings governors spend a lot of time keeping up with the latest changes and initiatives in education by attending external training courses often in the evening, online

training or having training sessions during Governing Body meetings. This training is vital in ensuring that the Governing Body carries out its legal duties and also helps to support the school in the best way that it can.

I had great pleasure in accompanying Year 5 for their annual visit to Kennet Court last Christmas. It was so lovely to see the different generations enjoying one another's company and the residents very much enjoyed the singing and poems as did I.

Diane Hampton (Chair of Finance and Personnel Committee)

Once again it has been my privilege to compile the school governors' annual newsletter. There is no shortage of news to write about which demonstrates the huge number and variety of exciting activities and events which have taken place in the school over the past year.

As Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee I am able to play a role in helping to review and challenge the school's policies which determine the curriculum and how our children are taught. The school never stands still, and I am impressed at how our teachers are always looking at how to improve and develop the children's experiences and learning.

Governors' Day was a highlight as always this year when I was able to spend time with Year 2 and take part in assembly.

I continue to enjoy running Imagineering Club on Thursday afternoons for some of our budding scientists and engineers of the future. In recent weeks we have been building and racing robotic ducks across the classroom!

Andrew Kensley (Local Authority Governor, Chair of Learning and Teaching Committee)

The School Governors look forward to seeing you at the Open Afternoon on 4th July. We would like to say "Thank You" to everyone who works so hard for the benefit of the children at The Hawthorns Primary School, especially: the Senior Leadership Team, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, office staff, Mr Gill the Site Manager, the lunchtime controllers, kitchen staff, and the PTA.