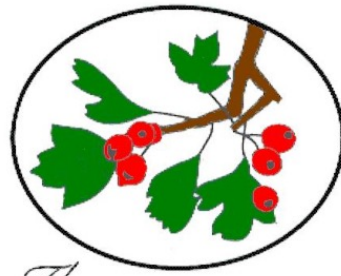


Welcome to the Hawthorns School Governors' Newsletter 2015.

I would like to start this year's newsletter by thanking all the parents, guardians, school staff, PTA committee members and helpers, fellow governors, Pat Kerton and the leadership team, and all other stakeholders who ensure that the Hawthorns School remains an excellent school from which pupils leave having achieved and developed well, ready to start the next phase of their education.

As always, much work has gone on within the three main governing body committees, and I will in the main leave the chairs of those committees to supply the detail. I must however comment on one or two personnel and finance matters that, unsurprisingly, are part of the Personnel and Finance Committee remit!

The Personnel and Finance Committee has been busy recently, particularly with regard to the school budget for 2015/16. The 'school funding gap' in England hit the headlines in March this year, underlining the fact that Wokingham has the lowest per pupil funding in England. This is not new, but



The
Hawthorns
Primary School

the level of funding has been decreasing year on year whilst costs have been rising. There is only one way this can go, and despite cost saving initiatives and careful budgeting, this year we have submitted a deficit budget for 2015/16. The school is well managed financially, has a full complement of pupils, and the deficit is relatively small; other schools are not in such a fortunate position, and the situation is not sustainable in the long term. Representations are being made to central government regarding the level of funding, but in the meantime the reality is that the school will have to work with the low level of funding we have been allocated.



G o v e r n o r s ' N e w s l e t t e r 2 0 1 5

There are ways in which you as parents and guardians can help. It is more important than ever that the requested donations for offsite trips are received from all parents in a position to make them, as the school is not in a position to fund the shortfall and the trips are an important part of the children's education. One disadvantage of the on-line payment system is that the payment can be overlooked once the permission slip has been returned, so please be diligent!

You will have seen from the school newsletters that the end of this term will see several staff members leave the school. My thanks and best wishes go to all those staff members who have left, or will leave, by the end of this year. In particular I must mention Mrs Coffield, Mrs Coward, Mrs Hooper and Mrs Thompson who have been long standing pillars of the school community, and were already experienced members of staff when I became involved with the school six years ago. I must also mention Miss Brimley, who as well as having taught in key



Funds raised by the PTA have always been useful in providing the sort of equipment that gives an extra boost to the learning environment. Going forward, if we want our children to benefit from up to date computing equipment and high quality physical surroundings inside and outside the school, that PTA funding will be essential. Some members of the PTA committee will be standing down at the end of this year, and the committee are looking for volunteers to take their place. Other members are remaining in post, so new committee members will benefit from their enthusiasm and experience. If you are interested in this important role I would urge you to approach any of the PTA committee members. It is also very important that we get the support of parents and family members on the day of events such as the Summer Fair, to help out but equally importantly to spend money on the many stalls. One such excellent stall is the barbecue, run in the main by the school governors, and we always welcome people to come along and see us there!

stage 1 for the last four years has spent the last year as governor. The commitment and enthusiasm of all the staff who are leaving will be missed, but we wish them well, and we look forward to working with our new colleagues in the autumn term.

Finally I must add my thanks to Andy Kensley who has been a governor here for nine years, much of this as chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee, recently as Vice Chair of the Governing Body, and long standing organiser of the Imagineering Club from which many pupils have benefitted. Andy moves on to new things in September, and he goes with our thanks for his years of commitment and support.

I will hand over to my colleagues to update you on their area of governance. Thank you for another good year.

Chris Shaw
(Chair of Governors)

This is the end of my fifth year as a governor (where does the time go?)

As chair of Sites and Buildings / Health and Safety I have again been involved with improvements and maintenance of the school building and grounds. I think the school and the grounds are looking really good - a lovely environment for the children to work and play.

In order to ensure that the school is a healthy and safe place for the children, we have again this year reviewed all our many policies and made amendments where necessary. We carried out a 'fire' audit, checking that all classrooms and communal areas had all the correct signage, procedure notices and extinguishers and that the children were aware of the evacuation procedure. Full evacuation fire drills have taken place, all of which I have attended and each time was very impressed by the way the children conducted themselves whilst leaving the building and making their way to their designated area.



Again, as well as all the 'official governors business', I have been lucky to join the children on some of their outings and activities. These have included.....

Walks to the Emmbrook with Year 1. These are such lovely afternoons. They go each term to see how the area changes with the different seasons. We look at all the trees, flowers and birds, but perhaps best of all..... we get to play 'poohsticks' off the bridge!



I spent a morning with my year 5 class at the Cole Museum which is located on the campus of Reading University. It is a remarkable Zoology Museum, which contains some amazing exhibits including the skeletons of an Indian circus elephant and a 5 metre python.

I also went with my class to the Madejski Stadium, where the children played mini matches in the indoor training dome and then went on a tour of the stadium itself, including going out onto the pitch area.

In my role as sports governor I have enjoyed helping out at both the cross country and the athletics clubs. It is a joy to watch the children keeping fit and sharing in their enthusiasm and determination. Well done to all involved for introducing more sports activities within the school day, before school and at after school clubs, a great job!





I was again invited on the Year 6 residential trip to Little Canada on the Isle of Wight. Another fantastic week it was too! The children were a joy to be with, very polite and well behaved. I again joined in the activities..... managed to hit the target in archery, paddled my canoe out to sea (the water was freezing!), screamed on the giant swing and screamed whilst abseiling!

I look forward now to what the next year brings!

Judith Shepherd

(Co-opted Governor, Chair of Sites and Buildings, Health and Safety Governor and Sports Governor)



My first 8 months as a parent governor have at times been a little daunting, but the Hawthorns team is amazingly supportive. There is a lot of information to take on board, but it's certainly been very interesting and has given me a far better understanding of the challenges schools face. I've attended a number of governor training courses, all of which have been very informative and designed to guide in the 'critical friend' role governors play.

I'm hoping to take on a subject link governor role from the start of the new term, which will give me a specific subject to focus on within the school. I now have an adopted class (5MC) who will become 6CW in September, and I'm looking forward to spending time with them, and getting to know them as they complete their final year.

Emma Kerr

(Parent Governor)



As usual, this academic year has been a busy and varied one for governors with a number of new government initiatives that schools have been required to put in place. Wokingham provides excellent training for governors which has been invaluable for keeping me, as SEN governor, up to date with changes in provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and helping in the monitoring role. I have had regular meetings with our SENCO to review progress and recently had the privilege of attending an annual review which confirmed how much care and planning the staff put into providing for our SEN pupils, and the thought that goes into ensuring that they will have as smooth a transition as possible to their new classes in September.



I am now into my 5th year as governor at Hawthorns School and again the last 12 months has been busy but extremely enjoyable.

I sit on a number of governor committees - Learning and Teaching, Personnel and Finance and the Pay Review Committee. We usually meet once a term and more frequently if needed to work through things such as the policies that need to be reviewed, amended and approved. There's certainly a lot of reading to be done!

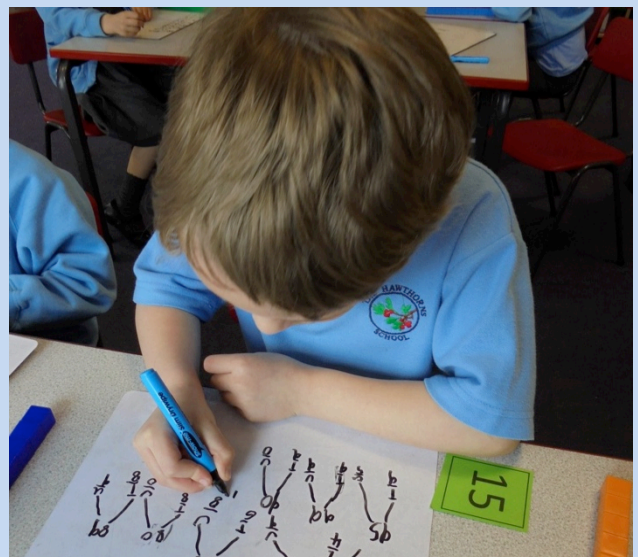
As maths governor also, I work alongside the maths leaders in school (thanks to Miss Nicola Norris, Mrs Alison Coward and previously Mrs Jenny Waters for doing such a fantastic job!) who have worked tirelessly with fellow colleagues to ensure that our new maths curriculum is fully embedded across all year groups.



One of the bonuses of being a governor is that we can be involved in activities with the children. Amongst other things this year, I had an enjoyable morning at the Cole Museum with a year 3 class and was most impressed by what they knew about bones and skeletons! Year 5 were in fine voice when I played for their carol concert to the residents of Kennet Court, and I heard some wonderful poetry performances by children throughout the school for the competition in March. Fortunately we governors on the judging panel were given strict criteria to make sure we were as fair as possible!

I am now looking forward to another challenging but enjoyable year.

Rosie Beech (Co-opted Governor, SEN Governor)





At a time of considerable change and upheaval in school across the whole field of education, all the teaching, support and administration staff always strive to ensure that as a school, we provide the very best education and opportunity wherever possible for all the children.

I was fortunate to be in the company of my adopted class a short while ago - thank you again Miss Lianne Boyd and your year 3 class for a really enjoyable morning. A number of the children remember me from my time working as a lunchtime controller when they were in year 1 and it was lovely to see how well they are all doing. I heard a number of the children read too which was a joy. There was just the one scary moment when plastic balls were 'thrown' around the class as part of their 'ideas' sharing exercise but everyone survived unscathed and it was fantastic to see the children having fun and learning in such a fun environment.

Coming from a background in banking and finance and as I am studying for a diploma in school business management, I have also had the opportunity to work closely alongside the school business manager Mrs Sandra Carter and Mrs Debbie Tyrell who is part of the administration team, as we investigate further opportunities to save money in school. Budgets are tight and we are looking closely at some of the administration costs such as photocopiers. We are trying to secure more competitive pricing contracts and perhaps new more 'snazzy' machines!

It has been a great pleasure to be a part of the Hawthorns 'team' and I look forward to another enjoyable and successful year ahead.

Karen Blake (Co-opted Governor, Maths Governor)



I can't believe how quickly my first year as a parent governor has passed!

With our first daughter (Chloe) recently starting at Hawthorns, I decided I wanted to be a part of that "adventure" with her and applied to be a parent governor. Upon election, I asked Chloe what she thought the governors did – her first response was "drinking tea" followed by "making decisions". Given she is only five years old, I actually thought she was quite insightful....

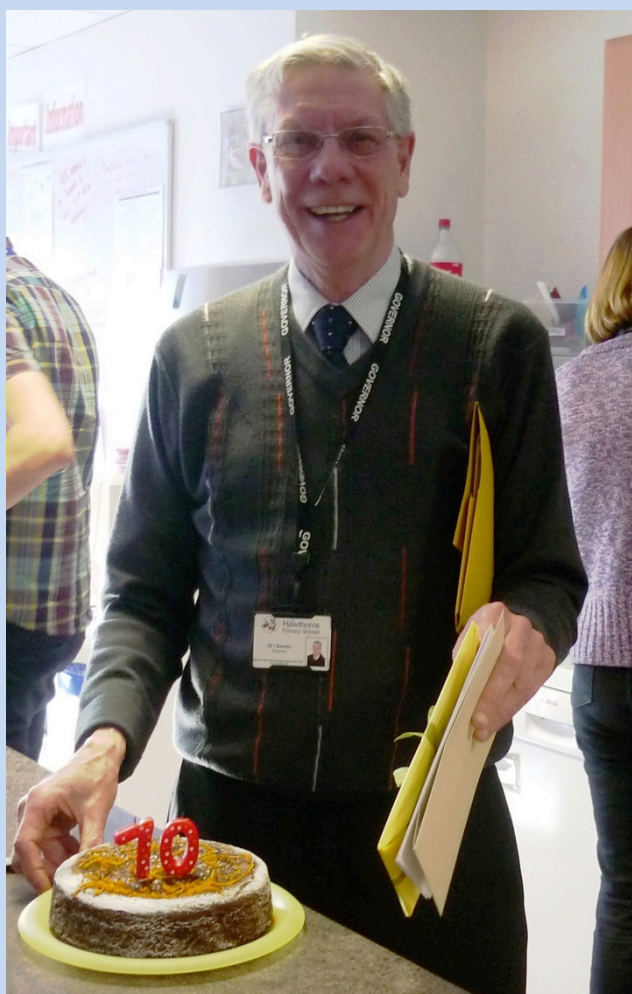


Until I realised there are so many real joys attached to this role – the main one being part of the Governors' Day assembly this year. And yes there are quite a few meetings. But the more involved I get in school life, the more comforted I am that Mrs Kerton and her team do such a great job.

Now that I feel like I have got my feet under the table, I am looking forward to another great year at Hawthorns. Chloe has also told me she is looking forward to next year's Governors' Day as her sister will be there too!

John Howarth

(Parent Governor)



The PTA have been a great help this year as through their support we have seen more interactive whiteboards installed and all classrooms now have additional PCs in place for the children to use to help with their IT development. The PTA have also helped us to be able to afford more classroom laptops linked to every whiteboard for the use of the teachers during lessons.

There is one area of concern – whilst we are very conscientious in school to ensure that the children have safe access to the Internet - we hope that this is true when they are at home?

Ian Severn

(Co-opted Governor, IT and e-safety Governor)



Well another busy year has passed as a member of staff and Hawthorns governor. It started with the My Journey challenge, which was entered into with gusto and an exceptional amount of enthusiasm by the children, their families, governors and members of staff. We managed to walk around the world twice beating other local schools and winning funds for the school. This competitive element was also clearly evident in the staff room and many dog-walking staff may have shown signs of obsession. Personally I think tapping in at 11.58pm on the last day was a little extreme but just goes to show the commitment we all had to the challenge.

This year has also seen hard work by the staff in embracing the new curriculum. As humanities governor I was able to represent the school on a course at Upton Court on 'Teaching historical chronology' which is a challenging concept for children to grasp. The subject leader, Mrs Machin, was then able to watch the practical application of this course when I used it with Year 6 in their topic lesson. For many of the children this was an eye opening lesson and showed the real benefit of teaching chronology in schools as they discovered the different historical periods were not equal in length and in particular how brief the Edwardian period was compared to the Anglo Saxon and Viking periods.

Mrs Machin and I have continued to bring history alive at Hawthorns with our recent assembly celebrating the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta with some of year 6 playing key roles as the barons demanding their rights from me as the 'evil' King John.

As Staff Governor I must also say a big thank you to the many staff leaving for the invaluable contributions they have made to the school, which have helped to create our success. Both teachers and teaching assistants have gone above and beyond the call of duty in so many ways enabling children to take part in outside sporting and musical events and enabling clubs such as Art Club to run after school hours. Our children have truly benefitted from the dedication of the staff and we should all give those members of staff a resounding 'thank you' and wish them all the best in their future path.



I look forward to another year and wish you all a safe and happy holiday.

Mrs Bridgeman

(Staff and Humanities Governor)

We are both in our first year as co-opted governors, having been appointed to the governing body in September 2014. Our role is to feed back information to teaching staff and support our fellow governors in understanding the everyday workings of the school. We share responsibility for attending Teaching and Learning meetings. Mr Jex also attends Personnel and Finance meetings. Miss Brimley also attends Sites and Buildings meetings and has taken an additional responsibility as the governor responsible for safeguarding. We have enjoyed the year as governors, learning about the school and the way it is managed and the important role governors have in making decisions to improve the education of all the children we teach.

Sadly, Miss Brimley will be leaving the school this year so a new co-opted governor from the teaching staff will be appointed. Mr Jex is looking forward to continuing his role on the governing body in his second year.

Deborah Brimley and Matt Jex
(Co-opted Governors)



It has proved to be another busy year for the Finance and Personnel Committee. As you may be aware school budgets are under a lot of pressure and at Hawthorns it is no different. The committee spent a lot of time during the year, with help from Sandra Carter, monitoring the budget for 2014-15 and then just recently setting a budget for 2015-16. A lot of difficult decisions needed to be taken and the outlook for the foreseeable future is even bleaker.

As a school are very lucky with the support we receive from the PTA and parents. That support will be needed even more if we want to give our children the education and experiences they deserve.

On a more positive note Pat and her team have successfully recruited a full complement of teaching staff in very challenging circumstances and we look forward to working with them from September.



I would like to thank Pat and all the staff for all their hard work during this year and send the staff that are leaving our best wishes for the future.

Diane Hampton
(Co-opted Governor, Chair of Personnel and Finance)

The Learning and Teaching Committee has continued to play its part in supporting and challenging the school in the important areas of teaching, curriculum and assessment. In particular this year we have been monitoring the implementation of the new curriculum across the school and we appreciate all the hard work the staff have put in to ensure it is successfully embedded.

To help us understand the curriculum and teaching methods we have heard a variety of presentations from staff on topics including



‘Narrowing the gap between boys and girls writing’, ‘Maths teaching and assessment’ and an overview of the new National Curriculum.

Personally this year I’ve still really enjoyed running our Imagineering Club, which has proved as popular as ever in its fifth year at Hawthorns.

However, I’ll be sad to leave the governing body at the end of this term due to my job change. I wish everyone at Hawthorns every success for the future!

Andy Kensley

(Co-opted Governor, Vice-Chair, Chair of Learning and Teaching, Science Governor)

Governor vacancy

The Hawthorns school governors would like to appoint a new governor from the local community in the autumn term. Would you be interested, or do you know anyone in the local area who might be interested? There is no requirement for educational expertise neither do you need to be a parent of a child at the school. What you do need is an interest in local education and some time, energy and enthusiasm. Being a governor can be a really rewarding experience and there is a range of free training available.

More information will be made available in September.

If you think you may be interested email:
governors@hawthorns.wokingham.sch.uk

The School Governors look forward to seeing you at the Open Afternoon on 9th 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, lunchtime controllers, kitchen staff and the PTA