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# Welcome to the Hawthorns Primary Governors' Newsletter 2023

Judith Shepherd



## Chair of Governors. Co-opted Governor, Designated Safeguarding Governor, Early Years Governor

Welcome to our 2023 Newsletter.

Another Academic Year has almost come to an end. A year which I feel has just flown by. This is my thirteenth year as a Governor and fifth as Chair, a role which I thoroughly enjoy. Over the years I have seen huge changes in the Education System which the school has embraced and continuously acts upon to ensure our children receive the highest standard of education.

The school year started with the marvellous news that Hawthorns had been rated 'Good' by Ofsted. A fantastic achievement. Nine Governors played their part in the inspection, being interviewed, and questioned by the inspector, who throughout did not leave any stone unturned! Pupils were also spoken to and given the opportunity to say how they felt about life in school. Full credit of course goes to all the wonderful staff, in their many roles, who work together to make the school what it is.

I would like to share a few of the comments made by the Ofsted Inspector ...

- Pupils feel respected and valued. They enjoy coming to school and show kindness to each other and to the adults working in school.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils are eager to learn and contribute well to lessons. They speak with enthusiasm about what they have learned.
- Leaders are determined that children do well and want the best for every child.
- Leaders have designed a curriculum that is ambitious and well sequenced.
- Staff are aspirational for pupils with special educational need and/or disabilities (SEND)
- Staff teach pupils how to stay safe and healthy. This includes how to stay safe online.
- Teachers have effective strategies to establish what pupils know and can do.



*Year 5 Kew Gardens Trip*

The Governing Body were so proud of the result. Well done to everyone.

We have had our full quota of meetings this year. Personnel and Finance, Learning and Teaching and Sites and Buildings/ Health and Safety have continued to be virtual. The Full Governing Body meetings have been held in school, which has enabled us all to meet up in person.

I would like to say a big thank you to my fellow Governors who have voluntarily given their time and shared their expertise throughout the year. Our Clerk Pippa West is worth her weight in gold, ensuring that everything is done when it should be, plus organising and minuting all our meetings. Thank you Pippa!

A huge thank you also to our PTA. This year they have again worked tirelessly, raising funds for the school. Within this providing fun for the children and adults alike. We were more than happy to man the kitchen at the Christmas Fair and run the BBQ at the Outdoor Cinema.

As Early Years Governor, I have thoroughly enjoyed visiting the children in their classrooms and watching them make new friends, enjoy learning, and grow in knowledge and confidence as the year has progressed. Their Christmas performances were a joy to watch.

I enjoyed a lovely sunny day with Year 5 at Kew Gardens and a day at Reading Museum with Year 4. Joining the children on such days is an absolute pleasure.

To the members of staff who have left or are leaving at the end of term, I would like to wish them every happiness and success in the future.

Finally, I would like to say thank you on behalf of all the Governors to every single member of staff at school. Everyone has a role to play, which, put together ensures that the children are happy and safe in school, have the best education and continue to **Belong, Believe, Achieve and Grow!**

Wishing you all a happy, hopefully sunny summer break with your family and friends.

Judith Shepherd

Chair of Governors





**Dozie Nnabuife**

**Vice Chair of Governors, Co-opted Governor, Chair of Learning & Teaching Committee, Designated Safeguarding Governor**

It was yet another exciting school year with the school open to outdoor activities and the lockdown now fully behind us. The Full Governing Board meetings were all done inside the school grounds and we continued the committee meetings virtually as agreed by the governors.

This year, the all day Governor's Day returned where the governors presented to the school assembly, attended the classes and had lunch with the children in the school canteen. The theme of the presentation to the children was on my favourite book growing up; this was an exciting moment engaging the children in remembering and narrating our childhood favourite books.

I chaired the Learning and Teaching Committee meetings and this was a period where the governors continued to support and challenge the school leadership to continue to uphold the high standards expected of the Hawthorns School. I also attend the Personnel & Finance and Sites & Building Committee meetings which were also done virtually.

Other key activities for the year included coming into school for the annual Safeguarding Audit with the Deputy Head Teacher where we looked through the policy and documentations to ensure the school is in compliance with NSPCC standard. I was also in the school to review the Single Central Register with the Finance Manager.

We welcomed new governors to the fold and I look forward to working with them to achieve for the school.

As I type this newsletter piece, I am all excited as I am looking forward this weekend to join other governors on the BBQ stand to support the PTA who are organising a Big Movie/Cinema show for the whole school. This is a great effort to bring exciting family activities and raise funds for the development of the school.

This wouldn't be complete without acknowledging and appreciating the enormous efforts and sacrifice of the Leadership team, the teachers, the PTA, parents and everyone for what we have all achieved for the children this academic year. As we approach the end of year and another set of boys and girls move on to new adventures in secondary schools, I send my best wishes to them knowing they will be great ambassadors of The Hawthorns Primary School.

I intend to continue working with the rest of the governors, the school management and staff to positively impact The Hawthorns Primary School.



***The School Council presenting to the Governors***



***Year 6 Residential***







**Year 2 King's Coronation**

**Diane Hampton**

**Co-opted Governor, Chair of Peronnel & Finance Committee, Development Governor, Admin Governor**

It has been another busy year for the Committee as we strive to fulfil our statutory duties. The committee ensures that resources are deployed appropriately in line with the school's priorities, avoiding financial loss and waste. We also ensure accurate accounts are kept and that the school has a three-year financial strategy in place taking into account realistic assumptions about future funding, pupil numbers and pressures. We also provide advice, challenge and support to the Headteacher. It has been a difficult year especially as we have experienced the same cost of living challenges as the school community. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the administration team who help us to fulfil our duties in these difficult times.

I was very pleased to be asked at the end of the last academic year to help with Year 6 Careers Week. This involves the pupils writing letters of application for advertised jobs. I was very impressed with the standard of the letters and even more so the interviews that I had for a wide variety of posts. The pupils were very articulate and not at all phased by the questions they were asked. I am very excited to be able to be involved again this year.

I always enjoy Governor's Day although I find myself feeling very nervous before the Governor assembly, the children know what makes an excellent assembly. The day started by joining parents and their children at the Parent Reading Café. It was so interesting to hear them talking about their book and why they chose it. We then spent time visiting year groups and classrooms to see how the children engage with impressive lessons and the activities that were taking place. It is always a lovely experience to have lunch with the children and hear about their hobbies and interests and how much they enjoy their time in school.

I was also very fortunate to be able to attend one of the Parent Forum meetings and hear their thoughts on various subjects that were raised.

Providing refreshments during parents evening for staff is always a pleasure and we were able to start again following the Covid interruption. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our very committed and hardworking staff for their dedication and service this academic year.

**Will Mitchell**

**Co-opted Governor**

I was delighted to be appointed a co-opted Governor at Hawthorns in March and am really happy to join such an experienced and welcoming team.

I am currently Head of Year 13 and teacher of Geography at Reading Blue Coat School. I am also a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and School Partnership Coordinator at the school. Outside of school I coach at Wokingham and Emmbrook Football Club and love cooking and BBQ's. I have one son at Hawthorns and he is absolutely loving it.

In my short time governing at The Hawthorns, I have had the privilege of attending the EYFS Father's Day event, Sports Day and have also interviewed many Year 6 Students about their career aspirations. I think the best thing about being a Governor is coming into school and seeing it in full flow. I have been thoroughly impressed so far and I am sure it will continue.



**Year 3 Science investigation**



**EYFS Father's Day**





Year 1 Rushall Farm Trip



Year 4 World Book Day



Playground Games



Year 5 Kennet Court Visit

## Phillipa Dunn

### Local Authority Governor, SEND Governor, LAC & PPG Governor

Being a school governor is a wide ranging role. From meeting and being interviewed by an OFSTED inspector to serving burgers at the PTA Summer Event! One of the best parts of being a governor is coming into school and interacting with the children. I really enjoyed visiting an Outdoor Learning class – the children were very creative and really enjoyed being outside and working together! A really good learning experience! Governors' Day is a time when we can visit many of the classes as well as telling the children a little bit about ourselves in an assembly (daunting but also fun!). This year the theme was 'My Favourite Book' – we certainly had a wide range of choices amongst the governors!

I have also been into school to support the SATs examinations and I was so impressed by the calm and focussed approach the children had to these tests. Hopefully all their hard work (and the teachers and support staff's hard work) will be rewarded with deserved excellent results!

As a member of 2 committees (Personnel & Finance and Learning & Teaching) I have attended a range of meetings which continue to give me a valuable insight into the strategic planning that goes into running a successful school. Governors are often called 'Critical Friends' – a good description of the support they can provide to the school community. As Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Governor I have attended forums and courses with SEND as their focus. I should also like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the Hawthorns SENDCo Charlotte Irving and her team of support staff for all their work. They have worked tirelessly to support our pupils to ensure that they make really good progress.

Following our OFSTED inspection last summer it was excellent news to be confirmed as a 'good' school which reflects the enormous amount of hard work and care that takes place running a successful school. I really enjoy my role as Governor – it can be challenging but it is also enormously rewarding.

## Helen Vernon

### Co-opted Governor

My name is Helen and although I have joined as a co-opted governor, I am also a parent of a child currently in the school, so I have strong ties to the Hawthorns.

We're coming to the end of another school year and I must admit at the beginning I didn't imagine I'd end the year a school governor! I'm very new to the role and haven't yet had the chance to attend many meetings, but I'm looking forward to the next academic year and really getting stuck in.

The role of governor, I believe, is incredibly important in both supporting the school as well as challenging it to achieve excellence. By attending the meetings, joining committees and visiting the school I hope to bring my experience, both as a mother and from my life, to contribute to the excellence the school already strives for.







**Sarah Mapleston**

**Co-opted Governor, Sports & Travel Governor**

Another year and what a year it has been! As always, I love my role as a governor as I see school in a different way to my classroom role. I have attended all of the meetings this year – both virtually and in person. This year – as many of you know – the school has continued to work hard with achieving accreditation with Modeshift Stars where we have been looking at reducing car usage and promoting active travel every single year for the past four years. This is extremely important as we need to take ownership over looking after the environment. This year we have managed to gain the silver and gold accreditation which is truly amazing! Many thanks go towards the children and yourselves, the parents, as changing and adapting attitudes to travel can be hard but the benefits are enormous in the long run. Although I am stepping away from the school as a teacher I will still be involved as a governor and will offer support to the next member of staff who is going to take over this wonderful project.

It is always nice to give back to others, and as a governor, I am always willing to give up time to support others. Helping out with the Winter Fair on the hot food counter was fun (but hot!) and of course, the famous BBQ in the summer term! I look forward to seeing what events the PTA will host next year.

I always end on this note but a huge thank you to the staff – this includes the admin team, the cleaner, dinner controllers, teaching assistants and the teachers. Without any of these teams, the Hawthorns would not be the Hawthorns. It is always important to express gratitude towards those that work extremely hard and although at times it can be challenging, we all help to demonstrate our aspirational qualities which in turn the children so successfully as well.

I hope that everyone has a restful summer and enjoys the long break!



*Scooter Training*



*Be Bright Be Seen Day*



*Year 6 Bikeability*

**Paula Anderson**

**Staff Governor, English & :Library Governor**

What another great year it has been as a governor and I have really enjoyed the time spent supporting the school and working with a fantastic team.

As I represent the teaching staff on the School's Governing Body, part of my role is feeding back any relevant information to the teaching staff and supporting my fellow governors in understanding the everyday workings of the school. I have continued to be part of the Personal and Finance Committee and recently moved to the Learning and Teaching Committee. I highly enjoy attending both of these committees and find them extremely interesting.

There have been the usual events to be involved in over the last year, such as the Christmas Fair, Governors' Day and recently a day of celebration for our new King. There have also been some exciting changes this year as well, one in particular was the opening of our new school library. It continues to be a huge success and we were delighted to host a Reading Cafe where parents and pupils could share their love of reading and take a look inside our newly finished room. We even invited the Mayor of Wokingham, who was very impressed.

We are extremely thankful to the PTA who as always continue to be able to raise funds to support our school. Many thanks to all the parents & other relatives of Hawthorns pupils who donate so generously. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff at The Hawthorns for all the wonderful work they have done this year!





*Governors' Day Assembly*



*Open Afternoon*



*The Mayor opening the library*



*Governors joining in outdoor learning*

## Julian Dempster

**Co-opted Governor, Chair of Sites, Buildings, Health & Safety Committee, Health & Safety Governor, Environmental Science & Forest Schools Governor**

Great work has continued at the school – some real highlights that come to mind:

- A brilliant new library for all the children to enjoy – I know they enjoy hunting out a new book to bring home.
- New toilets for the children in Year 3 and Year 4 – improving the environment for us all.
- Seeing how engaged the children were at our governors assembly when we all shared memories from our favourite childhood books.
- New playground equipment for the children to keep active at playtimes.
- Miss Mapleston's determination and commitment to improve 'green' travel to the school – we're now gold accredited!
- I enjoyed setting off the fire alarm at the school (only for the periodic fire drills!) – but how exciting to see everyone rush out.
- Helping at the barbeque at the PTA outdoor cinema – I don't want to see another sausage! But as Matilda says "sometimes you do have to be a little bit naughty"!

Thank you to everyone in the school (children, staff, parents and governors) for their contribution to making Hawthorns a safe and healthy environment!

## Asmita Gore

**Parent Governor, IT, Computing & Website Compliance Governor, e-Safety Governor**

My name is Asmita Gore and I am a Parent Governor and this is my second year running as Parent Governor. This role has given me an immense opportunity to understand the school better, how hard our teachers and staff work and at the same time supporting all the audit and committee meetings, providing our inputs and suggestions.

The role gives me an opportunity to interact with kids more, be it supporting them in outdoor trips, helping them in class, taking Year 6 interviews etc. The amount of effort school puts in, is visible via our students.

Apart from this I am also the IT Governor and I am very excited to move to Cloud servers in the new term.

