

Welcome to the Governors' Newsletter 2014.

In previous newsletters I have looked back over the school year, but this year I intend to keep retrospect short, and look to the future.

First though there have been quite a few staff changes this year which will be communicated to you in early July along with next year's staff list. My thanks and best wishes go to all staff members who have moved on to new projects. I must thank our interim Deputy Head Will Day in particular, for his enthusiasm and attention to detail while working with the Governing Body during his time at The Hawthorns. We wish him well in his new school as Deputy Head.

My thanks go once more to my fellow governors for their hard work, resulting in a cohesive and efficient team. I will leave it to my colleagues to discuss the detail, but notably:

- The Learning and Teaching committee has focused in ever more detail on the standards of learning and teaching in the school.
- The Personnel and Finance committee continues to monitor a



budget which is tight and getting tighter, and to work with a changeable staffing environment.

- The Sites and Buildings committee has overseen the improvements to the outside areas of the school, resulting in a wonderful outside environment in which our children can enjoy education. The PTA also deserve thanks here as they continue to do an amazing job raising funds which have contributed considerably to these improvements.

So to the future: This September will see a number of major changes for primary schools.

Predominant among these are:



- The introduction of the new National Curriculum: This is a large piece of work which will see some topics and subject areas move to different year groups. Much of the new curriculum is dictated by government but there is also some latitude for schools to tailor the curriculum around the ethos of the school, and governors will spend time alongside the senior leadership team and subject leaders in order to understand how this will take shape at The Hawthorns.



- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) reforms: These changes will see children with special educational needs assessed in a new way, and funding for the extra support required will also be decided using new criteria. Information about these reforms was contained in the REACH newsletter circulated by email from the school office in May. Again this is a large change, in which governors will be involved.
- Free school meals for all key stage 1 pupils: This is a logistical challenge to ensure the safe and timely provision of meals to a greatly increased number of children in a dining hall designed for a one form entry school. The further requirement here is to



achieve this within the challenging level of financial assistance allocated by the government for infrastructure changes.

There is a further imminent fundamental change which will specifically affect the governing body. The government has decreed that all governing bodies must review their membership, and reconstitute by September 2015. The general advice is to form governing bodies which are smaller, more cohesive, and with an emphasis on selecting governors based on their skill set. Due to a number of the Hawthorns school governors approaching the end of their terms, we intend to reconstitute our governing body early next term. The final details have yet to be agreed upon, but in order to comply with the new regulations there will be a reduction in the number of elected staff and parent governors, a reduction in the number of local authority governors, and the category of community governor will disappear. A new category of co-opted governor is introduced, allowing the governing body to select governors based on their skill set. This can and will include co-opting governors from similar parts of the community as at present, for example parents, carers and staff members. It also allows for co-option of governors from a wider field. At the point of reconstitution we will move some of our existing governors into this new category in order to keep continuity, experience and skills.

We will also lose some of our existing governors. My thanks go to Mary Coffield, Stephanie McKay, Anne-Marie Peries, Adam Dotchin and Debbie Banbury whose four-year terms come to an end early in the autumn term. I would also like to thank Emma Wells who will be stepping back from her governor role at the end of this term. Emma has been Vice Chair and committee chair and has been an important contributor to the work of the governing body for the last five years.

As a result of these changes we will be looking to recruit governors next term. If you are interested in joining us, keep an eye out for the information which will be circulated nearer the time. Information on being a school governor is available at

www.wokingham.gov.uk/schools/governors.

In addition, any time is a good time to ask us about the governor role. It isn't necessary to wait until an election is announced, and if we know someone has an interest we can keep that information on file until a vacancy arises.

Governors can be contacted at governors@hawthorns.wokingham.sch.uk. Mrs Izquierdo in her role at the school as Clerk to the Governors can provide information if requested. As well as this we are available on an informal basis at the open afternoon on the 7th of July.

I hope to see you there!

Chris Shaw (Chair of Governors)



As Special Educational Needs (SEN) Governor I know that it has been a particularly busy year for school staff. In order to keep up to date with all the changes that are happening to the organisation and funding of SEN I have attended several training sessions and met with our SEN Co-ordinator, and I know how much work goes on behind the scenes to provide the best for our children. In the autumn term I had the privilege of going on two learning walks and saw at first hand how well focused our school staff are on meeting the needs of individual children and the hard work they put in to help them succeed.

As always there are many opportunities for governors to become involved in school life and this year has been no exception. I have played the piano for carol concerts, been on several school trips, prepared material for our Governors' Assembly, continued to help in the library and once a week have spent time with children in my Year 2 'adopted' class. If you are thinking of becoming a governor you can be assured that the school will welcome and make use of any talents you have – and it will be fun!

Rosie Beech (Local Authority Governor and SEN Governor)



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 will both stand down as teacher governors in September 2014 as their terms will come to an end. A new teacher governor is yet to be appointed.

Mrs Coffield and Mrs McKay
(Teacher Governors)



This is the end of my fourth year as a Community Governor. Again a very busy and enjoyable twelve months.

I took over as Chair of the Sites and Buildings Committee and the Health and Safety sub-committee last September. We meet once a term for each, and are involved with the improvements and maintenance of the school buildings and grounds, plus ensuring that Hawthorns is a safe environment for pupils and staff. There are many policies which have to be reviewed, amended and approved, so a great deal of reading to be done!

The biggest undertaking this year was the back playground, which has been transformed with areas of artificial grass and a new surface with sports markings, making the whole space bigger and brighter. I know the children love it and there have been lots of compliments from parents too!

As well as 'Official Governor Meetings', I have had the most enjoyable year joining in with school activities. To pick out a few.....

As Sports Governor I helped Mrs Pritchard and Mrs Helliwell run the after school cross country club.

I also joined the various teams (marshalling, not running!!) as they competed in Cross Country races at venues including Bearwood College, Black Park Slough, and The Lookout in Bracknell.





All the runners were a credit to the school, not only by their enthusiasm and ability, but also by the way they conducted themselves. I felt very proud of them all. I am helping this term, training members of the Athletics Club, the culmination of which is the District Sports Day at Palmer Park in July, where our athletes will be competing against twelve other schools.

I accompanied Year 5 to Kennett Court in October, when they took harvest gifts to the residents. Then again at Christmas when they sang carols accompanied by a group of talented year 5 musicians. What a joyful afternoon, an occasion I know the residents look forward to each year.



I joined Year 2 on their trip to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. This was linked to their 'Take One Picture' study in class. They also did a Scavenger Hunt, finding objects, drawing them and writing a little about them. The children had a super day. If you haven't been, the museum is well worth a visit.

I was so lucky to be asked to join the team accompanying the year six pupils on their residential trip to the Isle of Wight. What a fantastic week I had! The PGL staff at Little Canada do a great job, the cabins were fun and the food was really good too. It was a joy to see all the children so enthusiastic and enjoying themselves, facing personal challenges and feeling a great sense of achievement. I was very impressed by the children, who were well behaved, polite and respectful. I joined in as many activities as I could. My highlights were kayaking and canoeing in the sea, dragon boat racing, archery, and abseiling (my heart was in my mouth for that one!). Nothing however had prepared me for the giant swing.... as my group could tell you, I did scream very loudly!! A truly memorable week, thank you!

Judith Shepherd (Community Governor, Chair of Sites and Buildings and Health and Safety Committees)



I have been a Parent Governor for 4 years now and as the end of my term is arriving I feel in a reflective mood.

I have thoroughly enjoyed being a governor at Hawthorns and I am going to truly miss all of the teachers, staff and children that I have been lucky enough to have been involved with. I would like to thank the governors, staff, parents and pupils for giving me the opportunity to learn so much about how a school runs and to have had such a wonderful experience.

Debbie Banbury (Parent Governor)

The Learning Platform is being used by the whole school community. It is proving to be a very useful resource and is much easier to use and update.

We are beginning to see the installation of new electronic white boards - these use high definition technology rather than the use of projectors. The PTA have been very supportive of this new innovation by purchasing the first three of four! A big "thank you" to the PTA. We hope over the coming 2 – 3 years to see all of the classrooms using them.

Our focus on 'E-Safety' continues as we improve the use of technology throughout the school. We trust that the children are equally safe when using IT at home - please be sure that you are taking the necessary precautions to keep your children safe while using the internet.

The next step in ICT is to review the new curriculum. We are already exploring some of the new coding programs on offer like SCRATCH and FLOWOL. Training for Teaching Assistants has also started.

Ian Severn (Community Governor and ICT Governor)





I enjoy being a community governor at Hawthorns School. It's lovely to see children I've known from Tadpoles mother & toddler group settling in to school and obviously enjoying it and thriving. This year in addition to the more usual governor activities I have learnt phonics and played Pooh sticks in the Emmbrook with my adopted class.

Doreen Murgatroyd (Community Governor)



I've had a great year with my adopted class 5MC this year. It's been very rewarding to help out with reading on Monday mornings. I also got to read one of my favourite books, 'Tom's Midnight Garden'.

At Christmas I was very fortunate to accompany Year 5 to Kenet Court for the annual carol concert. The singing was lovely and I was greatly impressed by the musicians' performances and the confidence of the soloists and readers. It was also fantastic to see the pupils chatting with the residents over a cup of tea afterwards. You could tell that our visit meant a lot to them and how important it is that Hawthorns maintains and strengthens links with the community.

Governors' Day this year was a great success with the assembly going particularly well. We were able to link it with the school's values of belong, believe, achieve and grow. It seemed to really strike a chord with the children. We really got into our stride with our African play when we performed for the EYFS classes separately - seeing their eyes light up at the different animals and the African spears was a delight.

Afterwards I had a very challenging morning in Year 5 and realised my mental maths maybe wasn't quite as good as I thought, especially when we had to remember increasingly long sets of numbers.

I always enjoy having lunch with the pupils on Governors' Day, as it's a real opportunity to chat with them about just about anything. This year was no exception but had the added excitement of a fire alarm as a result of a year 6 science lesson. The children were exceptionally calm and well behaved as they all filed out to the back playground. It made me recognise once again just how well behaved our children are and how proud we should be of them all the time. I certainly am as a governor.

Emma Wells (Parent Governor and Vice-Chair)



As we approach the end of another busy year, I've enjoyed compiling the newsletter and being reminded about the many and varied activities which happen at The Hawthorns. The school clubs, visitors to the school and trips combine with lessons to provide a rich and exciting curriculum!

This year I have been Science Governor which has given me the opportunity to learn more about how science is taught and the resources available. It also links well with Imagineering Club which I continue to lead on Thursday afternoons for Year 6. Most recently this term we have been learning how to solder and have been assembling some electronic circuits which the children have enjoyed.

As we look to next year a number of significant changes are ahead, not least the introduction of the new curriculum. Teachers are working hard to prepare, and the Learning and Teaching Committee will be playing its part in supporting the School as this change comes into effect from September 2014.

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



The School Governors look forward to seeing you at the Open Afternoon on 7th 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.