



Governors' Newsletter

July 2016

Dear Parents and Carers,

We think it would be a good idea for us to have a Governor's Newsletter to improve the communication between governors, staff, parents and children. With this being our first newsletter we thought it would be useful to start off by letting you know about what we do and some of the areas of focus and highlights of the year for us.

What is a governing body?

All state funded schools are required by law to have a governing body. The governing body oversees the development of the school but does not deal with the day to day management of the school which is dealt with by the Head and staff.

The governing body's three core strategic functions are:

- a. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- b. Holding the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils;
- c. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

We do this through our regular full governor meetings (around 3 a year) and termly committee meetings.

Governors are regularly in school talking with staff and pupils, and observing particular areas of work. Such visits are planned and are an important aspect of our role in monitoring the school's development and improvement.

Our governors are all volunteers and come from all walks of life bringing to the school a wide range of skills and experience.

Our agreed **strategic priorities** for the next stage of school development are:

- To raise our standards and expectations even further so that attainment in all subjects is significantly above average and all children make exceptional progress regardless of starting points by the end of KS2
- To provide the best learning experience to promote high impact learning
- To develop every child as an engaged, responsible, independent learner
- To establish Frimley as the school of choice within the community with a track record of excellence

This year we have worked with 2 committees- the Children and Learning Committee and the Resource Committee in order to fulfil our core functions:

The Children and Learning Committee chaired by Tony Ryles, holds Mrs Griffiths and the Senior Leadership team to account for the progress of all the pupils and for the quality of teaching & learning through the school. The teachers assess the pupils' progress on an ongoing basis throughout each term and Mrs Griffiths and Mrs Wright provide the Governors with reports showing a breakdown of all the data across the year groups, classes and for particular groups such as those pupils receiving Pupil Premium (PP) funding, pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and pupils with English as an additional Language (EAL). The Committee analyses the data and monitors the work to improve the teaching & learning in the school by making monitoring visits and linking with key co-ordinators.

Two aspects of school focus have focussed governor thinking over the past twelve months. The first has been the uncertainty surrounding 'life without national curriculum levels' and the sophisticated and effective assessment system that the school leadership and staff have devised and put in place to replace it.

The lack of national guidance has placed enormous pressure on Frimley staff to come up with an alternative, not helped by government policy announcements that have forced staff to adapt during the school year. The sheer professionalism and resilience of Frimley staff has shone like a beacon throughout this period of national uncertainty.

The second area is related to the manner in which Frimley C of E staff monitor the progress of every individual child in the school. Regular 'Progress' meetings of appropriate staff consider the performance of every pupil against expectations, and then ensure an appropriate combination of support and challenge is provided so that each individual achieves to their potential. This process is often overseen by a governor. You should be assured that you child is viewed very much as an individual. No effort is spared in ensuring that every individual both learns and succeeds.

The Resources Committee oversees the management of the budget, the Health Safety and maintenance of the school with Mrs Griffiths and the School Business Manager (Mrs Hammond), and holds them to account for the use of the funding. We receive monthly financial statements, comparing them against the approved annual budget and investigating any variations to that budget. In order to ensure that we are getting the best value for money we undertake a benchmarking exercise annually with schools similar to Frimley.

I am very pleased to report that we are very well financially managed and were well within our original budget at the close of the financial year 2015-2016.

However, everyone will be very aware that budgetary pressures across the whole education sector have risen significantly over the past year and there appears to be no light at the end of the tunnel! We have to accommodate significantly increasing staff costs as a result of government funding changes and in particular, pension contributions and National Insurance have risen sharply.

We are therefore mindful of this as we plan for the future. Staff retention is an area that all schools face and with 40% of teachers leaving within a year of commencing teaching the education sector is indeed facing a crisis. We are extremely fortunate at Frimley that we have been able to recruit excellent new teachers for the start of next term.

Since the announcement in the last budget and the subsequent White Paper introducing legislation forcing all schools to become academies our learning curve has been considerable. Whilst the headline proposal has subsequently been halted, such that academisation is no longer mandatory for all schools, the reality of the changes to the way that education in the UK is being funded together with continued pressure on budgets means that finding ways to cooperate and share resources will become increasingly important.

As policy and the impact on Frimley becomes clearer please be assured that the Governors are working hard to protect what you and we value and that, should the need arise, we will consult with the wider school community at the appropriate time.

As a Church of England School **Collective Worship and Christian Distinctiveness** is an important aspect of the Christian character of the school. Our governors Candy Price and the Reverend Phil Parker are regularly in school playing an active role. In their roles as governors they have taken part in learning walks for Peace Days, Easter Learning Morning and Self Awareness Day. The feedback from those walks was extremely positive and they were really impressed with how engaged the children were with their learning and observed a real buzz of excitement in the classrooms. It was evident that the staff had devised a variety of well-chosen activities in order to create this.

For me there were two highlights of the year when visiting the school, Governors Day and the Year 6 Leavers Play and both reminded and highlighted to me that everything that Frimley does is about the children:

In October were invited to a Governor Day, where all governors went into school for the day and observed all aspects of life at Frimley. We attended assembly, observed lessons, ventured into the playground and ate roast dinner with the children. In all of those activities we observed how well the children are supported and cared for by the staff, the high engagement that the children have in their learning, how they are encouraged to be independent yet care for others and fundamentally how happy they are in their environment.

I also had the privilege of attending the Year 6 Leavers play, for which I know tickets are like gold dust! I was thoroughly entertained and impressed by the performance however what struck me most was how all of the children worked for each other, the enthusiasm and confidence of their performances and the enjoyment that they had in giving those performances. As they move on to the next part of their journey I am sure that their families must be extremely proud of them, from what I saw they will be excellent ambassadors for Frimley wherever they go. The Governing Body wish them all the best for the future.

I am going to round of this newsletter on behalf of the Governing Body by thanking everybody involved at Frimley for their magnificent effort, in what has been an extremely busy year, both in school and on some fantastic school trips. We are particularly grateful to Mrs Griffiths and all the staff for all their hard work and ongoing commitment to the children and families of Frimley. They are tireless in striving to ensure that every child has the best opportunity to fulfil their potential whilst at the school.

We will continue to keep you updated with regular newsletters and postings on the website in the new academic year.

Please do not hesitate to contact me via the school office if you have any queries, comments or suggestions.

Richard Forster

Chair of Governors