

Governors' Newsletter for Hyde School
Autumn Term 2016
Edition 15

Welcome to this edition of the Hyde Governors' newsletter, our opportunity to inform parents about the work we have been doing to support our school.

Hellos and Goodbyes

We said a fond farewell at the end of the summer term to Anna Hills, Margaret Bunyard and Jan Houghton-Brown, who have been stalwart members of the governing board for many years. They were thanked for all their hard work on behalf of the school during that time. This left us with a few gaps on the governing board and so at the beginning of this term we welcomed two new governors, who bring a wealth of experience to the table. Jenny Boyd has been the headteacher of a special school and is currently an OFSTED inspector. Lyndsey Whitehead has come from a career in business in the training arm of Babcock and has been appointed our Local Authority governor. Jenny is now chair of the school improvement committee and Lyndsey chair of the finance committee. It has taken some time to find a new foundation governor, but we are glad now to know that Carol Sims will be joining us in this capacity next term. With Sue Willcocks back from a term away due to ill-health in the summer, we will start next term with a full complement of 12 governors.

We have had Claire Isaacs as our clerk for the last few meetings, but as her business has taken off she has decided she cannot continue, so we were sad to bid her farewell at the last meeting. We have advertised for a new clerk and are currently processing an application. We hope to have a new clerk in place before the next full governors meeting in February.

Keeping ourselves up to date

We constantly review what training we need and this term has seen governors attending training on finance and policies. This had brought some fresh ideas for how we go about our work in making sure the school is in robust financial shape and in reviewing, monitoring and evaluating school policies (of which there are many and most of them are on the school website if you want to have a look at them.) We are putting in place a system of monitoring and evaluation to make sure that the policies are working for the school and the children and doing what they are intended to do.

Following our whole governing board training session in the spring on safeguarding, all the governors have read the document put out by the government in September: Keeping Children Safe in Education. We have an item on safeguarding on every agenda and the safeguarding governor talks regularly with Julie to make sure any safeguarding issues which have come up are being dealt with.

We self-evaluated the Governing board at the end of the summer term and one of the outcome of this was that we wanted a deeper understanding of the data produced from the SATs tests. Julie has given us a very detailed overview of the data, which has enabled us all to interpret it more fully and to ask questions about the resulting plan.

School Improvement and the governors role in monitoring

There is a new school improvement plan for 2016-17 now in place, with some of the items from last year being carried forward into it and some new priorities. Progress on these will, as usual, be monitored by subject governors particularly in reading, writing and maths. Monitoring is built into the plan. This can take the form of a book review or involve talking to the children about their work or doing a pupil survey.

On the subject of surveys, thank you to all parents who filled in the parent questionnaire. There was a very good rate of return, representing all ages of children, and the responses were overwhelmingly positive about Hyde School with many parents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with all 16 statements. In particular, a large majority of parents agreed or strongly agreed with the statements about the school staff.

In the comments section parents particularly liked the small classes and family feel in school and also enjoyed its location and Forest School. Staff were mentioned by several parents in a very positive way, as were the buddy system and the calm, quiet, disciplined atmosphere.

The least positive response was to the question about provision of extra-curricular activities (and even here 60% were positive about it). This is an ongoing matter for the school, with staff and governors endeavouring to source a range of activities or at least the information about what is going on locally. While there are many huge benefits from attending a small school like Hyde it does mean that there are often not enough children to make it financially feasible to run a wide variety of extra-curricular activities or wraparound care.

It makes a big difference to the school to receive information like this from the parent body and presents you with an opportunity to give us some feedback on how things are going. It is far from being just a tick box exercise which is rapidly filed away and forgotten. We have analysed it carefully and taken note of the responses, to act on where we can.

One of our school improvement priorities is to build more links with the local and wider community. Lyndsey and I have been invited to attend the Parish Meeting on December 16th, which we hope will start more of a dialogue between us.

With Julie, we have undertaken a safeguarding audit and also agreed the budget for the next financial year.

Governors and the diocese

As a Church of England voluntary controlled school, we have 3 foundation governors - the vicar, Ian Witham (ex-officio governor), who comes into school to take weekly assemblies - and two other governors, Sue Willcocks and Carol Sims. One of their jobs is to make sure that the school is always developing in line with our stated ethos:

We promote Christian values within a caring family environment in which purposeful teaching and learning can take place. Everyone is valued equally and encouraged to develop their individual potential.

With all the imminent changes to the parish these three governors (and Ian's ultimate successor as ex-officio governor) will be very important to us, specially as the school is due for a church inspection in the spring.

Governors and HSFA

Our 3 parent governors, Amanda Painter, Rob Shadbolt and Clare O'Shea invited the other governors to attend some of the HSFA events so that parents and governors have an opportunity to meet and talk. If you see us at events, do please come and introduce yourselves.

Finally, because there have been a number of changes in the governing body since last term and also to the structure of our committees, I thought it might be useful to give you a quick update here:

Chair of Governors - Fiona Leith (co-opted governor)
Vice chair - Rob Shadbolt (parent governor)
Sue Willcocks (foundation governor)
Ian Whitham (ex-officio foundation governor)
(Carol Sims - about to become a foundation governor)

School Improvement Committee
Chair - Jenny Boyd (co-opted governor)
Amanda Painter (parent governor)
Julie Dalziell
Sarah Close
Fiona Leith

Finance Committee
Chair - Lyndsey Whitehead (LA governor)
Clare O'Shea (parent governor)
Dawn Skinner (co-opted governor)
Rob Shadbolt
Julie Dalziell
Fiona Leith

Buildings Committee
Chair - Rob Shadbolt
Clare O'Shea
Julie Dalziell
Fiona Leith

I hope you all have a lovely break and would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from us all.

Fiona Leith
Chair of Governors