



# Governors Newsletter Spring Term

April 2017

FEDERATION OF BOLDMERE SCHOOLS GOVERNING BODY

IN THIS ISSUE

## Governing Body News

by Chris Hindle

It is amazing how time flies, especially when so much is achieved in a relatively short space of time. Where does the time go? 2016 was a very full year and Governors have continued to be very active, both in meetings and enjoying school activities. Our termly visits during school time to monitor how school is progressing are proving to be more and more valuable to staff as well as highly informative and a good practical insight for governors, with the result that we are now able to evidence a positive impact across both schools, which is being reflected in pupil outcomes.

All credit must go to Carl Glasgow, his Senior Leadership Teams and the staff. This has not been an easy year but we are pleased to note that everyone has seemed to respond well to the new challenges that have been created by the change to SATs levels, Assessment and revised staffing structure. These have not been easy changes to make and I am sure that, like us, appreciate the professionalism and dedication of everyone at the Federated schools.

We are now fast approaching SATs time again and it is with some relief to know that the standards are not due to change again

this year. This should mean that we can start to gain a better picture of how progress is being made and any areas that may need some more attention if we are to maintain the high standards expected at the Federated School(s), when compared with other schools. It is pleasing to note that all the hard work and planning that is being done by all the staff should once again prove to be very worthwhile.

As you will see in the soon to be published Strategic Plan, over the next 5 years our priorities will be to continue to build on the experience gained over the period of change we have experienced. I am sure that there will be many obstacles to overcome – school funding to be one of them but I am pleased to say that we are already noting some much-improved outcomes across both schools in all areas. Hopefully with your continued support from home we will see our children thrive.

### The Federated Governing Body

The structure of the governing body remains largely unchanged but following the introduction of the Executive Head and new Heads of School that came into being on 1<sup>st</sup> September last year we have needed to 'reconstitute' to allow for the fact that we now only have one Head not two as before. We still number 12 in total -1 Head, 1 Local Authority, 1 Staff, 2 Parents and 7 Co-opted plus 3 Associate Governors.

- **The Federated Governing Body**
- **Pupil Progress and use of data**
- **Safeguarding**
- **School Funding**
- **Car Parking**
- **School Development Plans**
- **Looking to the future - Strategic Planning**

This year has seen a change to our Parent Governors. Tracy Haynes and Rekha Cumberlandidge both did a fantastic job and made a significant and valuable contribution to the work of the Governing Board, for which we are very grateful indeed. Sadly, their term of office ended in February 2017 and their posts become vacant

Following the Parent Elections, we are now pleased to welcome Jeremy Merckel who was the only nominated parent and was therefore appointed automatically. We are looking forward to working with Jeremy, he has many skills that will be valuable to the Federated Governing Board and we are sure he will bring a fresh approach to some of our work and we will value his input greatly.

As the Parent Election process only produced one nomination there was a remaining vacancy which the Governing Body was entitled to fill. Accordingly, we have now appointed Christina Engers to the remaining Parent Governor post and, at the time of writing, we are looking forward to formally welcoming her to the Governing Body. We are now up to full strength. We have also taken the opportunity to add two more Associate Governors to our number and I am pleased to confirm that Charlotte Cresswell and Dan Mortiboys will bring their additional skills to the Governing Body.

## Pupil Progress and the use of data

*Our shared vision*

As a Governing Body, we are constantly aware of the demands and needs placed on pupils through the new National Curriculum and the increased standards that have been brought about by the introduction of Assessment without Levels.

To meet those challenges and ensure that we can maintain a strategic focus on the provision of education for all at Boldmere, we maintain a regime of regular topic based monitoring. This is proving to be successful and we are pleased to note that our major strategic priorities are being

maintained and accordingly our focus will continue to remain the same. This allows us to continue to strive for the exceptional progress of the children in our care in an environment that is sustainable and where teaching and learning is creative, inspiring and above all enjoyable and rewarding. This is in line with our shared vision, which is currently under review but unlikely to change significantly for the foreseeable future

Our **'Governor Training Days'** are proving to be a very successful and useful aid to monitoring that keeps the Federated Governing Board informed about; the impact on teaching and learning across both schools; the effect on teacher workload and effective use of data needed to maintain the high standards we aspire to in terms of pupil progress and standards of teaching.

We determine a subject focus for the day and this changes on a termly basis. Working with the Senior Leadership Team, each school has the opportunity to lead so that we get to see with our own eyes and hear with our own ears how teaching and learning is applied at all levels across both schools and the effective transition between schools.

By using this system of monitoring we can successfully maintain the essential link with Staff in both schools and we value greatly the opportunity to come into school and gain first-hand experience in the life of the school, meet with subject leaders, see

*To provide schools for the local community that are recognised for educational excellence, that nurtures and values every child and enables them to reach their full potential through a child centred high quality primary education. Our work is guided by our commitment and belief that the Federated Boldmere Schools are inclusive with outstanding pastoral care and safeguarding of every pupil and where children can develop educationally, physically, emotionally and socially.*

teaching in operation and participate in the daily life of the school.

This term the theme has been 'Data and Attainment'. Governors have been given the opportunity to view and question current attainment and progress of pupils in line with the new curriculum and

assessment without levels, thus gaining an insight into the systems used to maintain and measure pupil progress.

This is a valuable exercise for governors that has increased our understanding of the level and range of data that is used in school. It has also proved valuable to the teaching staff as it has given them an opportunity to reflect and consider the outcomes they produce from a governance oversight perspective.

This makes a huge contribution to the effectiveness of our shared vision, with the result that governors have seen real progress made by pupils at all levels and accordingly we are confident that pupils will be working at 'Greater Depth' by the end of this academic year. In support of that objective and to follow this theme, in the Summer Term we will be examining 'Working at Greater Depth'

## Safeguarding

One of the major responsibilities of the governors is to ensure that the Safeguarding procedures for the school are properly in place, meet statutory requirements, and that staff are all appropriately trained and fully understand the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

We do this by a regular audit and review in line with statutory guidance by an appointed Safeguarding Governor who is properly trained working with the Designated Safeguarding Leads in the school(s). We have just carried our audit and review and I am pleased to note that all appropriate measures are in place and actively maintained in both schools. We are fortunate that we have not had any incidents where practice has needed to be changed as the result of a serious case but where there have been cases that have determined a review of our systems has been necessary on a 'lesson learnt' basis this has been carried out thoroughly and properly. The Governing Board holds the safeguarding and well-being of all the pupils at both schools as a high priority and is rigorous in its pursuit of maintaining the highest standards throughout.

## School Funding

It will not have gone unnoticed by parents that the proposed changes to school funding will have a profound effect on many schools and Boldmere will not be exempt from this.

Our current budget forecasts indicate that both schools will be net losers if the proposed revision of pupil funding goes ahead as planned. To overcome this, we are working closely with staff to ensure we minimise any effect this may have on pupils by looking closely at getting best value for money and evaluating how we work to ensure that pupil outcomes are maintained as far as possible.

This is an area of great concern and we have taken the opportunity to make appropriate representations at the highest levels.

However, we must be prepared for the inevitable and will continue to look at all the options that are available to us in the interests of the children.

## Car Parking

In previous newsletters, I have mentioned how we look to parents to support what we do and help us set an example, when I and commented that unfortunately this does not always happen as we would like and accordingly how we feel very let down when we observe behaviour by parents that is not entirely in keeping with the values we promote. Often these are simple but very important things like; respecting our neighbours and protecting all children, through careful and legal parking when driving to school. Having raised the matter once I would not normally expect to return to issues like this but on the subject of car parking before and after school it appears that there are some parents who choose to ignore the concerns about parking around the school.

The guilty parents are constantly parking on double yellow lines around the school endangering the children by making it unsafe for them to cross the road. Local police officers have been contacted by a school governor to ask if they could work with the school to come up with a long-term solution for this problem. Because of this enquiry, the police did attend at the school every morning and home time moving parents on. What is surprising is that even with police presence parents were still parking illegally.

**This behaviour is clearly not acceptable and these parents need to understand that they are endangering pupils by carrying on this behaviour. These parents need to be very clear that parking on the double yellow lines is illegal and cannot be tolerated, especially when pupils of Boldmere School are put at risk and accordingly any resulting prosecution is welcomed by the governors.**

I am aware that the concern of the school governors is shared by many parents who have praised the actions of the police and it is reassuring to note that because of this Boldmere Mums have suggested that a meeting with the school, police, residents etc. to find a solution would be beneficial.

As a note to those parents who are persistent in parking illegally Harvester on Boldmere High Street have offered their car park for free before and after school which is a very kind gesture by the local community.

**This is a positive start to finding a solution and we would support working together to find a solution to this issue and ensure the safety of our pupils.**

Please bear in mind - all these things help set a good example for the children and show respect for those who live near and those who work hard in the interests of the school.

**If we have these expectations for the children it is reasonable to expect the same from parents.**

## School Development Plans

As a progressive, forward think governing body we actively encourage and support any viable development for our schools. Accordingly, we have been researching and planning for the development of a Resource Based Unit (RBU) that will cater for Autistic children and those with Special Educational Needs (SEND). This is in response to an initiative put forward by Carl Glasgow and his Senior Leadership Team, which we fully support.

The range and size of the proposed new facility will necessarily be determined by the accommodation and facilities that can be provided. To be viable this will need to be manageable, secure, cost effective and capable of being integrated into the main schools.

Initially we looked at the potential for adapting and adopting part of the former Boldmere Adult Education Centre, which had its merits but

needed careful consideration. After discussions with the Local Authority it became clear that this was not going to be capable of fulfilling all the essential criteria that had been determined by the school and the Governing Board. It was disappointing that what was perceived to be a good option was, for various practical and financial reasons no longer viable. However, as a result of the negotiations with the Local Authority and the increased need for this type of special provision we are pleased that a viable and probably more acceptable outcome has been achieved. This will involve an extension to our existing premises that will have the capacity to fulfil all the needs of the school and provide a closer, integrated facility at a significantly reduced cost.

Currently the plans are in the formation stage but everything if everything proceeds as intended we hope to have the new facility up and running by October Half Term. We are unable to fully guarantee anything at this stage but we are quietly confident of a successful outcome so – watch this space – we will keep you updated on progress as and when we have completed each stage of the plan.

## A look to the future – Strategic Planning

Bringing the Federated schools closer together has proved to be a great benefit to both schools and this has now caused the Governing Board to seriously consider what needs to be done to continue our progression.

A major priority as a Governing Body alongside embedding the changes that have taken place over the last 12 months is to consider how we propose to continue to progress and maintain our high standards at a consistent level. This includes the challenge that the governing body are continually aware of, which is the Government directives regarding Academisation of all schools; not to mention the difficulty in managing static or possibly reducing budgets and maintaining staff at a desirable level through a program of positive recruitment and retention. There is also the need meet the demands and increasing levels of responsibility that being a Teaching School brings to our community.

We therefore have a responsibility to consider our strategic priorities over the longer-term future. This is one of the most important functions of any governing body if

it is to ensure that in a progressive academic setting the progress of the children is maintained at the highest level. To enable us to meet that challenge we are currently in the process of reviewing our Strategic Plan.

This is a high level long-term plan, extending over a period of 5 years, from 2017-2022. It sets out the school's vision, values and long-term strategic priorities. It is aimed at the key stakeholders in the school, children and their parents, staff, governors and other stakeholders.

The strategic plan is complemented by the School Development Plan (SDP), a shorter-term operational plan extending over a period of 1-2 years and the Governor Development Plan (GDP), also a shorter-term action plan for governors that also extends over a period of 1-2 years. The SDP is developed by the staff team and sets out in operational terms how the long-term strategy of the school is to be achieved. Similarly, the GDP considers the three core functions of the Governing Body and sets out the purpose, monitoring procedures and intended impact of effective governance.

To be fully effective it is essential that this includes input from all stakeholders – Governors, Staff, Pupils and Parents. The responses made by parents to the recent parent questionnaire are being analysed to inform the parental view. So, a big 'thank you' to all those parents who have contributed by responding to the questionnaire, this is valuable input. We welcome and value your input and any parent who has not responded and would like to contribute can do so by contacting the school when arrangements will be made for a further questionnaire to be provided.

The Executive Head and Senior Leadership Team are currently sharing a draft document with Staff to gain their feedback and Pupils via School Council will be invited to share the school vision and produce a suitable motto for the school that reflects their aspirations for success.

The plan when completed will be published and will be available to all so that the strategic priorities we include for the school can be shared by everyone.

Once completed the plan will be subject to a regular review which will be progressive and projected forward on a 5-year basis.

When used in conjunction with the SDP and GDP and monitored by our Self Evaluation of the School(s) and the Governing Board we will have a valuable resource that will provide a strong support as and when we consider our strengths alongside the potential benefits of Academisation.

What cannot be ignored is the support and encouragement we get from you the parents. **The strength of the PTA is highly commendable and without their support and community spirit we would certainly be limited in what we can provide for the children to enhance their learning experience and this will become even more important when funding becomes more restricted.**

Without doubt, our school community is one of the strongest I have come across in all my 30 plus years as a school governor, which has been in various settings and it is something that needs to be treasured for the benefit of every child that goes through the school. It goes without saying that it is very rewarding to see the school achieve continued success through constant improvement and, apart from the dedication of Carl Glasgow and all his school staff plus the commitment of my fellow governors, our thanks must go to all parents for the continued support that you give to the school. **Thank you for all that you do in support of the school.**

We are fast approaching a very welcome Half Term holiday and I hope you all have an enjoyable summer and return refreshed in the Autumn term for the start of a new academic year.

*Chris Hindle*

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