

SUTTON-ON-THE-FOREST

CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL



20th December 2018

Dear Parents and Carers,

I'd like to take this opportunity to provide you with an update on some of the recent activities of the school's Governing Body. Since taking over the role of Chair at the start of this term, the Governing Body has made a number of changes to its membership and its operational processes. These changes came about as a result of various recommendations made by the North Yorkshire Schools Governance Unit and discussions with both the Governors and the Headteacher. The changes will better enable the Governing Body to provide effective strategic leadership, perform its statutory duties and engage in practices that will both challenge and support the Headteacher as she seeks to make Sutton-on-the-Forest Primary School an exceptional place of learning.

This term we have welcomed on to the Governing Body a number of new Governors, who bring with them specific expertise that can be applied to school governance. Each will play a key role as a link Governor for a particular area of responsibility. In October, Mrs Jo Fineran was appointed as Staff Governor, following the retirement of the previous Staff Governor. While having considerable expertise in primary education matters, Mrs Fineran also brings expertise in the area of financial management, which she gained during her previous career prior to entering the teaching profession. Mrs Denise Craig was also appointed in October by the Diocese to serve as a Foundation Governor. Mrs Craig formerly served as a Staff Governor, and brings to the governing body considerable expertise in primary education processes and children's safeguarding. Our most recent appointment was Mr Guy Redfern, who was appointed as a Co-opted Governor in November. He will serve as a link Governor with responsibility for both school premises and health and safety. Mr Redfern has two children at the school and brings a wealth of experience in civil engineering, from a career in the construction industry and as the owner of a property business. In the short time since his appointment, Mr Redfern has made a significant impact as he has been able to offer sound guidance to the Governing Body regarding the monitoring and maintenance of the buildings. He has also been able to make useful links through his liaising with the Local Authority school building inspectors. Recently he has been able to provide creative advice to the Headteacher and Governors regarding possible future development of the school premises. We are very pleased to have been able to recruit all three new Governors and we are grateful for their input into the development of the school.

In the new year we are aiming to appoint two new Governors onto the Governing Body with demonstrated expertise in one of the following areas: finance, marketing, IT, fundraising or school improvement. If you are interested in serving as a Governor and have skills in any of these areas, please contact me and I would be happy to discuss the school's vision for the future and the Governor's role in supporting the school and the education and development of its pupils. In the

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Small school, big heart, aiming higher together





new year we will also be joined by a new Business Manager, who will work closely with the Headteacher and the Governing Body, and by a new Clerk, who will support the Governing Body.

The appointment of a new Clerk was brought about by our decision to restructure the Governing Body's operational processes. In October, the Governing Body agreed that it would no longer operate separate Resource and School Improvement Committees that report into to the six meetings of the full Governing Body. Instead, the full Governing Body agreed to hold nine meetings per year, and each meeting would have a specific focus on general business, school improvement or resources. This structure better enables each Governor to contribute to the governance of all aspects of the school and enables the full Governing Body to be much more forensic in its approach to the data it receives about the school. All Governors now have an assigned role as a link Governor, and governance responsibilities are associated with the expertise each brings to the Governing Body.

Early in the school year, the Chair and Vice-Chair of Governors met with the Headteacher and School Advisor to discuss the school development plan and identify the school's priorities for the upcoming year. The vision for the school is clear: to be an outstanding school that not only enables children to achieve, but encourages them to be active and valued members of the community and encourages them to seek an enriched life beyond primary education. The priorities that were set for the year are based upon the most recent Ofsted inspection and an analysis conducted by the Headteacher and the Governing Body. These are to:

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress for all pupils, including the most able,
- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all key stages,
- Develop leadership at all staff levels,
- Reduce the budget deficit and increase pupil numbers,
- Develop the Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sutton School

These priorities are central to the discussions held by the Governing Body at its monthly meetings. For example, with respect to pupil attainment, the Governing Body recently discussed that the school had implemented a new tracking system that will enable staff to more effectively monitor student progress, ensure that each pupil is on track, and where there are any concerns about progress, to intervene quickly to support a pupil's learning. Governors were able to question the Headteacher about the way this new system would aid school improvement and raise attainment.

The development and approval of policies is a critical task that enables Governing Bodies to fulfil their responsibility for establishing the strategic direction of the school. Policies establish a framework that guides the way a school should function. School Governing Bodies are legally required to establish and implement certain policies, while they may create other non-statutory policies that help schools to achieve their aims and objectives and promote high standards for educational attainment. These non-statutory policies are considered to be good practice for schools to adopt. To ensure that the Governing Body fulfils its statutory duties we are currently making progress with a review of all of our policies, and we have updated the website to reflect this. We have also been attempting to remove outdated information from the website. During the course of



the academic year, we aim to improve and update the website and ultimately make it a more interactive source of information.

Another critical task for the Governing Body is to monitor the management of the school's budget. As many of you are aware, we are currently running a budget deficit, and in our attempts to reduce this we have begun to review all our external contracts and service level agreements. This is to ensure that we not only get value for money, but to help identify any possible efficiency savings that we can make. Although fundraising is the domain of FOSS, the Governing Body was able to play a key role in facilitating access to the £5,000 funding that was secured for promoting the church mission for the children of Sutton and Huby. This funding came from a gift from the Estate of Jenny Mitchell, a local resident, and Mrs Pye gratefully received the funds last week.

While there are a number of responsibilities that come with being the Chair of Governors, one of the distinct privileges is that the Chair gets to attend much of the fun stuff that goes on in school that complements learning. For example, those who attended were treated to some fantastic singing by all at the Harvest Festival, exceptional creativity by the Year 5 and 6 children in the Remembrance Assembly, and some star performances in the children's end of year plays. I look forward to attending more amazing performances in the new year.

I aim to provide regular updates on Governor activities throughout the school year. At this time, however, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Mrs Pye, the staff and all the other Governors for all their hard work and dedication throughout this eventful year, and wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a peaceful and relaxing holiday.

Best wishes,

Howard K. Hall

Professor Howard K. Hall
Chair of Governors