

Governor Newsletter

Welcome to the Spring 2018 edition of the Governors newsletter. We should not underestimate the effect that cuts in real terms on school budgets are having on the running of schools nationally, including Brookfield. It is to everyone's credit that the school continues to operate so vibrantly in these challenging times and the parents' moral support is more invaluable than ever.

The governors' role is to set strategic direction, create robust accountability and ensure financial probity and report back to our community. We challenge and support the school to live up to the school's vision and values of promoting achievement, developing confident and independent learners, valuing supportive and positive relationships and appreciating others. The work is done mainly through meetings of sub committees and the Full Governing Body. We have highlighted below some of the work since our last newsletter:

Learning and Achievement committee (LAC) (Anthony Mirams, LAC chair)

LAC's purpose is to both support and challenge the school to be as good as it possibly can.

We do this by monitoring what the School provides and the results it achieves. We have a timetable of reports through the year so we cover all the main areas of the School's work.

In September we reviewed children's the end of year results for the previous year, approved the revised homework policy and discussed how parents might help in Brookfield.

In December we compared Brookfield's SATs results with those of Camden and Nationally. We also looked at the provision for Pupil Premium children and the outcomes it achieved.

In our most recent meeting in January we heard from Haseeb about PE, Katherine about SEND and Laurel about the EYFS (Nursery and Reception) and about phonics.

In all these areas we are repeatedly impressed by the quality of the reports, the discussion and the commitment of the School staff. Together we are working hard to make Brookfield even more successful for all the children.

Personnel, Salaries and Wellbeing Committee (PSWB Chair Jo Cooke)

Since the last newsletter the PSWB committee has been busy. As a committee we are responsible for general staff wellbeing and so we have been carefully monitoring the impact of the restructure on staff. To do this we carried out a staff survey to understand how staff were feeling following the changes that had been made and hear how they felt the school was doing. Through the survey we have learned a lot about the school - what aspects of it the staff

love and where they feel some improvements could be made. It has been an invaluable exercise. A number of themes have emerged from the survey and the Senior Leadership Team (Mark, Laurel, Mel and Katherine) have already started working on these and they will continue with this over the rest of the school year. We will re-run the questionnaire in the summer term to understand what progress has been made so far and to identify any further steps.

Aside from looking at staff wellbeing PSWB has continued its focus on behaviour. PSWB has reviewed the school's Visitors/Parents/Carers' Acceptable Behaviour Policy and as well as working on this policy three governors attended a 'Learning Walk' in January which focused on behaviour. Mark and Laurel organised a full agenda and governors observed the Soft Start in both playgrounds before visiting classrooms to observe in class behaviour. The governors then met with staff and children to discuss how they felt behaviour was managed in Brookfield. It was helpful to discuss the topic widely and interesting to hear the various points of view.

Finance Committee (Finance Chair Dorothy Toh)

The finance committee is continuing to closely monitor the financial situation of the school. On the positive, the reduction in costs from the staff consultation which took place last year, unbudgeted rebates from Camden, and new lettings income will help the school to achieve a forecasted, balanced budget in the next financial year. This is a significant improvement and achievement all around, which has required the support of all staff, students and parents. However, the situation thereafter remains challenging, especially given the anticipated funding proposals and increasing costs. Whilst cash reserves are currently sufficient to sustain the school for another three years, operating at a loss is not a sustainable strategy over the medium to long term. With the staff consultation complete, the finance committee will now look to see how the school can achieve a balanced budget on a yearly basis going forwards, thereby leaving the cash reserves for contingencies. This will include a benchmarking exercise with other schools, seeking advice from and discussions with Camden, improving the nursery offering and numbers, and continued, close monitoring of the budget.

Premises Committee (Premises Chair Stephen Kapos)

Areas the Premises committee have been working on include:

- Works agreed with Camden regarding mandatory improvements have been delayed by them until the summer break, but Camden's commitment to funding this work is re-confirmed .

- New condition surveys of the school have been carried out by Camden. The work is programmed for the summer, funded by Camden. Camden is taking maintenance work in-house, without additional cost to Brookfield.
- Air quality in Croftdown Road project: we are making progress with associated 'Stars' project of information gathering & educational activities, which is a pre-condition of Camden's support.

Full Governing Body (FGB) (Chair Elizabeth Dormandy)

The focus of our recent meetings has been:

- Questioning the school on progress against the School Improvement plan
- Meeting with professional partners at Camden Learning to review Brookfield's progress
- Reviewing policies and developing a policy review cycle
- Questioning the school on their preparation for Ofsted
- Governors preparing for an Ofsted inspection

More detail about what we have discussed at FGB meetings are included in the minutes of FGB meetings which are available on the school website

<http://www.brookfield.camden.sch.uk/governors-home/minutes/> .

We have also enjoyed visiting the school. There have been some great assemblies, as well as fantastic interpretations of Shakespeare and brilliant dance performances.

Governor Changes

Dorothy Toh has taken over from Nigel Bannerman as chair of Finance. We thank Nigel very much for his expertise in chairing the Finance committee over the last year, and consider ourselves lucky that we can continue to benefit from his expertise and knowledge as an Associate Governor. We are delighted that Dorothy will take over as Finance chair. She asks the difficult questions about finance which ensure the school will continue on a sound financial footing in difficult and uncertain times. Mike Yule was re-elected as a parent governor, and Katie Fraser-Thomas was re-elected as Staff governor, having covered Jen's maternity leave. It is great to have Mike and Katie, who both display great skill in supporting and challenging the school to achieve great outcomes.

We are keen to encourage people to stand as governors – the wider the interest and experience of governors the better and more effective the governing body is. If anyone in the school community would like more information about being a governor, or want to know more about what governors do, check our page on the school website or contact me (elizabethdormandy@gmail.com).

Finally

We want to thank all staff for their contribution to the school. These are difficult times, and we are so impressed by the professionalism, leadership and amazing hard work of all staff at the school continuing to deliver a fantastic education for all children. A huge thank you to everyone who volunteers their time and talents to the school. In particular we would like to thank the PTA, particularly co-chairs Eliane and Lucie and treasurer Phillip. An especial “Thank you” to Sebastian, Rob, Rebecca and Eril for the awesome auction.

Most importantly thank you to the children and their families for making Brookfield such a great community

Best wishes

Governing Body, Brookfield Primary School, governors@brookfield.camden.sch.uk

March 2018

Please remember the next governors drop in is on 16 March at 9.00am. We would love to see you!