

Governor Newsletter January 2017

Welcome to the Governors newsletter. The aim of this newsletter, along with the governor pages on the school website is to keep parents and carers, staff and members of our local community informed about the activities of the governing body. The role of the governing body is to set strategic direction, create robust accountability and ensure financial probity for the school.

The autumn term was a busy term for the school and governing body. Our last full governing body meeting was on the penultimate day of term, so we have delayed the newsletter until now. At the meeting the school improvement plan was discussed. This is linked to vision and values of the school, and is set every year to identify the eight key priorities that determine the direction and focus of work for the year. The governors supported the move towards a three year rather than one year improvement plan. It was agreed we would continue to review it on a termly basis.

We also reviewed the headteachers report. This identified the use and success of :

- Read Write Inc (a Ruth Miskin Phonics programme) and Spelling Made Easy (a spelling resource) in the early years setting and Key Stage 1 (years one and two)
- children using 'Learning Partners' in class, as well as having time to work independently
- weekly planning meetings between teachers and support staff.

You may remember in the last newsletter we reported on the government's policy for all schools to become academies by 2020. Late last term, the government announced this was not the case. We are fortunate to be part of the Camden family of schools. Through the local authority and meetings with heads and governors, we are able to utilise a wide pool of knowledge and experience to understand the implications of changes like this. Another example of working with colleagues across the borough is discussing the government's 'Fairer Funding' initiative. This is looking at the funding schools receive across the country. Disappointingly schools in Camden are likely to be badly hit by 'Fairer Funding'. We anticipate a 3% reduction in funding at Brookfield. The governors are looking at how to reduce the impact of these cuts at Brookfield, as well as how to respond collectively towards these cuts.

The following are highlights from some of the committee work last term:

Learning and Achievement Committee (Chair Mike Yule)

The Learning and Achievement committee (LAC) has met twice as a full committee and individual link governors have also met with staff responsible for Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND), Pupil Premium families, and Rights Respecting Behaviour. Governors also went on a visit across the school organised by Katie, which focussed on 'Building Learning Power' and particularly the skills and attitudes necessary to foster collaborative learning.

As a committee, we have overseen the increased focus on oracy and a new phonics scheme in the early years setting. Early years children did very well in last year's end of year assessments although there was a slight dip in the writing results. Indeed, throughout the school there has been a renewed focus on spelling and grammar in response to the emphasis on these in the new curriculum. The aim is to ensure that our pupils' linguistic accuracy and precision matches their ability to be creative and astonishing.

The school is still dealing with the fall-out from last year's abrupt changes in curriculum and assessment measures. The school is confident that pupils' progress in Maths and English will be based on even more accurate baseline judgements than last year, when the system was brand new. There are no national guidelines as to how to assess other non-core subjects (humanities/arts etc.) and the school is finding innovative and sustainable ways to do this. It is highly unfortunate, and frustratingly time consuming for our staff, that the commercially available assessment tracking system all have major drawbacks.

In addition the committee continues to scrutinise the SEND and Pupil Premium data and resource allocation. We are impressed with the targeted interventions and constant evaluation of the impact of these. LAC has also contributed to the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) in readiness for any Ofsted visit. The Self-Evaluation Form is an honest and rigorous appraisal of the school by the school that has in the past been used in Ofsted visits.

All of this happening in the context of real terms cuts to schools' budgets, which means that we have been scrutinising carefully the way the school maximises its resources. As ever, we are truly impressed with the dedication and skill of the staff at Brookfield.

Personnel, Salaries and Wellbeing Committee (Chair Joanna Cooke)

As ever, the term has been a busy one for PSWB. Much of PSWB's time in the Autumn term was spent discussing the behaviour principles which were drafted so ably back in September by Mike Yule and Rachel Hermer. Once drafted, the principles were shared with staff, parents, carers, pupils and governors outside PWSB to ensure that everyone got a say. Input from these groups helped finalise the principles which will now form the basis of the school's behaviour policy which will be drafted by the senior leadership team. Beyond behaviour principles there

have been strong discussions at PSWB about an amendment to the anti-bullying policy and staff CPD (Continuous Professional Development). Across the next two terms we will be reviewing three key policies: admissions, attendance and healthy eating.

Finance Committee and Change Committee (Finance Chair Fiona Miller-Smith to December 2016)

The finance committee and the change committee worked closely together this term. The temporary change committee has been set up, to propose how the school can make the approx. £250k savings in the next financial year. As Mark communicated earlier in the year, the combination of rising costs and a decrease in funding has meant the school needs to make significant savings if it is to balance the budget over time. The committee (Mark, Cee and two governors) have met weekly, to examine different ways savings might be made. Governors ratified a proposal at the final meeting of last term. The approved proposal has been communicated to staff at the beginning of this term, and is subject to a consultation with staff at the moment. This is an ongoing piece of work.

Governor Changes

In October, Rachel Hermer stood down as Chair of Governors, a position she had held for two years. All Governors commented on Rachel's excellent work, particularly her effectiveness, support and insight leading a team of governors that were able to hold the school to account for delivering high quality education for all children at Brookfield. We are delighted that Rachel remains as a co-opted governor. Fiona Millar Smith stood down as a Governor and Chair of Finance. Governors thanked her for her clarity and wisdom on both the financial management of the school, and the life of the school in general over many years.

Laurence Page was elected as a co-opted governor, Elizabeth Dormandy was elected as chair, and Mike Yule continues as Vice Chair

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 of all staff at the school as they continue to deliver a fantastic education for all our children. A huge thank you to everyone who volunteers their time and talents to the school. In particular we would like to thank the P.T.A., chairs Sonia and Charlie and treasurer Phillip who have helped organise some wonderful events, including the memorable Rock n' Roll Rodeo, Fun Run and Winter Fair.

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

Best wishes

Governing Body

Brookfield Primary School

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To find out more about the governing body please go to the school's website where full governing body minutes can be viewed. If you have any comments or suggestions or want to know more about the work we do, we can be contacted by email at the address above or drop us a note at the office.