

# An Update from your Board of Governors



School Governors are one of the largest volunteer forces in the country and have an important part to play in raising school standards. The role is a strategic one

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
2. Holding the Head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils;
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

This is the first newsletter for the 2018-19 academic year , written both to help you understand what we get up to and to give you the chance to tell us how you feel about things.

So in this Newsletter you should find:

- Some words of welcome from our Chair of Governors
- The Awards we were delighted to present to six pupils
- An introduction to one of our new Governors
- How the Governing Body works and
- What we have been doing over the last year

## From the Chair of Governors



### David Burrows

I am pleased to welcome you to our third Governor Newsletter and hope you'll enjoy reading it. Governors are part of the school leadership team but fulfilling a strategic, rather than operational role. We have an excellent working relationship with the head teacher and staff of the school. You will regularly see one or more of us around the school carrying out our monitoring activities.

The new school building is progressing well. The head teacher is doing an excellent job in representing the interests of the staff and pupils in negotiation with the Local Authority and builders. A few of us were delighted to be given a tour of the site recently, more details and photos below.

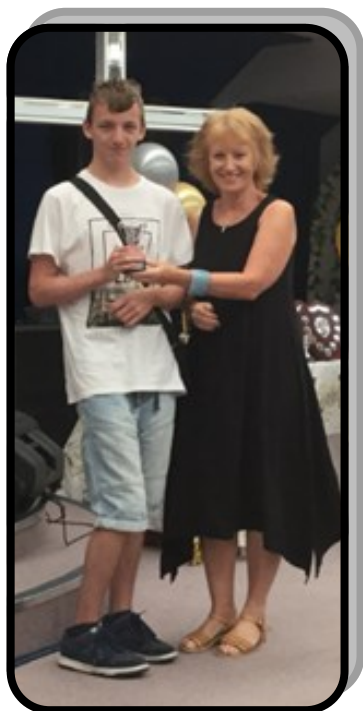
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## Awards

Every term the Governors seek nominations for and present awards to pupils who have made a particular contribution to the life of the school or who have achieved something noteworthy. On 19<sup>th</sup> July, the Governors were delighted to attend the graduation ceremony for those leaving the school and to present the awards. Class teachers make nominations in set categories and the winners receive a cup to take home. Their names are displayed in the school hall for the term in question. Not only is it wonderful to celebrate pupil achievement, but families usually attend and it gives other pupils a "gold standard" to aim for in the following term.

We made awards for Courage & Determination, Being a Good Citizen, Communication, Friendship and for Improved Attendance. We also made a special award to one pupil who met the criteria for all these categories.

## Awards



*Governor Award for Citizenship 2018.*



*Governor Special Award 2018.*

The photographs show some of the pupils receiving these awards. Well done to them all. At past award events, families have told us how very proud they are of their youngsters and how much it means to attend an awards event to celebrate success.

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## The Parents, Teachers and Friends Association

The PTFA is a group of parents, teachers and friends of Lexden Springs School who raise funds to help the school with extra equipment and activities for the pupils.

We are always keen to involve our pupils and parents in events whilst having some fun and raising money for the school, and even though we are looking forward to the new build we know there will always be some extras needed.

The PTFA has had a quiet year, but despite that we are helping fund a trip for 9 of our Holly Lodge students to go to Euro Disney at the end of the Autumn term. We are also planning to have a 'Goodbye old Lexden Springs' event in the summer term that we really hope pupils and parents will join us for.

We'd love to hear from anyone who would like to contribute ideas and a helping hand.

You can either email: [admin@lexdensprings.essex.sch.uk](mailto:admin@lexdensprings.essex.sch.uk) or [appealfund@lexdensprings.essex.sch.uk](mailto:appealfund@lexdensprings.essex.sch.uk) or call the school on 01206 563321.

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## Meet the new Governors – Rachel Burrage



I was delighted to be asked to join the governing body and have served as a governor since December 2017. I moved to Colchester more than 40 years ago and live locally in Lexden. I am now retired after working as a primary school teacher for 43 years. I have taught in a variety of schools and worked for 10 years as a special needs teacher in mainstream schools. I was a member of the School Leadership Team for many years at my last school, with responsibility for Key Stage One and Early Years. I also oversaw the teaching of English throughout the school. I still remain involved in education working as a voluntary helper in a primary school twice a week. I hope that I can put my experience and skills to good use in my role as governor to support the school in the fantastic work it does with its very special pupils.

In my spare time I enjoy spending time with my husband, children and grandchildren and like to visit new places on holiday. I enjoy walking, gardening, Pilates and yoga. I am also a member of St Leonard's Church and am kept busy as a Junior Church Leader.

## How does the Governing Body Work?

The Governing Body of Lexden Springs School was re-constituted in 2015 and is made up of two staff governors (including the Head teacher), two elected Parent Governors, one Local Authority Governor and seven Co-opted governors. Co-opted governors are appointed by the Governing Body and are people who, in the opinion of the governing body, have the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school. On our Governing Body all of the Co-opted governors are members of the local community.

The full Governing Body meets at least once each term, and we also have a number of sub-committees to consider different aspects of the school in detail. At Lexden Springs we have:

- a Finance, Premises and Personnel Committee
- a Curriculum and Pupil Related Matters Committee
- a Pay Committee
- a Committee to oversee the performance of the Head Teacher

We also have committees that meet if required to consider pupil discipline and staffing matters.

As I mentioned in the introduction, one of our tasks is monitoring school activities in key areas. So what does this mean in practice? Each governor takes on two or three areas to monitor and typically undertakes a monitoring visit once per term on each area. This typically involves meeting the school staff member responsible for the area and then visiting one or more class rooms to understand what is happening in practical terms. We don't interrupt lessons but are often invited to participate in activities. We try to get a sense of whether what we are told should be happening is really doing so. We might look at pupils' folders, we might look at assessment data or wall displays. We might chat with the class teacher after the lesson. It is definitely not our role to criticise the teaching and learning, we are not qualified to do that. Afterwards we will write a short report which gets circulated to all governors. A key topic that is addressed in all reports is what the impact on the pupils has been. Areas that are monitored include Safeguarding, Health & Safety, the impact of Pupil and Sports Premium funding, how pupil progress is assessed, Pupil Voice, pupils' mental health, the school web-site and several others. Once per term we will also meet as a whole board of governors to be briefed on a particular theme; last term it was on the work of the therapy teams particularly in support of Pupil Premium investment. This term we will be learning how Talentino is supporting the developments of pupils' abilities in the business world.

## So What Have We Been Doing Recently?

Regular parts of what we do include:

- Maintaining and enhancing the Strategic Plan to ensure we are aware of all the factors that may affect the quality of education at Lexden Springs in the future
- Monitoring financial spend and income against budget for 2017/18
- Reviewing the curriculum as it has been rolled out across the school and pupil progress in key topics
- Supporting the Senior Leadership Team with interviewing of prospective classroom staff
- Undertaking training to ensure we are up-to-date with legislation that affects school
- Reviewing the School Improvement Plan and identifying areas we need to monitor in the future
- Monitoring Health and Safety matters which may affect pupils and members of staff
- Monitoring Safeguarding and Pupil behaviour.
- Ensuring the Pupil Premium and Sports Premium Grants are being spent appropriately by the school for the benefit of our "vulnerable groups" of children and assessing what impact this has on their outcomes.

Specific activities over the last few months have included:

- Monitoring the progress of the new Middle-Management team in the school
- Monitoring progress towards Outstanding teaching in all classrooms
- Monitoring the activities on the School Improvement Plan
- Maintaining the momentum towards being rated Outstanding by OFSTED at the next inspection which is due any time soon
- Supporting the Head teacher in the negotiations over the plans for the new school building

As mentioned in the introduction, a few of the governors were delighted to be shown around the site of the new school. Much of the steelwork for the main building has been erected and the brickwork for the residential blocks has started. If work goes to plan the roof and flooring for the main building should be installed by Christmas making the building effectively watertight.



Left half of main building



Right half of main building



Forest School as viewed from the roof of main building



Three governors plus two of the site managers



Membership of the Governing Body evolved during the year. Ivy Robinson retired after many years of service as a governor at Lexden Springs and prior to that at a school in Witham. We thank her for her dedicated support over this period. Peter Wilde has also recently resigned as he will shortly be moving back to work in London. Peter had been a governor at another school previously and brought a wealth of experience on matters of finance. We were delighted to welcome two new governors, Rachel Burrage and Vicki Stevens. Rachel is a retired teacher from a local school and brings a wealth of experience particularly around Early Years. Vicki is a parent of a pupil in the school, is a solicitor for a large UK holiday company and has served as a governor in other schools.

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## Getting in Touch

We always welcome suggestions, feedback and ideas from parents – please contact the Chair of Governors, David Burrows, via the school office. The minutes of governing body meetings are available from the school office if you are interested.

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