

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 Headteacher 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 2019/2020 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
- A Report and photographs from our school graduation in 2019
- News from the PTFA
- 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



I am pleased to welcome you to our fourth 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 now open and I am sure that you will agree that it is a fantastic facility for everyone involved with the school. All of the staff worked hard in early September to have everything ready for the opening but special thanks need to be given to Simon Wall our Headteacher who has worked tirelessly for the past couple of years to ensure that the school would be fitted out with everything that our pupils will need and that every detail has been considered. It is an amazing achievement and some pictures of the parts of the school that are not easily seen are included in this newsletter.

Graduation 2019

As ever this was a very special occasion when the school had to say farewell to our graduates. This emotional ceremony was led by the students themselves and we had 11 graduates sadly leaving us at the end of the Summer term, Bailey, Devrim, Ellysha, James, Joshua, Mark, Michelle, Mohammed, Nivi, Olivia and Tom.

Many of our graduates made moving speeches and our Chair of Governors David Burrows presented each student with a beautiful collage canvas of memories, purchased by our PTFA. There was a recorded message and short film from Ollie Murs and the celebration was completed with a rendition of "Reach for the Stars" where everyone joined in to send our leavers off to their new journeys.





The Governors hope that they have enjoyed their time at Lexden Springs but they will all be greatly missed and the Governors wish them well for their futures, wherever they may be.

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.

After a quiet year during 2018/2019, there is a new and very active committee. They have set up a Lexden Springs Parent Group on Facebook and a Lexden Springs PTFA page which co educators, taxi drivers and escorts, parents, friends and anyone interested can follow. The aim it to be able to communicate effectively with everyone to keep them updated about the PTFA and what they are up to. Anyone who has an interest in planning events are invited to join the Facebook Messenger Group which has generated discussion and views, even when people are unable to be at meetings in person. Any contribution is welcome, however small, as it is appreciated that people are busy but good ideas and some assistance will always be welcome.

Parents have been busy with fundraising, one parent who works for a pharmacy nominated the PTFA for a charity match funded cake sale and raised a fantastic £882.52. Another parent bravely completed the Paras10 on stilts with a friend, raising a further £280.

In July 2019, just before leaving the old school premises, the PTFA arranged The Great Move Party to help the children transition and to celebrate the old school premises and the forthcoming move to Winstree Road. Many families from staff and pupils came to this event at Kingsland Church which lasted for some 4 hours enabling everyone to attend without overcrowding. To cater to our unique pupils there was a soft play area, a craft area, a sensory play area and games as well as the disco with photo booth and entertainer. Hopefully the event was enjoyed by all and was a fitting celebration to the preparations for the move.

In November the PTFA organised the Christmas Market which was partly held in the outside space as well as the new hall.

Although a slightly dismal day weatherwise, there was no rain and the Market was very well attended.

The purpose was to raise funds for the purchase of a new minibus as the current one is now 16 year's old and unreliable and expensive to repair.

The PTFA were thrilled to raise £2250 and were hugely grateful to the parents, staff, pupils and the general public who attended.

It is hoped that there will be some more events in 2020 and the PTFA are exploring the possibility of sponsored events followed by another big event before the Easter holidays. Any ideas and suggestions will be welcome and offers of help.

You can either email: appealfund@lexdenssprings.essex.sch.uk or call the school on 01206 563321.

Meet the new Governors – Vicki Stevens



I am a parent of a child at the school and have been a Governor since 2011, in two very different mainstream primary schools before Lexden Springs. In my working life I am a solicitor for a large UK holiday firm and specialise in financial compliance.

I have always had a background in governance throughout my working life, and am proud to be involved with the skilled and supportive team of Governors at Lexden Springs who provide support and challenge to the school in a way that has shown demonstrable improvements and continues to do so. Lexden Springs as a setting continues to go from strength to strength in difficult times for the education sector; long may it continue.

I am at the school gate at least 2 or 3 times a week and am more than happy, if I can, to answer any questions parents may have.

How does the Governing Body Work?

The Governing Body of Lexden Springs School is made up of two staff governors (including the Headteacher), two elected Parent Governors, and four 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; recent meetings have focussed on the work of the therapy teams particularly in support of Pupil Premium investment and how Talentino is supporting the development of pupils' skills for their future in the outside world.



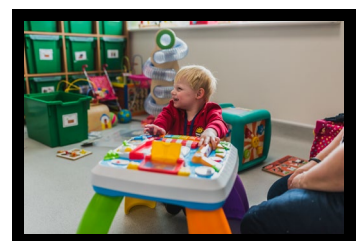
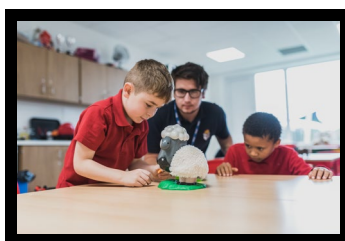
So what have we been doing recently?

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 2018/2019
- 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 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 Headteacher when possible to deliver the new school building
- Talking informally with parents at the parent/teacher meeting
- Celebrating with the school the Enquiring Schools Research Mark achievement at the Celebration of Learning on 9 July 2019.
- Monitoring and understanding the impact of the creation of Mental Wealth



Membership of the Governing Body evolved during the year. Shirley Croft is now Chair of Governors but ably supported by David Burrows and Vicki Stevens as Vice Chairs. David has been our Chair for some time and has brought a wealth of experience to the role and the Governors and school are enormously grateful for his hard work and commitment. We have also sadly lost our Local Authority Governor Lewis Barber who has new and exciting commitments. Our remaining governors, Sharon Slade, Rachel Burrage and Vicki Stevens and Lynn Lennard Jones continue to bring a wealth of experience to their roles and have an in-depth knowledge of the school and the pupils.

Minutes of Governing Body and Committee meetings are public documents – they are available at the school office if you would like to see any of the minutes of our meetings.

Getting in Touch

We always welcome suggestions, feedback and ideas from parents – please contact the Chair of Governors, Shirley Croft, via the school office.

