

LEXDEN SPRINGS RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

An update from your Board of Governors



February 2021

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 2020/2021 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
- Photographs from the graduates of 2020
- News from the PTFA
- An introduction to one of our 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 again to a Governor Newsletter, the fifth one so far and hope that you will find it useful.

Governors are part of the school leadership team but we fulfil a strategic, rather than operational role. We have an excellent working relationship with our Head Teacher and the staff in the school and work well together, coming from a variety of different backgrounds and previous and current employments.

In the last newsletter we were celebrating the opening of our amazing new school. The pupils

and staff were settling in well and enjoying the new freedoms of space and fantastic facilities. Everyone was looking forward to the opening of our residential units and all was looking very positive for the future of the school.

Little did we know that we would, by the Spring of 2020, be in the midst of a global pandemic, affecting the whole world and significantly impacting our school and all other educational facilities.

At the point of writing this newsletter at the beginning of 2021, not a great deal has improved but with the hope that vaccinations have brought, perhaps the next newsletter will be able to report that much has returned to some normality.

At this time, a large percentage of our pupils are in school and most of our staff. The daily routine is hardly normal for anyone but from the reports that we have seen as Governors, our fantastic staff and pupils have coped so well with the restrictions, the temperature taking and all of the limitations that the virus has brought to bear.

As Governors, we have avoided visiting school to reduce the risks to everyone concerned but have stayed in contact with our Headteacher and other staff in order to continue our obligations but have missed the visits that were such an important part of our work.

It has been particularly sad that our pupils leaving school were not able to celebrate their time with us in the same way as previous years.

The Parents, Teachers and Friends Association



appealfund@lexdensprings.essex.sch.uk

The PTFA is a group of parents, teachers and friends of Lexden Springs Residential Special 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.

Despite not being able to hold events over the last year, due to Covid restrictions, parents and friends of school have continued to support the fundraising efforts.

There was a successful community staff train during the Summer of 2020 when various parents had items for sale on their drives donating some or all of the monies raised to the Appeal Fund.

In October 2020 half term there was a virtual pet show which was well supported by people in the local community as well as parents.

In November the PTFA launched their online Christmas Market which had around 50 stalls and over 900 customers and this continued into the New Year so that customers could continue to purchase birthday, valentines, Mother's day and other special occasion gifts from our lovely stallholders

<https://facebook.com/groups/930961600745757/?ref=share>

There is also a fundraising group where people can offer help and support and from which there are games to help raise additional funds

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/734207710669532/?ref=share>

Following some amazing donations, including £6000 from Colchester Catalyst and £8000 from a lovely family, £11,000 raised during the 2019-2020 school year and some existing savings, the PTFA are currently awaiting a quotations for the acquisition of a new wheelchair accessible minibus to be named Rosie. Unfortunately the lockdown restrictions has delayed this a little but hopefully an announcement will soon be made. In the meantime, fundraising will continue in the limited circumstances available but the PTFA are very grateful to all who have continued to support the school during these difficult times.

New parents have been welcomed onto the PTFA committee and their fresh ideas and enthusiasm has been much appreciated. There continues to be support from staff and families of parents and staff including grandparents, aunts, uncles and siblings of our children and the staff's own children. The school is grateful as this enables fundraising for all of the additional items and opportunities for the pupils at the school.

There is currently a Gift Amnesty so if anyone has received Christmas gifts that are not to their taste or style they can be donated and dropped off at 8 Harvey Road, CO2 9HP where they will be isolated for 72 hours and then used towards fundraising efforts in the coming year.

Anyone wishing to support the PTFA and school in fundraising can also add funds by nominating the Lexden Springs Appeal fund as your chosen charity so that each time you shop at Amazon they will give a donation.

<https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ap/signin>

The PTFA also use the giving machine who again will donate to the appeal fund at no additional

cost to purchasers

<https://www.thegivingmachine.co.uk/>

It is hoped that events will be able to take place as 2021 progresses and any ideas and suggestions and offers of help will always be much appreciated.

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

Meet the Governors - Sharon Slade



I became a Parent Governor in 2013 and following my daughter's graduation in July 2020, I was happy to remain on the school's governing body and am now what is known as a co-opted governor.

Family life is busy my daughter lives at home with me, my partner and her younger brother. And not forgetting my 4 step-children and a new granddaughter!

My career for over 20 years was in the corporate events industry but I am now working for the NHS. An unexpected career change but one that I am very excited about.

I am also a trustee of a small charity called Frozen Light. They create multi-sensory theatre for audiences with profound and multiple learning disabilities and I am delighted to be able to offer them my support.

Running is an important part of my life. It is a great way to clear the mind and ease the stresses of daily life. I also enjoy taking part in races with my running buddieshalf marathons and marathons are my favourites.

How does the Governing Body Work?

The Governing Body of Lexden Springs Residential Special 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 Residential Special School 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 may involve meeting the school staff member responsible for the area and then visiting one or more classrooms to understand what is happening in practical terms. We don't interrupt lessons but we 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. But it is not our role to criticise the teaching and learning, that is not our function and we are not qualified to do that. More recently we have been involved in monitoring our new residential facility and as this is increasingly used, this will be an important part of our work.

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 and Safety, the impact of Pupil and Sports Premium funding, how pupil progress is assessed, the curriculum, Pupil Voice, pupils' mental health, the school website and several others. Once per term there will also be a meeting for the governors to be briefed on a particular theme. Recent meetings, for example, have focussed on the work undertaken by our therapy teams, particularly in support of Pupil Premium invests in this. All governors find this training very helpful but also undertake essential safeguarding updating training annually.

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 school in the future
- Monitoring financial spend and income against budget for 2019/2020
- 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 activities on the School Improvement Plan
- . Continuing to consider the findings of our last OFSTED inspection, in particular keeping in close contact with the school concerning the curriculum
- . Supporting our Headteacher through regular online meetings during the pandemic
- . Continuing to understand the impact of the creation of Mental Wealth

Considering the impact of the pandemic on the wellbeing of all staff and pupils

- . Continuing to closely monitor safeguarding and Health and Safety
- . Moving all committee and full Governing Body meetings to Microsoft Teams
- . Undertaking essential training as required

Membership of our Governing Body has remained fairly static during the year. Shirley Croft remains Chair of Governors, ably supported by David Burrows and Vicki Stevens as Vice Chairs. David was our Chair of Governors and Vicki has extensive experience in roles at other schools. Our remaining Governors, Sharon Slade, Rachel Burrage, and Lynn Lennard Jones continue to bring their wealth of experience to their roles and have an excellent understanding of the school and pupils. We are supported by members of the Senior Leadership Group and our Head Teacher and a Staff Governor at our regular 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.