

August 2022

LEXDEN SPRINGS RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Attend, Aspire, Achieve

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 newsletter for 2022 , 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 2022
- 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, 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.

At the end of 2019 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.

Although school remained open throughout the pandemic, it clearly had a significant impact on our pupils, staff and all families and carers. At the time of the last newsletter things were not back to normal and Governors were avoiding going into school for our usual visits, monitoring and meetings and much was completed online.

Although there have been more lockdowns, restrictions and continued illness, Governors have now returned to school and it has been a relief and pleasure for us all to be able to do so. During the past 18 months we have been pleased to welcome new Governors, who have already brought their skills and expertise to the Board, for the benefit of our school and pupils.

It had been particularly sad that our pupils leaving school were not able to celebrate their time with us in the same way but the pictures included in this newsletter show that by the end of the Summer term of 2022 we were able to return to the Graduation ceremony for our leavers which was as ever, a joyous occasion, just tinged with sadness that they are leaving.

Graduation 2022

This is always a very special and emotional occasion when we say goodbye to our graduates. The graduation of 2022 was in the School Hall and some of the pictures taken of the occasion are shown below.



Meet the Governors - Gareth Mitchell



Hello! I joined the school's governing body as a Co-opted Governor in the summer of 2021 having just retired from paid work. I have lived in Lexden for over 25 years and worked in local government in Colchester for 20 years, so I know the borough well.

As a school governor I am a member of the Curriculum and Pupil-Related Committee and am Deputy Safeguarding Governor. I have had previous experience as a school governor at my children's primary school but clearly there is lots for me to learn about Lexden Springs, our amazing students and dedicated staff and the challenges and opportunities that face us as a school. I am really enjoying the learning experience and getting to know my fellow governors and staff members, albeit we have done some of our work virtually since I started.

I am married and our two children are now in their twenties. Apart from my role at Lexden Springs, you will find me most days out and about with my dog walking the highways and byways of the area (got to keep my paces up!).

I have other volunteer roles including as part of the church community at Kingsland Church, Lexden. I also do some mentoring with students at a local secondary school and enjoy volunteering at Colchester Foodbank each week.

I have been so impressed in these few months since I became a governor by the significant achievements of our students, the remarkable commitment and professionalism of our staff and the strong community that is Lexden Springs – I very much look forward to playing my part in the future of the school.

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, one Local Authority Governor and 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, our school curriculum and consideration of acadamisation. All Governors find this training very helpful but also undertake compulsory safeguarding updating training annually. Governors also attend training from outside provision, sometimes induction courses for new Governors and general updates as required throughout the school year. A careful record is kept of all training courses attended.

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 2021/2022
- 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.
- Visiting and monitoring the Residential Unit and considering all independent reports regularly provided and annual Ofsted reports.

Specific activities over the last few months have included:

- . Monitoring the activities on the School Improvement Plan
- . Continuing to consider the findings of our OFSTED inspection in 2019, in particular keeping in close contact with the school concerning the curriculum
- . Supporting our Headteacher
- . Continuing to understand the impact of the creation of Mental Wealth

- . Continuing to closely monitor Safeguarding and Health and Safety
- . Monitoring our developing Residential unit and meeting with OFSTED for their annual inspection in late Spring
- . 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 longstanding Governors, Sharon Slade and Rachel Burrage continue to bring their wealth of experience to their roles and have an excellent understanding of the school and pupils. We have welcomed new Governors to the school during the academic year, Gareth Mitchell, Lucy Lavender, Julia Deery and Lucy Smith. We are also supported by members of the Senior Leadership Group, 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.