

Message from the Chair of Governors

Round-up of the Year

As we near the end of the academic year, I am reflecting on the year that has passed and the challenges the school has faced. We started the year in September, energised and eager, pleased that we were now a two-base school. The governing body felt that this was the right set-up for a school of our size, and that it would allow the teachers to focus on getting it right in the classroom, and remove the challenges of the distance between the infant bases. We also feel that it is good for the children to all start their school life together and move up through the years as one whole group.

In October we were faced with our second Requires Improvement rating from Ofsted, with a specific focus on the quality of leadership and teaching. This was borne out by the KS1 and KS2 results of the previous academic year, and therefore difficult to refute. The next few months were challenging and in February we received a visit and follow-up letter from Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI). This letter told us we were not making progress fast enough.

Towards Easter, our much-loved Headteacher, Mrs Roberton, resigned and, with the support of the Local Authority, the governors appointed Mrs McCarthy and Mrs Tarrant to lead the school. This has led to changes in the school, some of them apparent to us as parents (new newsletter, new school gate set-up, re-establishment of the PTA, resignation and recruitment of teachers), others less obvious but reported to the governors. As Chair I receive bi-weekly updates on the school and I am feeling very positive about the future as we look towards the next academic year. I can see the Heads working with the all staff to tackle issues that governors often ask about (quality of teaching, safety of children, value for money), and also find they are raising issues we didn't even know existed. This is reflective of their experience in settings similar to our school.

I can't do a round-up of the year without remembering that this term we received the sad news of the passing of Saira Ahmed. It is difficult for everyone when a child dies, and the thoughts of the governors are very much with the family and friends of Saira.

Going Forward

At the end of term, the Heads will be meeting with our Local Authority lead, detailing their plans for the year ahead, and reflecting their progress so far. This meeting also discusses the actual KS1 and predicted KS2 results, cross-referencing them against National figures. These figures only present one aspect of how a school is doing, but are valuable and important nonetheless. Governors also join this meeting, and it gives us a good flavour of how the school is doing.

Because leadership of the school is under the scrutiny of Ofsted, the governing body has evaluated its own effectiveness and is also adjusting and realigning; we have revisited and amended our general principles and requirements. In addition, all schools are required to reconstitute by September 2015 in accordance with new guidelines, and Riverbridge is no exception. Our new governing body will be smaller, and with several governors ending their term this month, there will be vacancies on the board. These will be advertised in due course. I take this opportunity to thank all the governors for their support for the school; they all give their time willingly and have been a great help to me in my first year as Chair.

The PTA is another important element of the school community, and its success often reflects the the school's reputation. I am so pleased to see new energy in the group and urge all parents and carers to get a bit more involved with the school community and actively support the PTA. There is a Facebook page you can join. It was great to see the solid presence from both teachers and parents at the school discos! A strong PTA increases the overall effectiveness of your child's school experience.

Overall, I am feeling very positive about the year ahead. I have confidence in the Heads and in the new structure of leadership they have put in place. I can see how all teachers and teaching assistants are involved in this structure and how there are clear lines of accountability – it is this accountability which the governors are responsible for overseeing, questioning and supporting.

Last night I attended the Year 6 Production – it was a fabulous show, very funny and entertaining, but also had us all reaching for our tissues. Well done Year 6 and good luck in your new schools.

I wish you all a lovely summer, and look forward to welcoming you back in September, refreshed and ready for next year's challenges.

It is onwards and upwards for Riverbridge!

Best regards,

Laura Ellis-Philip

Chair of Governors