
WINDMILL HILL GOVERNOR NEWS

Termly Updates from the Windmill Hill Governing Body

For some of our parents/carers this will be



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the first time you have seen a Governor newsletter. I apologise for that but as I had written a letter to all parents in November I didn't feel the newsletter was also necessary last term. These newsletters are an update for our parents/ carers and school community on what the governing body have been up to in the last term.

Having read my November letter you'll be unsurprised to hear that September to January has been very busy for the Governing body, who have been carrying out an increased number of visits into school, holding additional meetings, attending additional training and generally ensuring we have a full and accurate picture of what is happening in school. Fortunately we were able to fill our three Governor vacancies over the summer and we are now a full governing body with a strong team of individuals who are completely dedicated to giving the time and commitment that is required for the role.

Learn Sheffield Review

One of the first tasks undertaken by Governors at the start of this academic year was to commission an external review by Learn Sheffield (see box on P3). The review was able to validate the position of school in relation to last year's outcomes and make suggestions to help the school to improve. Governors were involved in the review and then received the report, so that we can hold school to account against the recommendations. A number of the changes you may have seen or heard about in school may have been as a result of this review.

Learn Sheffield support

Coincidentally, last year we had decided to change the School Improvement Partner (see box on P3) that we use to give us an external viewpoint of the school, and have also commissioned Learn Sheffield to provide that support. Using Learn Sheffield for this means we can access support from the skills and experience of more than one individual from their team. This year so far we have worked with OFSTED inspectors Peter Heaton and Nicola Shipman (who is also the Executive Principal of the three local schools in the Steel City Schools Partnership) working with the school.



Self-Assessment

At the beginning of each year school self-assess themselves against a range of criteria. Due to last year's results school know that we require improvements to be made to demonstrate that our children are being taught at the nationally required level. The self-assessment is important as school and governors need to demonstrate that we know our strengths and weaknesses.

This year's self-assessment judgement also means school qualifies for additional support from Learn Sheffield. This is useful for governors as it gives us another external viewpoint and comparison. As part of the Learn Sheffield additional support, in January Mrs Grantham and I attended a 'Support and Challenge' meeting with the Chief Executive of Learn Sheffield, Stephen Betts, and Peter Heaton. It was a very useful meeting, and reassuring to hear that they believe School and governors have acted very promptly in response to the SATs results.

Collaboration

This year school has also embraced the importance of working with other schools. Whilst school did some work with the local 'family' of schools last year, this has been significantly increased this year with Windmill teachers attending sessions at other schools to ensure that our monitoring and standards are in-line and also to bring back learning and ideas from approaches other schools take. As Governors we regularly receive feedback from the school about collaboration and are actively looking at how we can strengthen school's collaborative working even further.

Ofsted

Some of you may be aware that school was last visited by Ofsted in November 2013 and with a three year cycle that means that we are due a visit any time. Governors also attend when Ofsted visit school as we are considered part of the school leadership. I am confident, when Ofsted visit, that we have a strong governing body who know the school well and we will be able to answer any questions they have. Whilst this won't address the concerns they will have about last year's SATs it should help to demonstrate that school is well managed and is acting quickly to make necessary changes to ensure outcomes for our children are what they should be and more in-line with the national average.

Parent/Carer engagement

In July we received the results of the pupil and parent surveys and it was obvious from those that the majority of the school community believe that in the last academic year school saw some big improvements around offering more opportunities for parents/carers to be involved in school life, and to give feedback to school. This is something we continue to encourage as a governing body because we believe it is very important, and since then we have held a very helpful parent's forum. You should also recently have received a letter asking how you would like to be more involved in your child's learning. I hope you have been able to find the time to respond.

Attendance

We were disappointed that last year the school didn't meet its attendance target of 96%, however this year's data suggests as a whole school we are doing better. Thank you for your support with this. School attendance is important as it impacts on pupil achievement, and is therefore a factor that OFSTED look at very closely when they judge a school.

School 5 Year Strategy

Whilst governors are not involved in the day to day running of the school we do help set the vision for what we believe the school should be aspiring to achieve. We have recently completed the school's 5 year strategy, which sets out where we believe school should be in 5 years' time. Thank you to the parents/carers who contributed their opinions. The strategy can now be found on the school website.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. I hope you've found it useful. I welcome any queries on school governor issues so please don't hesitate to contact me via the school office.

Katy Davison, Chair of Governors

Meet the Governor

Jacqueline Williams - Parent Governor

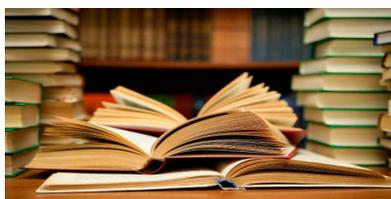
Tell us about yourself – *I have a daughter in Year 2 who loves reading and the school as much as I do! I am an Independent Financial Examiner, working from home, which means that I have plenty of time during the day to be treasurer for the PTA, help organise the Bookclub and be treasurer for a local WI as well as be a Governor*

What does your role on the Governing Body involve? – *I am the Literacy Lead Governor working on the Learning Committee. My role is to challenge school to provide the best education possible in reading and writing and to support them in fostering a love of reading and writing that will stay with the children as they grow. I have an absolute passion for literacy as I believe it is the foundation for so many important life skills. I am also interested in the analysis of school data and in the strategic direction of the school and so I have also joined the working groups for these areas.*

Why did you become a Governor? – *I really love Windmill Hill School and want to help and support the school in any way I can. I have great fun helping on the PTA but I wanted to do more and when the Literacy Lead Governor role became available it was too tempting to resist! I hope my time, skills and enthusiasm will be useful to the Governing body and the School.*

What are you most proud of as a Governor? – *I am so proud that when I speak to organisations, businesses and individuals in the local community, they all express a real fondness and affection for the School and the pupils. I am often told that we are such a happy, friendly school and that the pupils are so polite and helpful. The community are so supportive of us and are really starting to become more involved with the school.*

What's your greatest governor ambition? - *To see the pupils of Windmill Hill discover a life-long love of reading, to do my best for the school and to see it go from strength to strength*



Learn Sheffield

Learn Sheffield is a not for profit schools company which is focussed on school improvement and owned by Sheffield's schools and colleges (who own 80%) in partnership with Sheffield City Council (who own 20%).

They support a school-led system to deliver improvement through partnerships, and improve outcomes for the children and young people of Sheffield. Learn Sheffield aims to strengthen city-wide partnership work. They are commissioned to deliver the statutory duties relating to school improvement by Sheffield City Council.

School Improvement Partner

Every local authority school (like us) has a school improvement partner for the year. The school improvement partner is an individual or team who can provide an external perspective to help the school look at how they can improve. They are also another way, alongside data, surveys etc that the governing body can be assured that school are giving us an accurate reflection of the school's true position. School Improvement Partners are often OFSTED advisors themselves and always teachers or ex-teachers.