

Thursday, 14th December 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we end the first long term of the year, it felt timely to send an update from the governors.

The past few months have been a time of change and, as usual, have been very busy. My thanks go to the staff and leadership of the school who have worked very hard. We have welcomed several new teachers to Paxcroft this year and they have brought lots of enthusiasm and new ideas. We are pleased to have them on board.

The governing body has also seen a change over the past few months. Bernie McHale-Jones stepped down as Chair of Governors at the beginning of the school year, and we have recently said goodbye to Lee Davey. Both Bernie and Lee have served their time well, both being on the Board for many years. We are thankful for all their work and the support they have provided for the school over the years, especially when they both had terms as Chair of Governors. As some leave, others join, and I am pleased to welcome Sammi Coggans and Dan Elliott to the Board. They both bring excellent skills from different areas outside education, and I am pleased they have chosen to join us at Paxcroft.

I am the new Chair of Governors and Rachel Edmunds is Vice Chair. Between us we have lots of experience of delivery in schools and governance in other sectors. I am pleased to be leading a board of excellent people who care deeply about Paxcroft and want it to be the best it can be.

As school governors, our role is to:

- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction
- Hold the leaders to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff
- Oversee the financial performance of the school

We do our work through the Full Governing Board (FGB) which has three sub-committees. The FGB and each of the sub-committees (Finance, Curriculum and Pay & Reward) have met this term.

- The FGB met at the beginning of term to review the School Evaluation Form and approve the School Development Plan. It has set up monitoring processes for each of the priorities of the School Development Plan and approved several updates to school policies.
- The Finance and Premises Committee had an update on the school budget and the spend to date. The committee were assured that financial controls are in place to ensure good financial practices. The committee heard updates from a Health and Safety monitoring visit and updates on the site development projects around the school.
- The Curriculum Committee interrogated current progress data for pupils. They also focussed on progress of children eligible for the Pupil Premium grant and were provided with details of actions being taken to ensure all pupils achieve their potential.



- The Pay and Reward Committee met to consider the Head Teacher's recommendations on pay progression following individual appraisal meetings with all members of teaching staff.

Each of the Committees report to the FGB, which will meet in the new year, before each sub-committee meeting again in term 4. Governors will also be meeting with key members of staff monitoring safeguarding, SEND, Health and Safety and Leadership development.

In addition to the formal governance and meetings, we also receive reports providing external scrutiny. This term the school has had several external bodies review the quality of teaching and learning. The Ramsbury English Hub has had several visits to review the phonics provision across the school, with overwhelmingly positive outcomes, including very positive feedback about the leadership of phonics.

In November, the Local Authority undertook a school evaluation and found the school's improvement journey was well underway and there were some areas of real strength in the school. This is something the Governors were very pleased with and is a testament to the hard work of all the staff across the school. The report gave us an external opinion backing up all the things we are seeing in school and hearing from the leaders. In addition to the whole school evaluation, the local authority has done a deep dive into safeguarding. The report found that the school was in a good position with its safeguarding, again backing up what governors are seeing and hearing.

Outside of governance, I am pleased to see the further development of the school site and premises with the work completed over the summer to improve the IT infrastructure and the redevelopment of the Reception playground, together with installation of the new climbing apparatus. If you, like me, come in through the main gates you will also be able to see the developing forest school area with the new outdoor classroom. I am particularly pleased about this area as it will be shared with our neighbours, Silverwood School. They have little outdoor space and so our forest school area will be shared with them to allow their pupils to enjoy the outdoors in an engaging and accessible space. Our relationship with Silverwood grows and you'll know we've lent Silverwood one of our classrooms for this year meaning that those students can continue to learn near to their peers whilst also being part of the Paxcroft community.

I am also pleased to see the many initiatives happening across the school including charity fundraising activities, outdoor learning days, school trips and residentials, school councillors visiting the local nursing home, drama performances and children having an active role in Trowbridge Youth Parliament. I have enjoyed meeting potential new families at our Reception Open mornings, and hearing about the great work of the house captains, vice captains and other student leaders in the school. As governors, seeing what the children are learning, the opportunities they are given and how well they represent the school really makes the role worthwhile.

On that heart-warming note, I wish you all a restful time over the Christmas break and a happy new year.
Kind Regards

Andrew Ross, Chair of Governors

If you are interested in the role of the governors, either because you'd like to know more about what we do or because you are interested in becoming a governor then please email me at chairofgovernors@paxcroft.wilts.sch.uk

