



Where children are
at the heart of all
we do each day.



Governors' Newsletter – Autumn Term 2020

At the start of this year, none of us could have imagined the challenges that 2020 would bring. The Covid-19 pandemic has created a truly unprecedented situation and school life has had to adapt and change like never before.

In order to fulfil our responsibilities as governors, we have continued to work and support the schools. We have almost become Microsoft Teams and Zoom experts after holding eight months of governor meetings using this 'virtual meeting' technology! We have occasionally been able to visit the schools (sometimes under the cover of darkness), and meet, socially distanced of course, with some of the staff. However, we are all missing seeing the children and hearing from them how they are getting on at school. We hope that in the coming months we will be able to get back into the schools.

In this newsletter, we would like to give you some information about what the governing board does and how we work with the school teams.

Role of the governing board

As governors we have three core functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Holding the Executive Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Our role is strategic. We don't get involved with the day to day operation of school life. To help us focus on these strategic functions, the governing body has committees who look after key areas, such as:

- Teaching and learning (including school improvement)
- Resources and finance
- Safeguarding and compliance
- Pay

Each of the committees is made up of four to six governors who were selected for

their relevant skills and experience. Details of the full governing board, areas of responsibility and a register of interests can be found at

<http://www.burleyandsopley federation.org.uk/page/?title=About+Us&pid=46>

Safeguarding and compliance

Our main focus is always safeguarding. It is our duty to ensure the schools meet their statutory responsibilities and that the children are safe.

How do we do this? We ask questions about how the children are looked after. We check to ensure that all adults within the school have had the correct checks and training. We make sure that the schools have procedures in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and, if concerns are reported, how these would be followed up. We visit the schools regularly and check that buildings are safe and secure. We make sure that the correct statutory policies and procedures are in place and that everyone knows and understands them. We look at the curriculum to ensure children are taught about, and know, how to keep themselves safe. We talk to the staff and children to check they feel safe and know what to do if something is worrying them. In short, we need to be sure that the schools are safe, and that safeguarding is effective.

School improvement plan

Each year our schools prepare a school improvement plan, which identifies the main priorities for the year and how they will be addressed. It is governors' responsibility to monitor the plan throughout the year. We do this during our committee and full governing board meetings, as well as through visits to the schools and discussions with the staff teams. This year the main priorities are to:

- Maintain and further strengthen the school's positive safeguarding culture so that children are safe, feel safe and are taught how to keep themselves safe.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning further, to raise standards achieved by pupils
- Develop a love of reading so that all children read with greater fluency and understanding, achieving at least the national expectations
- Improve the teaching of maths so that children learn to reason, problem solve, think fluently and mathematically
- Make sure the new behaviour policy is applied consistently and fairly
- Promote our school values so that children develop tolerance and respect for others and learn how to contribute to the school and wider community
- Embed the school's support for mental health and well-being across the whole community.

Governors' action plan

Each term, we have an action plan that includes the key areas we need to focus on, which are a combination of our statutory duties and the school improvement plan priorities. It's been a busy term for us, and we have completed the following actions:

- Annual safeguarding audit, and we have been involved in an external safeguarding audit carried out by the local authority and we have participated in annual safeguarding training
- Carried out health and safety site visits to both schools
- Regularly reviewed and updated the COVID-19 risk assessments
- Engaged in the recruitment of new staff
- Monitored the outcomes and progress the children are making
- Worked on financial forecasting, budget revision and planning for sustainability and marketing
- Reviewed our policies, taking into account COVID-19, to ensure that they address the welfare of all members of the school community
- Reviewed and audited the federation website
- Ensured that performance management and staff pay decisions were fair and effective
- Attended virtual full governing board training on safeguarding
- Governor monitoring visits and virtual meetings in the following areas:
 - Safeguarding – several visits to check safeguarding records and staff training record and to attend safeguarding training for teaching staff
 - Maths – reviewed the action plan and progress the children are making
 - Curriculum – termly review across all subjects and a PE focus
 - Review of online learning and the contingency plan if the schools or bubbles have to close
 - Carried out a review of school communication
 - Continued to ensure that the wellbeing of all staff is recognised through considerate working practices

Marketing the schools

One of the marketing initiatives we discussed was how we could showcase the beautiful settings of our schools. We arranged for an aerial survey of our schools which we have donated to the federation and we hope will be used for years to come. We are delighted with the result of the consequent footage (link below), filmed a few weeks ago. It shows off the fantastic locations and the amazing space that the schools have. We have been really encouraged to hear that the children have enjoyed much more outdoor learning this term, with both organised days and more time spent outside undertaking activities as part of their everyday learning.

Burley: <https://vimeo.com/aerialviewuk/review/487032428/bbc9afd6de>

Sopley: <https://vimeo.com/489138044>

Thank you

Finally, we would like to say thank you. Firstly, to the staff teams who have had to manage the pandemic with ever-changing guidelines, advice and practices, and quickly learn new ways of working. They welcomed the children back in September and quickly settled them into the school routines, with enthusiasm, understanding

and kindness. Everyday school life has changed, and teachers have had to follow safety guidelines, which has not been easy when you have a 'bubble' of children to steer through these changes. Staff have worked tirelessly to keep the children safe whilst trying to make school as normal as possible. We would like to **say a huge thank you for all their hard work throughout this year.**

We would like to thank the BPSA and FSS for their continued support and enthusiasm in coming up with creative ideas to continue raising much needed funds for the schools in difficult circumstances.

A **big thank you must go to all parents and carers for** your support during this term. You too have had many changes and guidelines to follow and we appreciate all your efforts to keep the children and staff safe. We are very grateful that the schools have remained open and thank you for helping to make this possible. Lastly, we need to thank the children. Their resilience throughout the year has been incredible. The way they have coped with being at home for so many months and then quickly adapting to the many changes in September, has been inspiring. They have worked so hard this term and made us very proud.

As the end of this unusual and challenging year approaches, we hope that 2021 will see a return to normal. We would like to wish you all a **very Happy Christmas and** hope you stay safe, well and enjoy the holiday with your families.

With our best wishes,

The Governing Board

