



March 2015

South Wilts Grammar School for Girls

Governor Newsletter

Welcome to our newsletter

The beginning of the New Year is a busy one for the Governors with the first meeting in January. This is the Strategic Meeting which we have once a year.

At this meeting we discuss present and future matters. These can cover any of the committees. Steering Group, Curriculum, Admissions, Audit, Personnel and Resources. All of these committees have met since January. Quite a busy start to the New Year. We are now, Staff, Pupils and Governors looking forward to the holiday.

We would like to wish you all a Very Happy Easter, and to those taking exams on their return, very good luck.

Diane Atkins



Diane Atkins
Chair of Governors

South Wilts Grammar School for Girls
Stratford Rd
Salisbury
SP1 3JJ

Phone: 01722 323326

Fax: 0172 320703

E-mail: governors@swgs.wilts.sch.uk
www.swgs.wilts.sch.uk

Dates to note:

13 April Return to school
22 April Year 8 Parents' Evening
30 April Year 7 Parents' Evening

25-29 May Half Term

23 June Year 10 Parents' Evening
17 July End of Summer Term

Did you know?

All our articles will be uploaded and linked to the school website, so that you can refer back to them.

Governors' involvement in Parents' Evenings ...

Parent Governors play a vital role on the school's governing body by bringing a parental perspective to the strategic management of the school. Elected by parents, usually for a four year term, they provide first-hand experience of how the curriculum is delivered and the way in which the school is perceived by the wider community.

A Parent Governor attends parent consultation evenings for every year group. They are available to listen impartially to concerns that are raised and will guide and advise parents on any procedures or courses of action. They will not become personally involved in any individual concerns but will be able to direct you to the relevant member of staff.

Please feel free to speak to your parent governors during parents evenings, they are approachable and non-judgmental.

Nigel Anstey



My first few months as a new governor



I became a new staff governor towards the end of the autumn term, hoping that I could make a useful contribution from both my perspective as a teacher but also as a parent.

The early weeks were daunting because I was given a lot of documents to read through which didn't make a much sense initially. I then went on a New Governor Training Day run by Wiltshire council which gave me a good overview of the role and made me feel more confident about what I was supposed to do.

Now that I've attended a few meetings, I think I'm beginning to get to grips with the jargon but it is clear that I will be learning a lot more in the years ahead.

Sarah Byerley

Committee Updates

Audit Committee

There are two governor members of the Audit Committee. Lisa Ball is a partner in a national accounting firm and David French is the Chief Financial Officer of an NHS Hospital Trust.

The work of the Audit Committee in recent meetings has included:

As part of its financial assurance programme, the school has engaged an external firm to review some of our processes, particularly around financial controls. The cost of these reviews is relatively small at £1,125 but provides helpful assurance that appropriate controls and procedures are in place at the school, which in turn minimises the risk of any financial loss. The Audit Committee reviews these reports and discusses any recommendations made in the reviews. Where the recommendations are accepted and agreed, the Audit Committee ensures that they are implemented. In recent meetings, the Committee has looked at income and payroll procedures and how business risk is handled.

Linked to the review of risk, the Committee has worked on developing the school's framework to manage risk. This has involved reviewing the risks the school faces, assigning an owner, assessing the impact and likelihood of each risk and ensuring that there are actions in place to eliminate or minimise the risk.

David French, Chair of Audit Committee

Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee meet each term with the Head and Deputy Heads. In a school with 155 members of staff there is always much to discuss and give consideration to, for example the appraisal processes for both Teaching and Support staff, employment policies and procedures and staff training. Effective and well managed appraisal and training of staff directly translate into high quality teaching and learning that underpins all the curriculum successes of the pupils.

The Personnel Committee also have delegated responsibility for the Admission process and procedure. In order that prospective Year 7 pupils for SWGS feel more at ease and become familiar with where they will sit the 11+ at the school on Saturday 26th September it has been decided that a familiarisation test will take place on Saturday 19 September 2015. Sitting an exam is always a daunting prospect especially when you are an unfamiliar school and it is really hoped that this will go some way to reducing nerves for the girls and help them to their very best on the 'day'. The test paper will not be marked or play a part in the actual 11+ examination mark.

Helen Stewart, Chair of Personnel

Curriculum Committee

The main focus of this committee is to check that the school is helping all students to achieve as highly as possible, not only in terms of levels of academic achievement, but also personally and socially. Governors scrutinised the examination results from 2014 rigorously and were once again reassured that students in Year 11 and in the Sixth Form reached a very high level of attainment. Furthermore, the data showed that South Wilts students make above average progress in their learning from when they join the school. This is an important factor in ensuring all students, regardless of background or ethnicity, fulfil their potential and in preparing them for higher education and employment. Governors praised both students and staff for their hard work and achievements.

Unsurprisingly, this committee also checks that the school curriculum matches the needs and interests of the students as far as possible within the school budget. This year we again reviewed the subjects taught and discussed issues such as the range of language options and whether all students should study the key EBACC subjects (English, Maths, Science, History or Geography and a language). Governors agreed that French and German provide excellent grounding in languages but also felt it was beneficial to offer Spanish and Latin outside the curriculum additionally. They also supported school leaders and the wishes of parents and students in the view that for some students, the EBACC group may not be the most appropriate.

To help governors understand different curriculum areas, we visit different departments and see the school at work. This year so far we have visited the Technology and Science departments. Governors were most impressed by the enthusiasm of both the students' and staff and enjoyed seeing the type and level of work undertaken. We have listened to teachers telling us how their environment and resources could be improved which will help us when we have to make decisions about expenditure.

The Curriculum committee also oversees the school's work on ensuring that provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is of a high quality. The Safeguarding Governor also reports to this committee and at every meeting, we check safeguarding matters, including staff training, and update the related policies.

Governors also monitor how well students are prepared for their later careers and we were delighted to be able to congratulate Jane Mackay, Careers Advisor and Carolyn Stammers Deputy Headteacher for their achievement of the Careers Mark for the school in 2014. At every meeting we also review a group of policies and these have included policies relating to Food, Homework, Medical Needs, Anti-Bullying, Attendance and Child Protection. We have also checked that the Assessment, Marking and Reporting Policy has been updated in line with national changes in assessment for Key Stage 3.

Jacqui Goodall, Chair of Curriculum Committee