



July 2016

South Wilts Grammar School for Girls

Governors' Newsletter

Welcome to our Summer Term Newsletter

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Dates to note for the Autumn Term

1 Sept	Inset Day for Years 7-11 Years 12&13 in p.m. only
2 Sept	Year 7 in school only Years 8-13 studying at Home
5 Sept	All years in school
15 Sept	Speech Day
11 Oct	Year 7 Parents' Meet The Tutor evening
18 Oct	Academic Support Evening

Did you know?

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



Helen Stewart
Chair of Governors

An important question the Board must ask of itself is how well do we keep parents and carers informed and monitor their views of the school?

Our Parent Governors play a key role in ensuring parents voices are sought and valued. An example is their presence at Parents Evenings so parents can talk through any issues they may have. However, having been to more parent evenings than I care to remember, having the time to discuss issues good, or bad, with Governors whilst playing musical chairs in the Hall is problematic! In addition to a Parent Governor being present on the evening, a short questionnaire could be available for you to complete, this providing a solution to ensure we more actively seek your views.

This would be added to the current survey Parents are requested to complete whilst you wait to speak to your daughter's teachers. I hope you find this approach satisfactory.

The School Development Plan 2016-2017 is on the website. The priorities for the year ahead include the following:

Teaching and Learning

- 1.1a Develop a clear SWGS learning ethos
- 1.3 To further refine the Department Review Process and 2.5 ensure that the accountability by middle leaders is strong

Curriculum Development

- 3.2 Curriculum Design KS5 2017 and 3.7 To implement work experience into KS5

Assessment and Reporting

- 6.5 Review and embed school feedback policy
- 6.6 To introduce and embed a new school system for assessing progress at KS3

Partnerships

- 7.4 To further develop the Salisbury SUPA (Southampton University Partnership Alliance)

Communication with stake holders

- 8.3 Develop a marketing Strategy for the school

Staff Development

- 9.6 To support the well-being of staff

Building and Resources

- 10.5 Refurbishment of running track and setting up systems / agreements to ensure longevity
- 10.9 Continue to plan for the long term viability of the school

Miscellaneous

- 11.1 Admissions - To continue to explore mechanisms to maximise social mobility and access to South Wilts

May I take this opportunity on behalf of the Board to thank all staff for their commitment and sense of purpose in providing a high class education for the girls. A great deal of effort has been put into supporting them pastorally and academically this past year. The hard work by everyone, I am sure, will be reaped on examination results days and before those important days a rest and break from work is richly deserved by all.

Helen Stewart (Chair of Governors)

Welcome to our new Parent Governor Nick Lay



Nick Lay
Parent Governor

Like every parent, I want SWGS to succeed in giving our daughters an outstanding education - in the classroom, on the sports field and through extra-curricular activities - to the best of its ability. This needs strong parental support. I am hoping becoming a Parent Governor will enable me to help the school's Governing Body to achieve this by providing a link between parents and staff to deliver feedback, inform the school's direction and strengthen the partnership between the two that is critical to our daughters' success.

Having an engineering background, I am particularly interested in encouraging girls to investigate the world of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and to pursue rewarding careers in these fields, using my industry connections to bring these careers to life.

The local community in Salisbury and the surrounding area is an important source of support for the school, and as a Parent Governor I will look to harness this support for the benefit of both SWGS and the community.

Nick Lay (Parent Governor)

Committee Updates

Resources Committee

As we approach the end of the school's financial year, we remain confident once again that we will come in within budget just! However, whereas in previous years we have been able to set aside a little every year for future contingencies, we will not be able to do so this time around. Next year will be worse and for the first time for many years, at its meeting on 11 July, the Governing Body has reluctantly agreed a small deficit budget for financial year 16/17. Nevertheless, our overall financial position remains robust and our cash reserves (set aside for circumstances just such as this) will see us through.

Why have we set a deficit budget? Staff costs, which are typically over 85% of our budget, continue to rise. We have a stable cohort of teachers and the pay bill has increased as teachers rise in seniority. However, it is increases in pension and NI contributions that have hit all schools particularly hard, and we are no different. There is little we can do to reduce staff costs now without compromising the quality of the education provision. We are running a very tight ship already, and when we benchmark our staffing levels against similar schools, we are right at the top for efficiency across a range of indicators.

As staff costs have risen, income has fallen! There was a surprising reduction in Sixth Form pupil numbers last year, decreasing the grant provided by the Education Funding Agency (EFA). However, the increased Published Admission Number (PAN) a year ago will bring some relief as it continues to increase student numbers year on year. In the longer term, Sixth Form numbers will recover and we must make sure that the Sixth Form curriculum offer remains attractive. When it comes to longer term financial planning, there are huge uncertainties out there. Will education funding rise or fall? What difference to staffing levels will the linear A levels bring? Will the new funding formula make a difference? ... and so on. If anyone has a crystal ball that works, we would like to borrow it!

School Infrastructure. The other main agenda item for the Resources Committee is infrastructure and readers may be interested in the two most important estate matters dealt with by the committee in recent months. Some time ago, a survey was carried out on all our buildings and we are now moving ahead with addressing the repairs required to ensure that our buildings remain fit for purpose. Although much of it can be absorbed and dealt with as 'minor maintenance', there is also some large (and costly) works needed. As we go to print, a major contract is being placed to repair the roofs and walls of the old school buildings over the summer holidays.

There has also been considerable progress made towards establishing a clear way ahead for the Athletics Track. We recently secured a sizeable grant from Sport England for renovation of the track and work is expected to start later in the year. However, the main user of the track is the City of Salisbury Athletic & Running Club who will, for the most part, have to fund its future maintenance and renovation. Working in partnership with Wiltshire Council, they continue to work up their business plan to ensure the track's long term financial sustainability.

Chris Child (Chair of Resources and Vice Chair of Governors)



Chris Child
Vice Chair and Chair
of Resources

Committee Updates Continued

Curriculum Committee

SAFEGUARDING & ATTENDANCE

The Safeguarding Governor reported that all systems and procedures were securely in place and as always, given a high priority. Recommendations for improvements had been implemented and plans for increased security for students and staff in extreme emergency situations will be in place for September.

Attendance rates for the school and for groups were discussed. The attendance rate so far this year was 96% which is above the national average.

ACHIEVEMENT

The final government-issued report on achievement in the 2015 examinations was examined by the committee. This focused on Sixth Form progress and governors were pleased to see that measures were generally well above the national average.

Governors also scrutinised reports of current students' achievement. It was noted that all year groups are making strong progress with Years 11 and 13 particularly on target to reach their predicted grades.

CURRICULUM

A large part of the Curriculum Committee's discussions were based on the Sixth Form curriculum from September 2017. Schools across the country are making decisions about the new A Levels and their decoupling from AS Levels. The vast majority of schools will be encouraging students to take a maximum of 3 A Levels and it is likely that South Wilts Grammar School will also be making this offer. Governors discussed the various options that may be open to students to expand this offer and to supplement their academic studies. One change that is likely to take place is that the main work experience block of time that is currently provided in Year 10 will be moved to Year 12. Work experience has become a core activity for Sixth Formers with close links to their programmes of study.

Governors also discussed how the school will assess the work of students in Key Stage 3 now that National Curriculum levels are no longer used. This is an interesting opportunity to improve the way students are helped to learn and will follow on from their primary school experience.

The work of the Learning Resource Centre was looked at. Governors were amazed to hear that the average number of student visits per day was 657! This reflects how much students value this provision. Year 10 volunteers help at lunchtimes and this has been much appreciated.

POLICIES

Because of the many changes to the curriculum and assessment structures nationally and within the school, there were no policies to approve this term, but have been deferred to next term.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Governors said farewell to Nigel Ansty, who has served the Curriculum Committee very well indeed during his four years as a governor. Greg Wilson has now taken on the role of Sixth Form governor and Miranda Thomas has agreed to monitor careers provision and personal, social and health education. Many thanks to all concerned.



Jacqui Goodall
Chair of Curriculum
and SEN and Child
Protection Governor

Jacqui Goodall (Chair of Curriculum and SEN and Child Protection Governor)