



December 2016

South Wilts Grammar School for Girls

Governors' Newsletter

Welcome to our Autumn Term Newsletter

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Dates to note for January 2017:

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| 4 -10 Jan | Year 12 and 13 mock exams |
| 5 Jan | Year 9 Parents' Option Evening |
| 10 Jan | Parent Voice 6.30pm |
| 19 Jan | Year 9 Parents' Evening |
| 21 Jan | A Cappella Concert |
| 26 Jan | Year 12 HE & Post 18 Options Briefing 7pm |
| 31 Jan | Year 13 Parents' Evening |

As Governors we hold SWGS in trust for our existing community and for future pupils. A key obligation is to ensure that SWGS continues to provide the best possible education and pastoral care and this can only be achieved by being proactive particularly in strategic planning.

Fulfilling the strategic role is one of the biggest challenges a Governing Body faces – and it is the most common area for criticism by Ofsted inspectors. As a Board we have a meeting and work shop in the New Year for this specific purpose. This year, as well as ensuring that we have the strategic framework for the school firmly in place, we will be challenging ourselves by evaluating our practice in areas such as our effectiveness as a Governing Board, checking SWGS has a clear vision and strategic priorities, our engagement with all stakeholders and seeking assurance that we have processes in place to ensure effective accountability of both the executive and Board members .

It has been a highly successful term for the School and on behalf of the Board of Governors send congratulations to all involved in these events and achievements and best wishes for a joyous Christmas to pupils, staff and their families.



Helen Stewart
Chair of Governors

Welcome to our new Governor

This term we said goodbye to David French who has served on the Board of Governors since 2012. He brought to the Board a wide range of accountancy and financial skills and his contribution to the school during his term of office has been invaluable.



Robert MacDonald
Co-opted Governor

We therefore needed to recruit a professional with the same skill set to ensure the Board can meet it's wide range of responsibilities, and I'm pleased to announce that Robert MacDonald has been co-opted on to the Board from the 8th December 2016.

Robert brings with him a wealth of knowledge and skills, is ACCA qualified and is currently a Partner at Moore Stephens LLP in Salisbury. He has worked within the education sector since 2008 carrying out audits for academies since 2011. I know you will join me in wishing him well in his new role here at South Wilts.

Jane Walsham, Clerk to Governors



Committee Updates

Resources Committee

At this time of the year, the main financial focus for the Resources Committee has been to ensure that our audited annual report and accounts for the year ending 31st August, are signed off and submitted to the EFA by 31st December. Once again, the process has gone extremely smoothly and our financial systems are in good shape, despite the fact that our budget is tighter than ever!

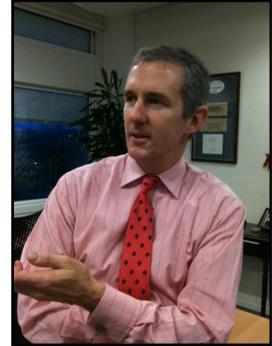
In the meantime, the routine business of Resources has continued. Having set the current years' budget back in July, Resources has been monitoring spend against that budget and keeping an eye on our cash flow and bank balances. Specific attention has been given to Post 16 Bursary expenditure, which has traditionally underspent in previous years. Intended for students who may be struggling to afford travel costs and other essentials, it is now well on track to be spent on what it has always been intended for.

Pupil Premium has also come under the spotlight; although a very welcome contribution to the budget, it requires detailed oversight to ensure that it is spent wisely, and on those interventions that help our more disadvantaged learners. The Payroll has also been under particular scrutiny throughout much of the year. After a successful trial period, it has now been decided to bring payroll in house (an external provider has been used for Payroll in the past) where it will be managed more effectively (and at lower cost) by our own finance team.

In addition to financial matters, Resources also spends a considerable amount of time monitoring school infrastructure maintenance and improvements. With so many buildings, both old and new, keeping the site in good shape is like painting the Forth Road Bridge! The most significant work in recent months has been the makeover of the old building with roof and wall repairs being completed and guttering and soffits replaced. Building work can cause considerable disruption in schools, and it was quite an achievement to get the bulk of this work completed during the Summer holidays.

Finally, Health and Safety falls within the bailiwick of Resources and it is pleasing to see that Wiltshire Council have now made a start with the safety improvements in Stratford Road. There is still more to be done and we will keep lobbying the council to get it completed. In the meantime please encourage everyone to drive and park with consideration and care along this road; it gets extremely busy at both the start and end of the school day!

Chris Child, Chair of Resources Committee



Personnel Committee

I joined the Governing Body in October 2015 and have recently been appointed as Chair of the Personnel Committee. Although relatively new to the Governing Body, I am hoping that my 20 years' experience in Personnel/Human Resources will stand me in good stead for chairmanship of this committee!

The Personnel Committee oversee many matters relating to staffing and admissions. The committee have been busy this term ensuring that the appraisal and pay review process is carried out appropriately. A sub-set of the committee reviewed the senior leadership team's appraisal recommendations, considering evidence from lesson observations and objective reviews and also reviewed all proposed pay awards to ensure consistency and alignment.

Admissions is another key topic which the Personnel committee focus on considering 11+ test arrangements, admissions criteria, appeals process, and the size of the intake in Year 7 and in the Sixth Form. Increasing social mobility continues to be a key focus area for SWGS and in the recent meeting, the Governors' reviewed the results of a questionnaire completed by Year 7 parents and discussed how to continue efforts in this area.

At this time of year, the Committee also review the training budget and how members of staff are continuing their professional development. Each committee meeting also includes feedback from the staff voice forum which provides the Governors with very insightful feedback from both the teaching and support staff.

All in all a busy term, and I look forward to an equally productive committee in 2017.

Merry Christmas!

Elaine Cole, Chair of Personnel and Admissions



Committee Updates Continued

Curriculum Committee

SAFEGUARDING & ATTENDANCE

The emphasis on keeping children and young people safe increases yearly for all schools and this term, the committee looked at their roles and responsibilities in regards to safeguarding and child protection. They checked that all staff have been trained and that policies were in place and updated where necessary. It was confirmed that the annual local authority safeguarding audit had taken place. Provision was judged to be outstanding. Among the improvements made to safeguarding are increased awareness and training for keeping students with mental health issues safe and more rigorous systems and vigilance on foreign trips. The E-safety curriculum, private fostering arrangements and 'Prevent' training for volunteers and visitors (requirement for schools to prevent young people from being drawn into terrorism) are the main areas to develop over the next year.

Attendance rates for the school and for groups continue to be good with a particular improvement in the attendance of Y12 and Y13.

ACHIEVEMENT

The committee spent much time in analysing the results of the GCSE, AS and A Level examinations. Whilst the achievement of South Wilts girls remains very high, governors asked themselves these key questions:

- Do South Wilts students achieve their full potential?
- What are the school's strengths and relative weaknesses in regards to achievement and what is the school doing to address those areas of relative weakness?
- How well do vulnerable groups of students achieve in comparison with their peers and others across the country and are they given sufficient support?

The minutes of the Curriculum Committee summarises our discussion of these questions.

GCSE results were summarised by the new rating for progress (Progress 8 score) which was well above average at 0.31. This indicates that on average, students achieved around a third of a grade higher than their previous achievement predicted. This confirms that not only did the students gain very good grades at GCSE (77% of grades were A* or A), enabling them to move on to their post-16 studies successfully, they also made very good progress from their starting points.

Some challenges had been made to student grades, particularly in English, reflecting the continuing concern about the quality of consistency in examination marking. For example, 15 applications for re-marks in English Language GCSE resulted in 10 grade changes.

AS results showed an improvement in several subjects and results overall were in the top 25% of schools nationally. Similarly, at A Level, results remained high overall and remained in the top 25% band.

CURRICULUM

At this meeting, the committee heard about the strategies introduced to develop the culture of learning across the school. Launched at the beginning of the year the strategy focuses on:

- Responsibility and reflection
- Resilience and resourcefulness
- Risk-taking.

Governors considered that this strategy will ensure that students will be better prepared for further study and life in general. In particular, the focus on encouraging students to become independent learners will hold them in good stead for university study.

Other items discussed at the curriculum committee meeting were:

- The success so far in the introduction of the 'assessment without levels' system for Year 7;
- The new system of holding department leaders to account;
- The increasing needs of students in relation to anxiety-related health issues;
- The excellent Careers and Guidance provision as demonstrated by the re-validation for the Careers Mark;
- The moving of work experience from Year 10 to Years 12 /13;
- Governor visits to school to look at the impact of school strategies and policies.

POLICIES

Governors reviewed the policies for Careers Education and Guidance, Work Experience, Work-related Learning, Feedback, Assessment and Reporting, Curriculum, Student Discipline and Behaviour, the Complaints Procedure and the Equality, Information and Accessibility Plan.

Jacqui Goodall, Chair of Curriculum

