



April 2017

South Wilts Grammar School for Girls

Governors' Newsletter

Welcome to our Spring Term Newsletter

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Dates to note for the Summer Term

26 April	Year 8 Parents' Evening
6 May	Joint Choral Concert 7.30pm at City Hall
9 May	Parent Voice 6.30-7pm FOSWG Meeting 7.00pm
15 May	Public exams begin until 29th June
5 June	Activities Week
6 July	Year 10 Parents' Evening

Dear Parents/Carers

With so much publicity recently about the National Funding Formula, governors are carefully considering the implications of the proposed changes to school funding and its likely impact.

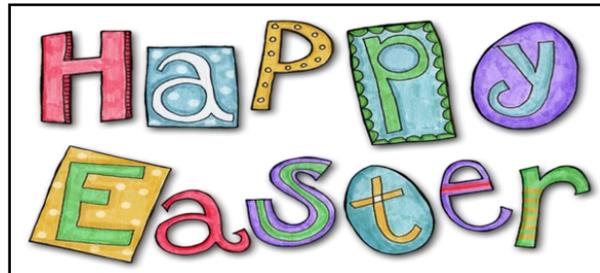
We feel that it is important to take time to consider the implications fully and how these tie in to the greater school vision. The school is committed, where possible, to maintaining a broad and balanced curriculum, which is accessible for all. As in our previous communication to parents, we have made it clear that we do not plan to ask parents for any additional funding.

We will of course keep you updated on progress. Wishing you all a very relaxing break.



Helen Stewart
Chair of Governors

Parent Governor Election



Following the Easter holiday, I will be sending out notification of a Parent Governor election for a vacancy commencing in September 2017.

Here at South Wilts Grammar we have a very strong and active Governing Board with members from a wide range of professional backgrounds. Each individual governor brings to the table their own knowledge and skills.

The role of the governing board is a strategic one, its key functions are to:

- set the aims and objectives for the school
- set the policies for achieving those aims and objectives
- set the targets for achieving those aims and objectives
- monitor and evaluate the progress the school is making towards achievement of its aims and objectives
- be a source of challenge and support to the headteacher (a critical friend)

If you would like to know more about becoming a Governor and how you can contribute to the future vision of your daughter's school, please e-mail me at governors@swgs.wilts.sch.uk and I will be happy to give you more information.

Jane Walsham, Clerk to Governors

Committee Updates

Curriculum Committee

SAFEGUARDING & ATTENDANCE

The safeguarding governor fed back to the committee regarding the latest checks on school systems and training. There has been a focus on keeping both students and staff aware of the latest safeguarding requirements with more information displayed around the school. Other items reviewed were consent workshops, road safety and the latest safeguarding handbook which all staff and governors must read. The Child Protection Policy was reviewed and amendments made. The Attendance Policy was also reviewed and updated. One of the changes was to clarify the expectation of good attendance. This should be at least 96% in line with the minimum expectation for whole school attendance. Attendance to date reflects this figure.

ACHIEVEMENT

During this term, the committee focused particularly on specific groups of students such as those who are disadvantaged, have special education needs, English as an additional language or have medical needs. As the numbers in these groups are relatively small, governors were able to hear how they are supported individually, albeit anonymously, and were pleased to hear that this valuable support in a variety of forms is helping these students to make as much progress as possible.

Governors also discussed the high expectations of students, especially in regards to their aspirational targets. Teachers and the students themselves aim for the highest achievement possible. Whilst not all students will achieve their aspirational targets, they should all achieve high grades. Furthermore, there is uncertainty about how the new grading structure for GCSEs in English and Maths this summer will turn out. 9 is higher than A* and the proportion achieving this mark across the country has yet to be established. Whilst all pupils should achieve at least a C grade in all subjects, the equivalent mark for English and Maths is 4 or 5, the latter being categorised as a 'strong pass'. It is hoped that all students will achieve at least a 5 but we will have to wait until the results are out to see the impact of the new grading system.

CURRICULUM

Governors considered the proposals for GCSE options for September. As financial constraints begin to impact on the curriculum in nearly all schools, we are also having to make difficult decisions about running courses with small numbers of students. For example, very few students opted to study GCSE Computing and therefore it was agreed that this subject is dropped for this cohort. Numbers for Geography at A Level were also very low and discussions were to take place with Bishop Wordsworth School regarding this course.

Other items discussed at the curriculum committee meeting were:

- A review of rewards and sanctions will be taking place.
- A governor fed back on her discussions with the Careers Adviser. Provision for careers advice, education and guidance is of a very high standard.
- There was a summary of the governor visit to school to look at the new assessment system in action. The new format for visits was thought to be informative and useful.
- There were continued concerns about the increase in anxiety-related health issues and how these can be addressed.
- Governors discussed the feedback from recent Parent Consultation Evenings and the new questionnaire system. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive although some parents would like more school trips and a few were frustrated about appointments running late. School leaders will review all the feedback and consider whether improvements can be made.

POLICIES

In addition to the Child Protection and Attendance Policies, governors also reviewed the policies for Special Educational Needs, the Curriculum, Freedom of Information, Racial Equality and Sex Education.



Jacqui Goodall
Chair of Curriculum
and SEN and Child
Protection Governor

Jacqui Goodall, Chair of Curriculum

Committee Updates Continued

Personnel Committee

This term in the Personnel and Admissions Committee we have been busy on a number of items including the consultation for the Admissions Policy for 2018 where an increase to a class size of 32 was proposed. The Governors reviewed the feedback from the consultation with parents, and discussed the impact on pupils and teachers. Given classes of 32 is something that has previously been in place at SWGS and, with the increasingly challenged financial outlook, the Governors agreed to ratify the Admissions Policy for 2018.



Staffing is obviously a key focus area for this committee and this term we have been busy with reviewing plans for the forthcoming academic year. The revised curriculum at A level with the introduction of the linear A level, plus the increased intakes in year 7, all mean that a fine balancing act is required in order to ensure the school has the right number of teachers to deliver the full curriculum whilst operating in a cost efficient manner.

Another area that the Governors reviewed this term was the Primary outreach activity where members of SWGS staff engage with staff and pupils from selected local schools. The intention is to build relationships in order to improve access to SWGS from these schools. This work is very exciting and helps ensure that SWGS continues to promote social mobility.

A standard item which the committee review every term is the feedback from Staff Voice. This is a forum where the Headteacher and members of the Senior Leadership team meet with teachers and support staff and discuss items, ask questions and share any concerns. A summary of these items, and the relevant response is shared with the Governors and it is positive to see that there continues to be healthy dialogue in these areas.

It has certainly been a busy term and I wish everyone a restful Easter break.

Elaine Cole, Chair of Personnel

National Funding Formula



Just before half term Mrs Chilcott and Helen Stewart, Chair of Governors, wrote to you about the Department for Education's proposed National Funding Formula and its implications for the school. This was one of a number of actions taken by a governors' working group set up following an initial analysis of the proposed NFF in January. We wrote to local MPs and Wiltshire Council, pointing out the likely effects of the new formula. We coordinated responses to the DfE consultation and took part in a BBC survey of school governors.

On 20th February Mrs Chilcott, together with the Headteachers of three other grammar schools met Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State at DfE, to express our concerns. Mrs Chilcott and two governors met John Glen MP on 3rd March and again put forward our views. John recognised that, despite Wiltshire schools receiving increased funding as a whole, the Salisbury grammar schools would be disadvantaged and indicated that he was in favour of a minimum level of funding per pupil. We also received a supportive response from Claire Perry MP.

The DfE consultation has now closed and the government's response is expected to be published in the autumn. The consensus of media opinion is that the NFF remains supported in concept, but the lack of any new funding for schools results in a large number of 'losers' and the detail of the formula may be tweaked as a result. I would like to thank all of you who wrote to your MP and expressed your support - this was crucial to adding weight to our representations and bringing the subject to the fore.

Nick Lay