



Summer 2017

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

5 Sept	Year 7 only return to school
6 Sept	All years return to school
14 Sept	Speech Day 7.30pm at Salisbury Cathedral
17 Oct	A Cappella Evensong at Salisbury Cathedral at 5.30pm
18 Oct	Academic Support Evening 5-7pm
18 Nov	SWGS/BWS Christmas Fair
21 Nov	School Concert 7pm in The main hall
19 Dec	Carol Service 7.30pm in Salisbury Cathedral

Dear Parents/Carers

On Monday the 24th July the funeral takes place of Diane Atkins, former Chair of Governors and member of the Governing Board. Mrs Diane Atkins served as a governor at South Wilts for 25 years and held many roles of responsibility, including being the Chair of the Curriculum Committee, later becoming Vice Chair and then she became the Chair of the Governors from 2004 until 2014. As you can imagine, a lot has happened in education during this time and Diane played a pivotal role in helping to move this school forward, including our conversion to an academy in 2011.

Diane tirelessly supported the school, attending many school functions and her and her husband Dudley, could always be seen at school concerts. Diane gave considerable time to SWGS over a number of years. She saw it as a precious service and a serious responsibility. We know as an old South Wilts Girl, that Diane was proud to serve the school community.

They say good school governance, and bad, make a big difference to the success of a school. Diane was in the camp of Governors that made a huge difference. She knew that the Board was the ultimate Guardian of the school's purpose and direction. Her view was the Board was not there to manage the school, that is what she entrusted the Headteacher and her team to do. We observed how she forged candid, trusting and supportive relationships with the three Headteachers that led the school during her time as a Governor. We particularly admired her ability to retain confidentiality on critical issues which is sometimes difficult in a close knit Board and school community.

We are sad to say goodbye to Diane, but her contribution to the school will live on and she will be fondly remembered by us all. We all send our sincere condolences to her family at this time.

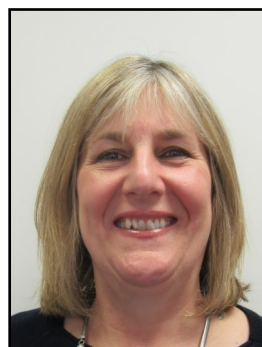


Helen Stewart
Chair of Governors

Introducing ...



... Our new Staff Governor Mrs Julie King who started her term of office at the beginning of July, taking over from Jane Mackay who left at the end of June. You will be more familiar with Julie on the school reception or at the end of the phone in her two roles at Receptionist/Matron and KS4 Pastoral Support..



... Liz Ogilvie, another new member to our Board of Governors. Liz is a SWGS 'old girl' herself and returns to South Wilts sitting on the Personnel Committee. Liz brings to the Board many skills and in particular marketing which of course is very important for the school going forward.

Committee Updates - Curriculum

SAFEGUARDING & ATTENDANCE

Governors discussed the latest report from the safeguarding governor. There had been no major incidents although a local incident which involved young people from several schools in Salisbury was discussed. Governors were reassured that firstly, schools had communicated very well over this incident which involved the taking of Xanax which is a prescription drug. Secondly, the school had taken the opportunity to give key messages about the use of such drugs which are potentially harmful although not illegal. Governors also checked that the plans for a Stay Safe procedure were well in hand. While it is hoped that such a procedure (lock-down) would never be needed, it is reassuring to know that the school can keep children safe in an emergency.

Attendance rates were discussed and we particularly looked at specific cases (anonymously) to see how staff supported those with low attendance rates because of illness or other special circumstances. Governors were impressed with the extent of the support and recognised that there are some cases where attendance is good for a particular pupil even though it is low compared with national expectations. Governors also discussed the impact of study leave for examination year students. They agreed that the staff should decide on what is best for particular girls / cohorts. Many can work more profitably at home than in school but there are always options to work in school. As the Learning Resource Centre can often get very busy and noisy, governors are delighted that the FOSWGS group has financed another study room which will just be used for Sixth Form girls. Thank you to all parents who have contributed to this funding in any way.

ACHIEVEMENT

The school is gearing itself for the first examination results using the new number system. This will only be for English and mathematics this year but will be used for nearly all subjects in 2018. Whilst estimations of results have been made, the accuracy of these will only be ascertained after August.

Senior leaders gave governors a summary of the achievement of Y7 pupils using the new South Wilts Standard. Although not yet fully embedded, it has worked well on the whole with positive feedback from both pupils and staff.

As usual, the curriculum committee discussed the progress of those pupils who benefit from the Pupil Premium funding. The use of the funding is scrutinised and impact discussed. One-to-one mentoring has been particularly useful for pupils. There was a discussion about how best to spend the funding. We know that transport costs are a barrier for some pupils when considering applying for the school. Although not directly associated with learning, a contribution towards transport costs could have a considerable impact on pupils entitled to free school meals. The school is looking into how best to support individual pupils, including those from service families. A Pupil Premium Charter is being considered.

CURRICULUM

Discussions about the curriculum continued at this meeting. In particular, governors looked at the core aim for the curriculum at South Wilts Grammar School. Although financial constraints are ever present, both staff and governors were in agreement that the curriculum offer should remain as broad as possible to try to meet the needs and interests of as many pupils as possible. In the Sixth Form, it was agreed that students will benefit from 7 periods of direct tuition in nearly all subjects except those with very small numbers of students. Discussions with Bishop Wordsworth School also continue to ensure that the girls' sixth form education is maintained at a high standard.

Work experience in the sixth form is evolving and nearly all girls have placements. Overall, it is felt that there is a wider spread of employment opportunities than in Y10 with more relevant contexts.

POLICIES

Governors reviewed and agreed the Freedom of Information Policy, the Citizenship Policy and the Medical Needs of Pupils Policy.



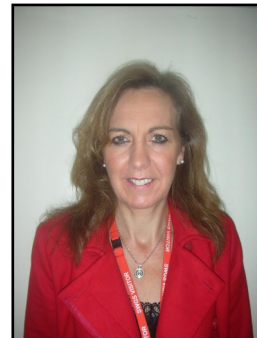
Jacqui Goodall
Chair of Curriculum
and SEN and Child
Protection Governor

Jacqui Goodall, Chair of Curriculum

Committee Updates - Personnel

It has been another busy term for the Personnel Committee and we said a fond farewell to Ian Burton who is stepping down from the Governing Body and welcomed Liz Ogilvie, one of our new Governors, to the Committee.

A key focus area this term has been to review the staffing arrangements for the forthcoming academic year to ensure that the girls continue to have the best teaching & learning experience. There will be a number of staff changes as some move on to pastures new, others retire, and some take a temporary leave of absence. The Governors reviewed all of the new staffing appointments and considered the departmental impact of these staffing changes, to ensure there will be a smooth transition, enabling new staff to settle in and for the girls to continue to receive the best quality teaching.



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. Application levels for both Year 7 and the Sixth Form continue to be strong and we look forward to 150 new girls starting in Year 7 in September.

Every term the Governors review all feedback provided by parents primarily from the feedback questionnaire issued at Parents Evenings. The Governors encourage all parents to continue to use this feedback mechanism as it provides a very effective way to capturing the positive feedback and more importantly, the areas which can be improved upon. Parents are issued the feedback form via email prior to Parents Evening and paper copies are also available on the evening.

All in all a busy term and I am sure everyone is ready for their summer vacation!

Elaine Cole, Chair of Personnel

Committee Updates - Resources



Once again, our income has dropped this year (for the 5th year in a row) as our General Annual Grant (GAG) funding continues to be squeezed. In particular, our Education Service Grant (ESG) funding component of the GAG continues to fall year on year. The small increases we have seen in School Budget Share for Years 7-11 that have occurred have so far been far outweighed by these reductions. However, our head teacher and her team have found inventive ways of making ends meet, and despite the doom and gloom surrounding media coverage of school budgets more widely. Indeed we were also able at our recent Full Governing Body meeting to set a balanced budget for next year.

However, in the longer term (and across the whole country), considerable uncertainty still remains over school funding and as a grammar school, we will always struggle to attract higher per pupil funding than others, whichever new formula is used. Of course, I would be delighted if income keeps pace with increasing staff costs but suspect that we may not find ourselves in such a fortunate position! We are already running a very tight ship - there are simply no more substantial 'efficiencies' to be found and the only major financial levers we have left are reducing curriculum and staffing, and/or increasing our intake (and therefore, income). It goes without saying that the latter is by far the most preferred; we recently increased our Pupil Admission Numbers (PAN) to 160 from September 2017 onwards and we should see this portion of our GAG growing each year thereafter. Having done all we can to increase intake at Year 7, we will now be concentrating our efforts on growing the 6th Form in order to recover lost ground and improve our financial resilience as we move towards an uncertain future.

Chris Child, Vice Chair and Chair of Resources