



March 2016

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

- 13 April Year 8 Parents' Evening
- 23 April Joint Choral Concert
7.30pm at Salisbury Cathedral
- 28 April Year 7 Parents' Evening
- 10 May Parent Voice 5.45-6.45pm and FOSWG Meeting at 7.00pm
- 16 June Public exams begin
- 7 June Activities Week

At the last Board meeting of this term on 21st March, the governors were delighted to receive a cheque from the outgoing Chair of Friends of South Wilts Kim Glennon-Alty and the in-coming Chair, Sally Walden for £30,000. Kim has been chair of FOSWG for four and half years and we are very grateful for all her hard work.

This amazing amount was raised over two years as their major fund raising project and has been allocated to be part of the provision of new food technology equipment.



This form of income never comes easily, and governors recognise the hard work and commitment of parents and all those who support their fantastic efforts at a wide range of events.

THANK YOU FOSWG



Helen Stewart
Chair of Governors

Being a Governor at SWGS ...



Elaine Cole
Parent Governor

I joined the Governing Body as a Parent Governor in the Autumn term and have been able to share some of the same experiences as my Year 7 daughter, Iona, as she has settled into South Wilts.

All new Governors undertake an induction program which includes attending a one day course and completing Safeguarding training. As part of the induction, I was also presented with a rather large bundle of reading materials which kept me busy for a while!

I have attended a number of the full Governing body meetings where we reviewed a wide range of topics including the quality of teaching and learning; the financial position of the school, key stewardship metrics and various school policies and procedures. I also attended the annual Strategic Meeting where Michele Chilcott, Headteacher, shared the strategic vision and plans for the school.

All Governors are allocated to a Sub committee and given my day job as an HR Manager, I was appointed to the Personnel Committee. In these meetings we have analysed data from the teaching staff appraisal cycle, considered pay increase recommendations and reviewed feedback from the Staff Voice forum. Next month I will complete some specific training for Governors who participate in interview panels.

Being a Governor at SWGS ...

I joined the Governing Body in December as a Co-opted Governor, having had previous links with SWGS over many years as our two daughters made their way through school. As a result of my experience then, I had some idea of what to expect in the school, but rather less about what to expect as a Governor. Accordingly, I've been 'climbing a learning curve' as I come to grips with a new lexicon and new issues, and I've been attending as many committee meetings as possible to help get myself 'up to speed' as quickly as I can.

To say I've been very pleasantly surprised to find how well governed the school appears to be, implies that I'd expected something worse, which I certainly hadn't. The fact is that my professional career has brought me into direct contact with the boards of many organisations across both the private and public sectors, and it has been very re-assuring to see how well best practice is applied at SWGS; how well structured and robust the arrangements are by which school governance is undertaken; and the very obvious interest and involvement of all involved, not just amongst the governors, but also the school staff.

Overall my first impressions have been extremely positive, so I have no qualms about saying so publicly at this early stage of my time as a governor, whilst it's too early to claim any personal credit. I look forward to continuing to learn and increasingly to contribute to the strategic direction of the school, and to meeting some of you in due course.



Bob Hendicott
Co-opted Governor

Committee Updates

Resources Committee

The previous financial year in which we came in just under budget, has already become a distant memory as we now grapple with this year's budget and balance sheets. At the mid-year point, our finances are well on track and we expect them to remain so. However, we will need to find a great deal of extra money this financial year and beyond, to pay for some costly maintenance of our infrastructure identified during the recent school condition survey. In particular, some of our old roofs are likely to require attention over the summer period – and roof repairs are not cheap! Road works are not cheap either and as you will no doubt have read in the local media, money for one of our key recommended road safety improvements has been found. We continue to press for the funding needed to pay for the remainder.



Chris Child
Vice Chair and Chair of
Resources

Looking ahead, we have just received our General Annual Grant funding statement from the Education Funding Agency, which tells us what our central funding allocation is going to be for 2016-17. You would not be surprised to learn that there will be a small overall reduction in our allocation (around 3%), mainly attributable to 6th form numbers being slightly down on previous years. We can expect a couple of lean financial years ahead, albeit the increase in numbers of students at KS3 and 4 will continue to help our financial position a great deal as we move forward. In the longer term, considerable uncertainty remains over our funding provision beyond 2017; the move to linear A levels in 2017/18 will inevitably create change and what the new funding formula will mean for us is anyone's guess! More to follow, no doubt!

Chris Child

Committee Updates Continued

Curriculum Committee

SAFEGUARDING

As always, safeguarding is a high priority for the School and Governors have now carried out a full review of safeguarding provision. All areas were scrutinised including how well staff are trained, the safety of students on site and on trips and how well the School helps the girls to keep themselves safe, now and in their futures. There were a few minor recommendations which have now been addressed, including helping to reduce road accidents. Governors are very pleased that the requests for a safer crossing for the girls have now been agreed and hope that lighting on the road outside the school will also be improved.

ACHIEVEMENT

Governors have learnt how Key Stage 3 students are being assessed to help them make progress. At present, the School is still using National Curriculum levels but this is being reviewed to help the girls understand and enhance their progress through from Year 7 to 13. Year 11 students have completed their mock examinations and Governors were delighted to hear that 87% of students are predicted to receive A* / A grades in their GCSE examinations. School leaders are working with teachers to ensure that every student is achieving her potential. There have also been AS mock examinations which are also being analysed to check that maximum progress is being made. Governors check rigorously that no particular groups are underachieving. This includes making sure that students who are disadvantaged in any way are helped to overcome that disadvantage to achieve as highly as possible. We are very impressed by the extent to which the school supports all those who are vulnerable or who have special educational needs.

Governors considered the latest external analyses on 2015 GCSE results and these were very reassuring that students are achieving as much as possible in most areas. They continue to prepare for the big changes in accountability measures from this year. The '5+ good GCSEs including English and maths' measure is being replaced with the Progress 8 measure, changing the focus from students' results to their progress.

CURRICULUM

The sixth-form curriculum has been the main topic of discussion this term. All schools with sixth forms across the country are now assessing how to best make provision for post-16 programmes from September 2017. There are changes to examination requirements and the curriculum which need careful consideration. Parents can be assured that the School is planning the provision assiduously to meet the needs of our students. Leaders are working with Bishop Wordsworth School and researching what other schools are considering in order to arrive at the best possible curriculum to prepare South Wilts girls for their futures.

It is not only the academic aspects of the curriculum that are important however. The School has been re-accredited with the Healthy Schools Award and continues to place a high priority on student wellbeing, including mental health. To support the work of the School, students in Years 8, 10 and 12 took part in the County wide Healthy Schools Survey. The results of the survey are being used to improve personal, social and health education throughout the School.

This term, Governors visited the Religious Education department. They were very interested in the research being carried out of different religions, the development of independent study skills and the use of imaginative ideas to make learning fun.

POLICIES

Governors reviewed and approved the following policies: Equality Policy, Child Protection Policy, Curriculum Policy, Special Educational Needs Policy, Attendance Policy and the Complaints Policy.



Jacqui Goodall
Chair of Curriculum
and SEN and Child
Protection Governor

Jacqui Goodall