



April 2018

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

18 April	Year 8 Parents' Evening
21 April	FOSWGS Book Stall
5 May	Joint Choral Concert 7.30pm at Salisbury Cathedral
3 May	FOSWG Meeting 7.00pm at Culture Coffee in Fisherton Street
7-11 May	Year 7-10 end of year Exams
14 May	Public exams through to 26 June



Running Track

The school and CoSARC are close to reaching an agreement and it is hoped that the Interim Agreement can be signed soon. The school undertook a track inspection in January and the condition of the track was deemed unsafe to use. We have subsequently sought tenders to repair the track, using school funds. The cost is approximately £17,500 and it is planned, weather permitting, that the work will take place over the Easter holidays. This will allow the track to be used, for training purposes only, for this and next academic year. We hope the track will be ready to be used following the Easter holidays.

Dear Parents/Carers

It was pleasing to hear a couple of weeks ago a speech from the newly appointed Education Secretary Mr Damien Hinds. He announced that there would be no new tests or exam changes to the national curriculum or further reforms to GCSEs and A levels for at least four years. I hope that this is not rhetoric and the years of turbulence and steady flow of new initiatives from the Department of Education are over for the time being.



Helen Stewart
Chair of Governors

Mr Hind's speech included that it was the Governments' desire to put educational strategies in place to get back to the essence of successful teaching, strip away the workload that doesn't add value and give teachers the time and space to focus on what actually matters. My view has always been SWGS has been an outstanding school because the senior leadership team have a determination and drive to concentrate on core business. Over recent years however, the workload has increased for all school staff who are working long hours to ensure there is effective teaching and learning and the provision of excellent pastoral care and extracurricular activities for the girls.

Mr Hinds has also stated he will launch a joint initiative with Ofsted to pare back on unnecessary paperwork in schools. As Chair of the Board, I would welcome this. It would be a good place to start and would assist in making Governors' workload and SWGS staff's jobs more manageable.

Wishing you all a relaxing and enjoyable Easter break.

Helen Stewart
Chair of the Board of Governors

Welcome to our new Governor

Following the recent Parent Governor Election, I am pleased to introduce to you our new governor, Mr Neil Goddard. Neil's daughter is currently in Year 7 and he will join the Board's Curriculum Committee. Neil brings with him over 20 years' experience of working with and supporting schools as a Local Government Officer and over 10 years as a school governor for a local infant school. I know you will all join me in welcoming him to our board of governors.



Please remember, there is always a governor representative at each Parents' Evening, so if you wish to feed anything back to the board of governors, they are always keen to hear your comments. Please note, they are unable to comment on individual student matters.

Committee Updates - Curriculum

SAFEGUARDING, STUDENT WELLBEING & ATTENDANCE

Governors discussed a range of aspects which affect students' wellbeing. They were pleased to hear that attendance rates continued to be high which reflects the importance parents and students place on their education. Safeguarding was rated as outstanding in the Wiltshire Safeguarding Audit which took place before Christmas which reassured Governors that standards remained as the highest priority in the School. The Curriculum Committee monitors the standard of support provided by the School in a range of areas including medical care. Governors were pleased to hear that due to a change in legal responsibilities, schools can now keep spare inhalers for emergency use.

ACHIEVEMENT

Validated GCSE and A Level results only became available after Christmas so Governors took time to review these to ensure that strengths and areas for development are accurate. For South Wilts there were no major changes and there was acknowledgement that results were in line with expectations for the School. Maths progress was slightly lower than in English but remains good. Mr Bishop provided a very useful summary of A Level results with details of how Sixth Form teachers are continuing to make improvements to resources and lessons so that students can make good progress.

CURRICULUM

A large part of our meeting was agreeing the curriculum options following students making their choices. For GCSE, there was a surge in requests to study Economics whilst there were fewer students than normal opting to study music. There were also fewer students opting to study music in the Sixth Form. Governors debated whether music courses should go ahead because of the cost but it was agreed that as an important area of the School, music should be continued for those wishing to study this subject. This would be looked at over the year to gauge future interest in this subject.

Governors also discussed whether students should be obliged to take EBACC subjects (English (2), mathematics, science (2+), history or geography and a language). While students are of course encouraged to take these subjects, the Governing Body felt strongly that students should be allowed a choice; most do take EBACC subjects but others like to focus on more creative subjects and this should not be discouraged in any way.

Careers education was also a key topic for this Committee as new guidance has been published by the Department for Education. This document lays out new expectations for the way in which schools deliver careers education and guidance which will be more stringent and 'joined up'. School leaders will be taking this guidance on board over the next few months with the aim of improving careers provision. One aspect with which all schools must comply is the requirement to allow other schools and colleges to give information to students about their courses in Year 9 and Year 11.

POLICIES

Governors reviewed and agreed policies relating to Child Protection, Public Exams, Curriculum, Special Educational Needs, Attendance, Arts, Anti-bullying and Alcohol and Drugs. They also reviewed the Home School Agreement.



Jacqui Goodall
Chair of Curriculum
and SEN and Child
Protection Governor

Jacqui Goodall, Chair of Curriculum

Committee Updates Continued

Resources Committee



Chris Child
Vice Chair and Chair
of Resources

The Resources Committee has continued to carry out its core business of monitoring spending against the approved budget, as well as keeping an eye on the Balance Sheet and Bank Balances. As usual, we remain on track for this financial year, despite some unexpected in-year expenses associated with legal fees and the higher numbers than usual attending joint courses with BWS. Resources also regularly looks ahead to next years' budget and we currently expect to gain around an additional £200K in the 2018-19 transition year of the Fairer Funding Formula. Although by no means certain, this may allow the school to easily absorb the inevitable inflationary pressures on our staff budget, which as is commonly the case, accounts for well over 85% of our expenditure.

Other major areas of expenditure include the upkeep of our infrastructure, and Resources recently approved the funding for repairs to several of our roofs. The Athletics Track is also in need of some repairs and a considerable sum has also been set aside for this work, which will hopefully be completed over the Easter break. There are, of course, numerous other areas of work that Resources oversees. The Audit Committee routinely reports to Resources, and it is very pleasing to note that recent audits have provided us with a clean bill of health. We have also appointed new auditors this year who have already provided very comprehensive reports. As it should be, Health and Safety is on the agenda of every Resources meeting; we continue to closely monitor accidents and near misses, investigating, in particular any trends and what must be done about it.

Looking forward, there are some interesting areas that require attention at forthcoming meetings. Another review of our buildings is needed in order to ensure that we have the infrastructure to support our long term plans. We will also be taking a fresh look at our catering suppliers to see whether there is a more cost-effective way ahead. Our Stay Safe procedures will again be tested, and we will continue to press Wiltshire Council for improvements in Stratford Road in order to improve road safety. This will, of course, be in addition to the 'normal business' of ensuring that in-year expenditure remains on target, as well as setting next years' budget. We can look forward to some busy meetings ahead!

Chris Child, Chair of Resources