



## **Curdridge School Governors Newsletter Autumn 2016**

The purpose of the Newsletter is for us as governors to communicate to you, the parents of our school, and to provide a termly look behind the scenes of how the school is being run and how well we are performing. As governors it is our responsibility to set the strategic direction of the school with the Headteacher, challenging its leaders to achieve high standards whilst ensuring we deliver the best value for the limited funds we are given. None of us are “professional” governors, we all give our time freely with the overarching reason why we are involved is a desire to help the school. For the commitment we put in, we receive training and learn an enormous amount about the running of a school and education policy, which gives all of us a personal sense of satisfaction in the role we play.

As you will remember at the last OFSTED inspection in June 2015, the school was rated as RI – Requires Improvement. This did not mean overnight that Curdridge became a bad school, with the OFSTED report being very positive in a number of important areas. It was more of a reflection of the difficult year the school had been through with the departure of a number of key members of teaching staff, as well as an indication that there were areas where improvements needed to be made. Since that report the amount of work that has been done, along with implementing the changes required by a new curriculum and methods of measuring children’s progress in school, have been immense. It is a real testament to the incredible amount of hard work put in by Mrs Wood and her team the progress the school has made during this time, which we as governors have fully endorsed and supported. We believe the future for the school and our children is very bright, and all of the governors would like to formally thank Mrs Wood and the team for the tireless effort they have all put in to make the progress the school has made since the report.

In March we had a follow up visit from a representative of Her Majesty’s Inspectorate to check how we were progressing; it was like a mini OFSTED. The conclusion of that report was we had made good progress and were on track for the next OFSTED review to be rated a “Good” school, which is very much the target we have set ourselves. We also receive regular reviews and advice from our link person at the local authority, and her advice and guidance has been invaluable in the changes that have been made. She was in school last week to have a review of the changes that have been made to the SEND provision (Special Education Needs and Disabilities) as this was an area OFSTED highlighted needed a change in approach. Her assessment was that fundamental changes had now been made and implemented, with significant progress being made to the provision for these children, to the extent that the SEND Inspector wants to use some of the work that was being done as best practice to take to other schools. Work is still being done to roll the new processes out across the school, but it is testament to the new team in place how much progress has been made. Without saying any school would ever relish a visit from OFSTED (we are due for a return visit at some point in the next six months), we are looking forward to the having the opportunity of demonstrating how we have developed, and to get that good rating back again.

As governors we play a key role in ensuring there is continuous improvement, particularly in the key areas of Reading, Writing, Maths, Early Years (i.e. Reception Children) and the area of SEND. Each governor is attached to one of these areas, and each term we come into school to review and monitor the progress that

is being made. This is done by watching lessons, speaking with the children and reviewing work in books. It provides a real insight into the workings of the school and the efforts everyone is making to achieve that good level of progress; it is also a pleasure to be involved and witness the excellent behaviour of the children and how the core values of Curdridge School are borne out in all of the children's activities. From a governor perspective, there has been very significant improvements across these areas throughout the school, and we very much hope that this is something you have been aware of with your own children.

Across these core areas here are some aspects of the reviews that we as governors and external advisors have noted in the last term on our visits which have all been extremely positive:

### **Maths**

Maths now has a clear learning journey where learning is progressive, addresses any misconceptions the children may have and builds on their previous learning. In working with the county Maths advisor to change the way the children learn, they are now focussed on problem solving and reasoning in the Maths work they do. Children are now exposed to problem solving on a regular basis, and we witnessed the much greater use of concrete physical resources which are helping them to understand and solve problems they are set. Learning walls are now fully supporting the children's learning with pictorial images and examples of their work. New resources have been bought to aid planning and support exciting and purposeful learning.

### **English**

The learning walls and evidence in the English books that we have reviewed all support the new Learning Journey approach for the English curriculum. The grammar the children are now using is embedded within the learning journeys and the children are clear about the journey their learning has taken and the impact this has had on their final writing outcomes. Children are clearly taking pride in their learning and they can talk about the purpose behind each step of the learning journey they are taking. Progress in developing reading journals has been supported by county advisors and the work that the school is now undertaking is being used as best practice across other schools countywide.

### **Early Years**

All of the children within year R are happy, engaged and positive in school whenever we have done our visits. The learning environment now has a much wider range of resources accessible to the children and is clearly zoned both indoors and outdoors, creating a much more positive learning environment. During child initiated play, children were observed as actively involved in play promoting mathematical vocabulary and record keeping.

As you will know we recently had a Parent Governor vacancy arise as a result of Phil de Montjoie Heard resigning following a change in his work commitments. We would like to thank Phil for all of his effort and time over the past couple of years working on the governing body. However, as one door closes another opens, and we were delighted when Scott McDermott, father to Ethan in class 3, put his name forward to take on the position left by Phil. As Scott was the only person to formally put their name forward, he was automatically elected to the governing body, and we very much look forward to welcoming him as part of the team. He has a wealth of knowledge and experience from the business world and has previously been a trustee for a local charity for a number of years.

The governing body of the school has to be made up of people from a variety of backgrounds, not just for the benefit of the different experience they each bring, but also to ensure there is no potential bias where the interests of some could hold sway over the whole governing body. This is why we have a mix of people, some of whom are parents, some from the local community as well as those such as the head teacher, who work at the school. We were very fortunate therefore when a few months ago we had a vacancy for a local authority governor and Mr Andy Sly, who had been the chair of governors at the school a few years ago, came forward and was willing to take on the role of governor once again. We thank Andy for coming back to the school, and know his skills and knowledge will be invaluable on the governing body. It is however, with sadness that we will soon be losing Mrs Ann Young a retired teacher, who after many years has decided that despite her “youth” she is finally going to put her pencil down and retire from the governing body at Christmas. Again we would like to thank Ann for all her effort, commitment and common sense over the years and her input will be sadly missed.

The full make up therefore of the Governing Body is as follows:

James Hillyear – Chair and Co-opted Governor

Martin Horn – Vice Chair and Parent Governor

Andy Denyer – Parent Governor

Debbie Gallagher – Parent Governor

Scott McDermott – Parent Governor

Andy Sly - Local Authority Governor

Ann Young – Co-opted Governor (Retiring at Christmas)

Simon Barker – Co-opted Governor

Sally Wood – Head Teacher

Ben Simpson – Teacher Representative

Each governor is elected to the governing body for a period of 4 years, and whilst there is currently no vacancy for a parent governor, if anyone is interested in becoming a governor at any stage and would like to know more about the role then please contact one of the existing governors who would be delighted to offer a bit of an insight into what the role entails. In the meantime there are always many opportunities to assist the school, whether it is to come in and help in class, be part of the CSA or just helping out at events. Being a small school we rely on parents making a contribution, and it's a very rewarding to feel part of the school and help make a difference.

Finally it is one of the key roles of a governor to listen, feedback and make changes where appropriate. This can take many forms but we are always happy to hear the views and thoughts of you the parents. Hopefully these will be positive but we do appreciate that we might not get everything right all of the time. As governors we are not there to deal with specific issues your child may have, these should be handled in the usual way via your child's teacher or through Mrs Wood, but we do like to hear how things are going generally, as ultimately for us as governors and you as parents, we all want the same outcome, for our school to be a good place to learn where our children are safe and happy.

From everyone on the governing body we wish you are happy Christmas and very prosperous New Year, and we look forward to the continued progress of Curdrige Primary School.

Regards

Martin Horn

Vice Chair Governors