



Camp School Governors Newsletter 2020/21

Welcome to our Camp School Governors newsletter for 2020/21. This is to update you on what we've been doing this year, and say a bit about the school's finances. We hope you find the information useful, and would welcome any feedback.

The role of the Governors

The Governing Body is made up of staff, parents and other members of our local community. We provide strategic leadership for the school and help ensure every child gets the best possible education. In the eyes of the law, the purpose of governing bodies is to conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement.

Governing Body changes

In November we held an election for two parent governors. Louise Larkins was re-elected as a governor, and we were pleased to welcome Pritam Vekaria onto the Governing Body. We thank Jennifer Mitchell who came to the end of her term as governor and had covered the finance role. The finance role is now being covered by our new community governor, Vignas Gunasegaran, a local resident. We also thank Shabana Farooq who stepped down as governor at the end of the spring term, having covered the Health & Safety role. Recently we have welcomed Danny Macro, a new parent governor, and we have given a fond farewell to Helen Harden, a community governor who stepped down after 9 years of service. Helen has an educational background and did sterling work supporting the school on curriculum matters, throughout various changes to policy and ways of measuring performance and attainment.

Supporting the school during the pandemic

Clearly the past year has been dominated by the pandemic. It has placed huge pressures on the school, both in terms of adapting to remote learning and key worker provision during lockdowns, and in ensuring the safe adherence to Covid guidelines when the school has been fully open. Governors have supported the school in the difficult decisions they have had to make, including through reviewing the risk assessment and reviewing school policies that have had to be adapted due to the different circumstances applying to school life.

During the Autumn term Governors reviewed the 'Back on Track' plans the school created to help pupils recover learning after a time when progress had been impacted by the first lockdown. In the Spring term Governors worked with the school as it again moved to remote learning and provided support for key workers in our community. At the end of that term the governors wrote to all the members of staff at the school to thank them for all they had done during a challenging period, often working longer hours and going above and beyond to keep the school going and people safe. In particular there was recognition for the work of the teaching assistants who stepped up and supervised classes for those still attending school during the lockdown.

General activity

Governors have supported the school as it develops its curriculum. The priorities set out in the School Development Plan for 2019-20 continued into the current academic year, as the school got 'back on track' with in-person learning. The school continues to progress the development of its Foundation subjects (i.e. all subjects outside English, Maths and Science), looking in particular at the coverage and progression of skills across the school and the key role of the subject leaders. Each governor is assigned to a subject, to work with and support the relevant subject lead. It has not been possible to arrange governor school visits this year due to restrictions but it is planned that these will take place in September and provide the opportunity to see the subject being taught and talk to the pupils.

Governors support the school in specialist areas like Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Safeguarding. The nature of the issues and challenges involved has been impacted by lockdowns and restrictions but we continue to be assured by the quality of the school's provision and adherence to policy.

Governors review the school's policies on a rolling basis. During the last year a significant development has been the introduction of the new Relationships and Sex Education policy in line with new Government guidelines. Governors are currently engaged in developing a new Statement of Behaviour Principles; this will reflect the school's ethos and the therapeutic behaviour approach referred to as STEPS. The Principles will underpin the school's Behaviour Policy which is also being updated to reflect the STEPS approach in practice.

Finances

The school budget is a major area of focus for the Governing Body, and is discussed with them in detail when set, with further updates twice each term.

Camp receives around 95% from Hertfordshire County Council, out of education funding it receives from the Government. This has been a higher percentage than normal due to Covid, other income dropped dramatically but will hopefully increase back to previous levels from September 2021.

The school spends the majority of its money on staff. At Camp, the children benefit from a good pupil-teacher ratio of 22:1 – which is higher than most schools similar to ours.

Due to careful management over the school year, Camp has once again ended the financial year in a relatively strong financial position. This year, Camp has invested in a new sandpit for the Early Years and playground equipment. A longer project of replacing all of the windows within the school is the result of a bidding process to County for capital funding. With the national picture leading to money being tight for all schools, we continue to work to carefully manage the budget and to look for other ways to raise and save money.

We're thankful to all those who support the school by raising money through PA events, initiatives and donations. This has funded certain projects that might otherwise have had to be covered by the school budget.

Inevitably the school's income from hirings has fallen during the pandemic, but as restrictions ease this can re-emerge as a positive benefit for our financial position. If people are interested in long term hirings for clubs etc please get in touch with the school office.

Vacancy for non-parent governor

We do have a vacancy on the Governing Body for a non-parent member of the community. Having non-parents on the governing body helps ensure a broad mix of perspectives.

If you know of any non-parents who may be interested then please encourage them to give this consideration. With the shift to 'working from home' in many jobs, it may be that some people now have more time available for a commitment like this. Our meetings are currently being held using Zoom. Whilst we plan to return to physical meetings when possible, we would retain provision for people to join meetings remotely, which could help with child care or travel issues.

We would particularly welcome interest from non-parents who reflect the ethnic diversity of the school community, but expressions of interest are welcome from anyone. Anyone interested should please contact the school office.

Summary

As Governors we voluntarily commit time and effort to our work, but enjoy being involved with a school that aims for the very best for its pupils within a supportive environment. The school has faced many challenges in the last year, but has continued to provide a nurturing learning environment for the pupils. The school continues to provide a community feel for all involved, even during a time when it has not been possible for all that community to gather together in person. We would like to thank the children, staff, parents/carers, and all those who make Camp School special!