

Thomas Russell Junior School

Governor Impact

Newsletter

December 2017

Governors produce an annual newsletter for parents highlighting their impact on developments in and affecting the school. Individual reports from the chairs of our main committees follow with a concluding piece by the Chair of the Governing Body.

If you would like any further information please contact either Mrs Sharpe or the relevant governor.

Finance Committee

By Mr Matt Harrington

Members:

Mr Matt Harrington (Chair)
Mr Terry Wells
Mrs Shelley Sharpe
Mrs Gillian Gahagan
Mrs Mandy Bant
Mrs Rosie Whiteford
Mr Tim Gee

The primary aim of the Finance committee is to ensure that the funds, allocated to the school, are used in a way that maximises the outcomes for the children, as well as supporting the wider school environment and ensuring value for money.

The budget for the school this year is just over £900k and is based broadly on pupil numbers. As you would expect, the vast majority of this is used to provide the teaching staff and support in the classrooms and this will continue to be our focus as we strive to provide the highest levels of support to the children. As a school, we invest a significant sum maximising teacher numbers to provide more focused and effective teaching than may otherwise be available. An additional benefit of this is to give the children as much consistency as possible even when a teacher is absent.

As well as funding the teaching staff, we also aim to provide the best learning environment and resources to enable the best teaching and outcomes. As part of this, we will continue to look to invest in additional technology to support the children in a Digital Age. Clearly, if additional funding was available, we would look to accelerate the integration of replacement technology in the classroom. We are extremely thankful to the Friends who, through numerous fundraising activities, provide additional resources to the school for the benefit of the children.

In collaboration with the Premises Committee, the Finance Committee must also ensure that funds are available to provide the necessary maintenance and normal overheads to the school, for example heating & lighting and ongoing repairs.

The school continues to offer both a Breakfast Club and After School Club (appropriately named by the children as Early Birds and Night Owls). The 'take up' on both clubs is good and any income over and above expenditure, will be invested back into the school to provide benefits to the children. This is one way in which the school is looking to maximise its opportunities.

As we look forward, we await clarification on how the new funding formula for schools will impact on our budget. We are hopeful that this will not reduce our available funding but at this point this is not confirmed.

All in all, the committee continues to remain focused on delivering the best possible outcome to every child in the school within the constraints of a specified budget.

<p><u>Members:</u> <i>Mr Andrew Lloyd-Jones (Chair)</i> <i>Mr Terry Wells</i> <i>Mrs Shelley Sharpe</i> <i>Mrs Gillian Gahagan</i> <i>Mrs Sam Cowgill</i> <i>Cllr Lorraine Brant</i> <i>Mr Paul Thompson</i></p>	<p><u>Premises, Health and Safety Committee</u> <i>By Mr Andrew Lloyd-Jones</i></p>	<p>A number of new and ongoing projects have been undertaken through the year, the highlights of which are detailed below:</p>
<p>Some significant progress since last year has been made across the school. Regular school inspections continue to highlight areas for improvement and have been continuously addressed by Mr Harper, particularly in the areas of pool availability maintenance planning and general school wide decoration.</p>	<p>Most notably, planning permission was granted for the erection of 2 mobile classrooms to provide for the increasing number of pupils.</p> <p>Unfortunately, funding restrictions have allowed for the implementation of a single unit only at this point. Work commenced in October 2017 with completion due in January 2018. Overall space within the school remains tight.</p>	
<p>We are really pleased that our application to be included in the Education Capital Programme was successful.</p> <p>As part of the Sustainability Programme, works have been approved to fund replacement of the boilers and associated pipework.</p> <p>This fits with the schools focus on energy management and consumption which will be enhanced through this action.</p>	<p>Despite repeated repairs the age of the swimming pool boilers has continued to cause problems in maintaining heating and pool closures have resulted. The school is urgently attempting to source new boilers but doubts have arisen about the adequacy of the gas supply especially given the increased need that will arise from the new modular classroom.</p>	<p>Mr Harper has sadly left us to pursue his window cleaning business and generate more family time.</p> <p>We are grateful to the contribution he has made to the school over his time with us and wish him well.</p> <p>Our new Site Technician will join us from 21st December - Mr Stephen Bradley is very excited about the new post.</p>
<p>Funding was made available for the replacement and repair of the corridor floor tiling, which has subsequently been completed.</p>		
<p>CCTV will be extended to cover the new classroom and to remedy a gap in current provision.</p>		
<p>Additional investment has been made in a new server for the ICT suite and a further 3 Clevertouch boards for the classrooms providing a significant enhancement to the benefit of the pupils.</p>	<p>A staff wide internal survey was undertaken in February 2017 to assess 'Wellbeing' with wholly positive results. A follow up is planned and any feedback or areas for improvement will be incorporated and adopted where applicable into the school's working procedures.</p>	

<p>The Curriculum Committee consists of people with a wide range of life experiences. We have taken on Governor roles within the committee which suit our own particular skills and we use these to monitor and evaluate everything related to teaching and learning.</p>	<p><u>Members:</u> Mrs Elaine Watling (Chair) Mr Terry Wells Mrs Shelley Sharpe Mrs Gillian Gahagan Mr Seamus Treanor Mrs Jane Budge</p>	<p><u>Curriculum Committee</u> By Mrs Elaine Watling</p>
<p>This includes analysing the children's progress and attainment and breaking this down into different groups such as gender, year groups, abilities and pupil premium. As governors we set aspirational targets for our children and staff, however be assured that with every decision we make, we have the children's best interests at heart.</p>		
<p>2017 SATS Results</p> <p>2016 saw significant changes to the Key Stage 2 SATS tests. We were delighted that as a school we bucked the trend of nationally falling results with 67% of our pupils achieving the expected standard. This year, a huge 83% of our pupils achieved this standard, that's 16% higher than last year and 22% above this year's National Standard! Having attained such a standard, we are pleased to be recognised in the top 2% of schools nationwide for attainment in Writing and top 4% in Maths. This is an enormous achievement for the school and the children. Well done to all!</p>		
<p>We are continuing with many of the provisions already in place as we have found these have had a positive impact on the children and their learning. Therefore as last year we will be continuing with:</p>		
<p>Smaller class sizes for English and Maths in all year groups which enables teachers to spend more time with the children. (This will continue as long as financially possible)</p>	<p>Our popular on-site breakfast club (Early Birds) and after school club (Night Owls). Profits from the clubs are channelled back into school benefitting the children.</p>	<p>Governors direct communication with parents through "Governors Corner" in the weekly newsletter, being contactable through "governors@thomasrussell-junior.staffs.sch.uk" and being available for a chat at the termly parent consultations.</p>
<p>A minimum of 3 hours sport per week (the majority of schools offer 2 hours)</p>	<p>Golden Time to reward excellent behaviour</p>	<p>Termly reports to parents</p>
<p>The huge extra-curricular program (which can also be accessed by children using Night Owls)</p>	<p>Musical instrument tuition in Y3 (keyboard) and Y5 (clarinet).</p>	<p>Encouraging parent teacher relationships through the open playground, questions@thomasrussell-junior.staffs.sch.uk and comments in the children's homework books.</p>

Report from Chair of Governing Body - Mr Terry Wells

Another year of **school achievement** as noted in the Curriculum Report above (and most recently in earning the Basic Skills Quality Mark)

In **staffing** matters there were changes following decisions to pursue career development by obtaining wider experience. Governors were pleased to assist with interviews and new staff have been welcomed to the school.

On the **governing body** some members stood down with elected replacements sought from the parent body.

Various governors have attended training courses; answered children's questions about their role at a school Democracy assembly; observed school life during a Governors' Open Morning; answered queries via the new governor email address; increased their involvement at the School Council; and assisted with school excursions.

The 2017 **General Election** was followed by Government dropping or diluting various policies and proposals. In particular, it seems Government has abandoned its intention of compelling all schools to become **academies**. Governors continue to closely monitor the situation but compelling educational reasons for conversion remain elusive.

Governors also responded to a long list of suggestions for school improvement (- many both amusing and inventive!) submitted by the students.

Central government at long last published proposals for **fairer national school funding** only to be met with almost universal hostility! Far from simply redistributing from those much better funded it seemed to take away from almost all schools, including those already the most poorly funded e.g. TRJS. Many governors and others, nationally, made their views known in a second consultation. The effect of revised proposals, as noted in the Finance Report above, are still uncertain but it seems that TRJS will probably benefit though unfortunately only to a modest degree.

Also nationally, Ofsted noted that the **curriculum** contains more than English and maths: it expressed concern that schools nationally had narrowed the curriculum to focus on those aspects most inspected. However that had not occurred at TRJS where staff and governors are committed to maintaining quality provision in a wide range of subjects as well as offering a multitude of after school activities.

TRJS had concluded an agreement with the County Council whereby more than the normal number of students would be admitted for a limited time. In return County agreed to fund the permanent addition of two new **modular classrooms**. As referred to in the Premises Report above, County then informed us it was refusing to fully honour the agreement and only one would be provided. Governors will continue to press for the original agreement to be implemented.

Concern had previously been expressed at Parent Forum that the school paid for routine maintenance of the **lampposts** in Gilmour Lane (a private road owned by the parish council). Governors pursued this with local authorities. The County Education department has funded the replacement of the old lampposts with modern versions and seems to have now accepted responsibility for ongoing maintenance.