

Thomas Russell Junior School

Governor Impact

Newsletter

November 2016

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 or are interested in becoming a member of the Governing Body in the future, 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 Suzanne Tandy
Mr Jonathan Cunningham

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.

The budget for the school this year is just short of £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, 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 in the 3 teachers per year approach which allows us to provide more focused and effective teaching, maximising individual pupil attention.

As well as funding the teaching staff, we must also aim to provide the best learning environment that we can, along with the resources to enable the best teaching and outcomes. As part of this, we have continued to invest in new equipment, including additional Clevertouch boards and iPads. We will continue to look at investments in new technologies as the opportunities arise, but, as you would expect, the costs of these need to be considered against other priorities. We are extremely thankful to the Friends who, through numerous fundraising activities, provide additional resources to the school for the benefit of the children.

The Finance Committee must also ensure funds are available to provide the necessary maintenance and normal overheads to the school, for example heating & lighting, as well as ensuring the school environment is in the best possible condition.

The school now offers 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.

Monitor the effectiveness of Pupil Premium and Sports Premium spending and the impact on pupils.

As many of you will know, over the next few years we anticipate that the number of children in the school may increase. This provides both opportunities and challenges to the school. We will continue to ensure that we invest the school's budget and assets in maximising the benefits to all our children throughout the current and future years.

<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>CCTV Installation - Complete across all designated areas with visible signage added. This has already proven useful in identifying a delivery company causing damage to school property which would otherwise have caused a financial implication on school.</p>	<p>Solar Film for skylights - Samples received and under review. Decision to be made before calendar year end.</p>	<p>Clevertouch boards - Installed in 3 more classrooms and the hall - £17.5K. We now have 7 in school and continue to plan for more.</p>
<p>Pool changing areas - Significant progress in decorating and improving the changing areas. This is a continuing project.</p>		<p>Playground resurfacing - Accident analysis showed a large percentage of slips, trips and falls were caused by the shiny surface on the old playground. 22K was spent resurfacing to provide a safer, more durable surface for playtimes and sporting activities.</p>
<p>Catering Update - New contract running smoothly: children like the food; kitchen staff are happy; portion sizes have increased; there is less waste. We have already received some little extras e.g. food demonstrations (such as bread making and smoothie bike) and input at assemblies. Numbers of children taking school lunches has more than doubled as a result of the change.</p>		<p>Copper Pipe replacement - Ongoing repairs are being made as necessary. Funding solution applied for to replace all copper piping with plastic - £27k</p>
<p>Decoration - Thoroughfares and classrooms form part of a continuous improvement plan undertaken by Neil Harper (site technician). Visible improvements are evident.</p>		<p>Grease Traps in the Kitchen - all installed</p>
<p>Corridor floor tiles - identified as needing replacement. Funding solution applied for - £8.5k</p>		<p>Provision of new modular classrooms - Currently in the planning phase, the new teaching space remains to be approved.</p>
<p>Night Owls - Early signs are very encouraging with a healthy number of parents utilising the service. The addition of key pad access or similar will add another layer of child care and premises security.</p>		<p>Effective CPD (Continuing Professional Development) - Child Protection and Safeguarding - Level 1, 2 and 3 training has been provided to all staff as well as First Aid, Asthma, Epipen, Diabetes and a range of other training to keep knowledge up to date.</p>
<p>Children's Health - We have participated in Government initiatives such as Y6 Child Measurement programme and Y3 Flu inoculations, obtained school nurse support for Y5&6 Sex Education, NSPCC assembly on Speak Up, Shout Out and Bikeability Training.</p>		

The Curriculum Committee consists of parents, teachers and governors with a range of skills and experience. Most of us have designated responsibilities suited to these areas of expertise. We use these to monitor and evaluate everything relating to Curriculum.

Members:

Mrs Elaine Watling (Chair)
Mr Terry Wells
Mrs Shelley Sharpe
Mrs Gillian Gahagan
Mrs Philippa Rumsey
Mr Seamus Treanor
Mrs Jane Budge
Mrs Kate Jones

Curriculum Committee

By Mrs Elaine Watling

Curriculum Committee has many responsibilities; the main focus is quality of teaching and learning. Our job is to monitor and analyse the progress and attainment of children, looking at different groups, such as year groups, gender, abilities and Pupil Premium. As governors, we ask challenging questions and set aspirational targets for children and staff.

SATs - You may be aware that this year there were significant changes to the SATS tests, following major changes to the National Curriculum in 2014 and the removal of levels (2b/4a etc.) to be replaced with scaled scores. It is widely recognised that this year's tests were harder, with government reporting they had 'raised the bar'. TRJS results bucked the trend of falling results nationally with 67% achieving the **expected standard** or above in Reading, Writing and Maths ranking us in the **top 23%** of schools nationwide. We were ranked in the top 7% nationally for progress in Writing. This is testament to the dedication of the staff, determination of the children and superb support from the parents.

How have Governors already impacted on provision for pupils at TRJS?

- Smaller class sizes for literacy and numeracy in all year groups. This enables teachers to spend more time with children - with endless benefits.
- 'Golden Time' to reward excellent behaviour.
- A minimum of 3 hours of sport per week. The majority of schools offer 2 hours.
- Musical instrument tuition in Year 3 (Keyboard) and Year 5 (Clarinet). Studies have shown that children who learn to play a musical instrument could also enjoy greater success in other academic areas.
- Popular on-site breakfast club (Early Birds) and after school care (Night Owls). Profits from both go back into the school, benefitting your children.
- A huge extra-curricular program which can now be accessed by children attending our 'Night Owls' after school care.

And what are our plans for the future?

- To continue to communicate the ethos and direction of the school clearly to parents.
- To move into the top 20% of schools nationwide.
- To be recognised by OFSTED as a school which provides Outstanding education.
- Continue with the smaller class sizes for as long as possible (this is subject to a possible short-term increase in pupil numbers due to new housing construction in the village).
- Continue providing termly reports, to keep parents up to date throughout the year with children's progress.
- Work towards gaining national accreditation in a range of areas, including becoming a Rights Respecting School, Basic Skills Mark and kite marks for Music and Sport.

Report from Chair of Governing Body - Mr Terry Wells

This year has seen further changes to the Governing Body with several members bowing out after years of service and being replaced by new volunteers. Members have undertaken **training and learning** activities to enhance their knowledge and skills.

Governors continue to be busy in school and have been **involved**, for example, in learning walks, having lunch with children, discussion of school issues at meetings and by email, attendance at parent consultation evenings, meeting staff to discuss subject areas, and helping with interviews for staff vacancies. Parents will be aware of **new staff** members and that some teachers on short-term contracts have been appointed to the permanent staff.

Staff and governors have also participated in the relaunch of the **Friends Association** that does so much to support the school and its students.

The school has this year provided the **weekly Newsletter** by e-mail with print versions on display in all classrooms. This is now an established routine saving time and financial resources. Other **electronic** means for making payments and booking appointments are also in use.

Due to some **funding** reorganisation within Staffordshire some schools have had some reduction in elements of their budget with the savings redistributed to other schools. TRJS has benefited from this. However, following the EU referendum, the Government announced that the proposed national reorganisation of school funding, which is expected to benefit Staffordshire schools, has again been postponed: it is now hoped this will commence in 2018-19. A profit-sharing clause in the popular new catering contract is expected to produce a small income for the school in future years.

As noted above, governors have approved installation of **CCTV**. This does not operate during the day as it is intended only as a safeguard for school premises.

The introduction of 'scaled scores' for **SATS** and the increased difficulty of the tests this year has caused difficulties and uncertainties nationally but TRJS staff and children have coped very well. The Government has now said that no new tests will be introduced for two years. The national viability of changes already introduced remains to be seen.

Many parents will be aware that new housing developments, such as those in the village, entail the developers providing (**Section 106**) money to offset any negative effects of the development. Currently TRJS admits a number of children from outside our catchment area. The new housing will mean that in future more children from within the village will obtain places at TRJS; the out-of-catchment children that might previously have been educated in the village will be accommodated at new or enlarged schools in other localities.

There will be an **interim period** during which a larger number of children than usual may have to be accommodated in village schools. Governors are clear that, on the basis of County population estimates, this will only be a short-term bulge before numbers drop back to an expected admission number of 60. TRJS is already short of class space and currently having to use the hall and the ICT suite as classrooms. The available S106 money is able to help fund additional classrooms - in fact, the total cost of this is rather more than the value of the available S106 money.

Governors have considered responses to the public consultation and decided to proceed with an application for **planning permission** for the two new modular classrooms. If everything proceeds as hoped the new facility would be available for autumn 2017. This is expected to provide a permanent benefit to the school and its children.