



Governor Newsletter

In my newsletter last half term I reported on the impact a number of initiatives in the school are having on teaching and learning. This newsletter provides more detail about the general work of the Teaching and Learning Committee and includes examples of work carried out during the autumn term.

About the Teaching and Learning Committee

The role of the Governing Body's Teaching and Learning Committee is to work with the school to evaluate its strategies and plans in this area in order to achieve the best possible learning outcomes for all children. Governors are invited into the school on a regular basis to observe a typical day; undertaking a 'learning walk' is part of this. This helps us to understand more about how the school works and what questions we want to ask in undertaking our role as the governing body.

The school closely monitors the progress of children across the curriculum through each school year and uses data gathered such as RaiseOnline, as well as external feedback from OFSTED and the local authority, to set appropriate targets for development. The school must monitor the progress of individuals and groups across all year groups and key stages. For instance the school may recognise that there is a difference in learning (attainment) between girls and boys in reading at Key Stage One and seek to address this by ensuring a greater variety of reading materials that might appeal to boys. Another example might be the school supporting 'Gifted and Talented' children by providing access to a more advanced curriculum.

At committee meetings governors require the School's Senior Leadership Team SLT to explain the latest evidence of learning, to evaluate the impact of recent interventions and identify the next steps forward. For instance, we may ask for an evaluation of the impact of funding for specialist PE teaching, particular reading intervention strategies or staff CPD (professional development) regarding the moderation of assessments.

This year, the 'Achieving Success' strand of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) focuses on two main objectives. The first is the Application of Maths. There have been significant changes to the primary maths curriculum this year but the teaching staff had already identified maths as a key area they wished to focus on. The second objective is linked to challenge for all learners.

Autumn Learning Walk

Ellie Russell, Chair of the Governors' Teaching and Learning Committee, recently conducted a learning walk, and commented



'It was obvious how maths was everywhere. The learning environments were colourful, engaging and full of number. From the numbered scissors in the art area and ping pong balls floating in the water play area in reception classes, to the dates, temperatures and distances I read in Year 6 topic books'.

As Governors we recognise the impact of the literacy interventions over the last two years. An example of this impact is our Year 6 results in reading achieving Level 4 or more (average or above) being 5% above National figures and our results in writing achieving Level 4 or more being 9% above National, with our percentages achieving Level 5 being 11% above National in reading and 20% above National in writing. We hope to see similar outcomes from this year's focus on maths. As with last year, we will ask the SLT and their colleagues to evaluate what strategies they've implemented, feed back to us what they think is working and to explain why.

The successes we've seen over the past couple of years come from knowing the children as individuals. In Teaching and Learning Committee meetings governors see tables of data but teachers always know the children who make up the numbers. The awareness that teachers have of the strengths and development needs of each child mean that they can provide the right support at the right time to help every child reach their full potential.

Part of this aim is ensuring students become true independent learners, rather than simply recipients of instructions and direction from the teacher. Each class room has a superb 'incredibly independent' display where teachers regularly recognise individuals in the class who have shown themselves to be excellent examples of independent workers.

"During my walk around the school in November I saw many students choosing tasks and taking ownership of their learning, including in Reception class – within 5 seconds of carpet time finishing every single child was up and actively involved in the learning task of their choice. If only we could feel so motivated as adults! In other classrooms I watched children working together on their story-telling skills, helping each other to learn to read the time and understand the calendar."

"It is an absolute pleasure coming into school, eating lunch in the canteen with the children, walking into classrooms to be enthusiastically greeted by those who I walk over to. To be honest many of the children were not even aware I'd walked in because they are were so interested in what they are doing"

Autumn updates to the School Improvement Plan (SIP)

Along with school staff, governors are actively involves in setting the school's SIP, a key aspect of the information and data that the Teaching and Learning Committee review and monitor.

Simon Bentall, recently elected parent governor, joined the school staff at a recent SIP planning session.

"I attended the School Improvement Plan workshop in our new impressive school hall in my capacity as a parent governor. I joined a little late so only caught the end of last year's achievements. I heard how well the school had done last year in the Reading Recovery programme. This will positively affect the children for the rest of their lives and give them access to even greater learning in the rest of their school careers. It is such an important building block for a child's progress during their school lives.

I am linked to the Fit for Learning strand of the SIP, which aims to reach the groups who do not access the usual sports groups like football. We are trying to find different activities which will appeal to them, e.g., dance groups or skipping. We hope to make use of and design the new playground around encouraging all children to find a way to exercise and hopefully add a maths element. As a parent I have already noticed that as a school we are taking part in more sporting activities against other schools. We came 3rd in the Manchester schools cross country championships this year.

It is going to take a massive amount of work to repeat last year's achievements. Hopefully it will be easier as the building work is now completed".

Sarah Spearing, one of our Lunchtime Organisers and parents, also attended the SIP session:

"The now huge staff group met in our fantastic new hall to review the progress we have made and set goals for the next wave of improvement. I confess to an ulterior motive to my attendance. In addition to voicing the views of the Lunchtime Organisers to assist in the development of the 'Fit for Learning' plan, as a parent, I also wanted to hear how things were progressing generally. Without wanting to sound melodramatic, I was blown away by how hard the staff group have been working to raise standards and help our children be happy, healthy and successful learners. There are too many successes to list here but they include better provision for children with special educational needs, an increase in attainment across school, better access to sport, dance and music provision and an award for outstanding progress in promoting pupils emotional wellbeing. However, the one development that really struck me was the success of Reading Recovery, the intensive one-to-one programme for children who are finding reading difficult. The programme was described as 'life-changing' for those children who have participated in it, enabling them to better engage in classroom learning and make significant progress in all areas of learning.

It's so impressive that all of this was achieved whilst the school was undergoing major building and remodelling work but to avoid burn-out the SIP teams were encouraged to 'Work Smarter not Harder'.

The Headteacher's newsletter tells you more about the SIP and how the parent's community will be and have already been involved in shaping this. The SIP and its implementation is supported by the management of the school's budget and resources. I'll be sharing some of the work of the Governing Body's Resources Committee in my first newsletter of 2015.

With that in mind may I take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

Helen Dobson