

WE ARE 'REACHING HIGH'

Governors' News

The governors' newsletter of Fairlands Primary School and Nursery

Issue 7

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July 2009

Dear Parents/Carers,

Six years ago, with an OFSTED inspection due in a couple of weeks, a vacancy arose for Chair of Governors. In the absence of other volunteers I agreed to take on the job on a 'temporary' basis. Before I give it up in September here are a few reflections on the changes in those years.

In 2003 Fairlands had been through a difficult period. An earlier OFSTED report had judged it as a school with 'serious weaknesses.' Under the leadership of former Head, John Hayes, sufficient improvement had been made for a judgement of 'Satisfactory.'

Five years, and five head teachers later OFSTED again found Fairlands to be 'Satisfactory.' Given all the changes in senior and other staff as well as other upheavals (including a major fire just before the inspection) this was an achievement, which can be built on. There are still 'areas for improvement' (new jargon for weakness) in some aspects of pupil learning and behaviour, but the trends are all in the right direction.

We now have a school that is attracting increasing numbers, tribute to its growing reputation in the local community. We have a flourishing Pre-School, which is meeting previously unmet local needs. The physical appearance of the school and its grounds are an outward sign of this new confidence and success.

The most important thing Governors do is to appoint the Headteacher. I know that the best decision we have made was to appoint Mr. Staples who has presided with calm authority over the school's transformation, a process far from complete.

I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the development of Fairlands School, and helped to make chairing the governors such an enjoyable, as well as challenging, experience. These include my fellow Governors, teaching and support staff, all those who help the school in a voluntary capacity and the parents and pupils who make up the Fairlands Community.

Best wishes to you all

Michael Downing
Chair of Governors

LEA Governors

CLlr Michael Downing (Chair)
Mr Jim Callaghan

Mrs Alison Parkes

Community Governors

Mr Phil Swallow (Vice Chair)
Rev Geoff Tickner

Staff Governors

Mr Rob Staples
Miss Michelle Bridge
Mrs Rosemary Biggs
Miss Maxine Franklin
Miss Emma Verlander

Parent Governors

Mrs Teresa Callaghan
Mrs Sue Hurren
Mrs Julie Jeffries
Mr Keith Smith
Mr Partha Kundu
Mr Dave Gray
Mrs Karen Oakley

NEW GOVERNORS

Two new governors have joined us this term. We welcome them both to the governing body and look forward to their contribution.

Alison Parkes

My name is Alison Parkes and I am a new governor, just joining the governing body this summer. I volunteered to become a governor because I have been working in education for the past eight years helping schools to recruit teachers and support staff and really enjoy my close involvement with schools.

In my current role, I advise schools on staff wellbeing and hope that I will bring some useful experience to the team. I have lived in Hertfordshire all my life, went to school here and now work in Stevenage. I am married with two teenage sons,

both of whom are very interested in sport (as is my husband), so I enjoy watching lots of sport (mainly football and cricket) and doing a little bit of jogging myself just to try and keep fit - I am taking part in the Race for Life 5k run at Fairlands Valley Lakes (very slowly) to raise money for cancer research.

I am really looking forward to being part of your governing body and getting to meet you.

Partha Kundu

Partha is a parent governor who has a child in reception.

GOVERNOR OF THE MONTH VISITS

JIM CALLAGHAN – MAY

As governor of the month, I was kindly invited by Mrs Yendell to join in the recent Foundation Stage visit to Standalone Farm. Boarding the coach outside the school with my packed lunch took me back more years than I care to remember. I resisted the urge to rush down the coach to bag the back seat (old habits die hard) and spent the 20-minute journey getting to know the group of six children who were going to be my responsibility for the day. They were all very eager to introduce themselves and tell me what they were most looking forward to. We all agreed that the pigs would be good fun and, fittingly, they filed off the coach making very realistic oinking sounds.

We kicked the visit off with lunch which we finished just as the heavens opened, so we took shelter in a big barn. As well as a real tractor to climb on, there were also plenty of small pedal tractors for the children to play on while we waited for the rain to stop. It was then off to see the lambs being fed; pigs rolling around in what pigs roll around in; llamas spitting and finishing up the day by watching a cow being milked. The farmer said that Fairlands pupils were the best-behaved children that had ever visited the farm and that they were a real credit to the school.

Praise must also go to the school staff who did a marvellous job of organising the day and ensuring that we returned with exactly the same number and breed of creatures that we arrived with. Looking after a group of six children for one afternoon gives a real perspective on just how much hard work the teachers and teaching assistants do on a day-to-day basis. It also gives me a sense of how rewarding it must be.

KEITH SMITH – JULY

On Thursday 9th July I will be spending the day in the school to see what happens when the children get to see their new classes and teachers for the following school year. It's an obviously exciting time for the children and the teachers so I'm quite looking forward to it. Then in the afternoon I will be going to see the current years 3 and 4 children play cricket at Stevenage cricket club, even more fun! And, I get a day of off work to do it!!

CHAIRPERSON STEPPING DOWN

After serving as our chairperson for 6 years, Michael Downing is stepping down from the post. Fortunately we are lucky enough to be retaining him as a member of the governing body – we certainly don't want to lose his expertise and experience.

Michael has led us well through some difficult times and has provided a much-needed stability over the years. We're sure that he will help to guide our new chairperson along the right tracks when the post is filled at our next meeting in September.

LONG SERVING GOVERNOR AWARD

Jim Callaghan was asked to attend an awards ceremony recently hosted by Herts. County Council. They were honouring long serving governors throughout the county and Jim was one of those.

He has served as a governor for Fairlands for 12 years now and over this time has been invaluable. He has seen many changes and has made a huge contribution to the growing success of the school. Most recently he was involved in the setting up of our Pre-School and put on an extraordinary amount of hard work in order to make that happen correctly. He has headed up the Resources committee and is always present at fundraising events supporting the school.

Unfortunately for us his term has come to an end now and we would like to say a huge thanks to him for all he has done. We're confident that he will still be around supporting the school in his enthusiastic manner and no doubt we will be calling on his vast knowledge of the school and its policies in the future!

ECO SCHOOLS

We have recently registered on the international environmental award scheme for schools "Eco Schools" and Teresa Callaghan will be the governor overseeing this exciting new project. With our allotment facility proving to be a success we are on the way to our award already! We will be keeping you posted about this.

If you have any suggestions or queries you would like to raise with governors, please use the suggestion box, placed by the school office.