

Governors' Newsletter

March 2021 



Hello Everyone

It is a pleasure to introduce our Governing Body newsletter, the first of many to inform parents of the role that Governors fulfil within school life at Hemingford Grey, and to provide regular updates on what we're up to.

We recognise it's been extremely challenging with Covid, but it has also given us an opportunity to try new ways of working and communicating. We have been so impressed and proud to see how well the whole school community has come together. We are delighted that the children are back in school and adapting so well to their bubbles.

In this newsletter we will introduce you to the Governor team, explain our key duties, as well as updating you on latest news and feedback from recent school visits.

We hope that you find this first newsletter informative and that it provides a useful insight into how we support the school. We aim to share regular updates throughout the year, and you can also find key information on the 'Governor' section of the school website. We are hoping to be able to arrange some meet and share sessions in the very near future.

We would be very happy to hear from you about any topics you would like to learn more about. Details about how to get in touch are at the end of this newsletter.

– Helen Peat Chair of Governors

WHAT WE DO



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Your questions answered

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1

Do all schools have a board of governors?

Yes, all schools must have a governing body.

2

How much time commitment does being a Governor take?

Generally there are two full governing body (FGB) meetings per term, plus two meetings for each of the primary committees such as resources and curriculum. There are also opportunities to get involved in school monitoring visits, such as reviewing policies or supporting with staff recruitment.

3

Why do schools' need a Governing Body?

To ensure the school has a clear vision, ethos and strategic direction; to hold the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of its pupils and the effective and efficient performance management of staff; and to oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well spent. We aim to be a critical friend providing both support and challenge to the school.

4

If I was interested in becoming a Governor what would I need to do?

Governor vacancies are advertised on the school website, and parents are notified via email when governor opportunities become available. If you are interested and would like to know more please email us at clerk@hemingfordgrey.cambs.sch.uk

MEET YOUR FRIENDLY TEAM OF GOVERNORS



Helen

I work at the British Antarctic Survey where I am head of the UK Polar Data Centre. I have two grown up children who both attended Hemingford Grey Primary School. Most of my interests are related to improving and enjoying the natural environment (you might see me on the river in a canoe or volunteering at the RSPB Fen Drayton lakes).

I became a school governor when my first child was in year one at the school - back in 2002. I have always been interested in education and have found being a governor very rewarding and so even when my children moved on, I stayed on as a governor.



Rachel

I live in Hemingford Grey with my husband and two teenage children, plus a mad ginger cat and a laid back tortoise. We (the humans in the family) are all fans of the outdoors, especially the coast or somewhere a bit hilly like the Peak District. I also enjoy running, reading and all things arty and crafty.

I became a governor to give something back to the primary school that both my children attended and to learn new skills too.



Ruth

My name is Ruth and I live in the village with my husband. I have two children, both grown up now. I became a governor when my younger daughter was in Year 2 (2007) and have stayed on ever since! I work as a primary school teacher in Cambridge and also as a piano/violin teacher. When not working I enjoy making music and play in a local orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra of St Ives and also in a clarinet quintet.

I wanted to become a governor to support the work of the local school. As a teacher, I did have an advantage in knowing the primary school curriculum but it has been really interesting seeing how the learning zones have developed the children's independence and responsibility. I am also the governor responsible for SEND and have learnt a huge amount about this since taking on the role.



Raylene

I joined the governing body 3 years ago as I had more time and wanted to support the school. You get such a good appreciation of the dedication of all the school team, and positive effect when all the school community work together to ensure a great environment and a happy experience for every child. I felt my role as a Change Manager would be helpful for the role as it is all about people!

My son has now left the school but has lots of great memories. Weekends are spent cheering our son on at football. We all love to ski though I'm not a fan of the cold!



Kathryn

When I'm not clerking, I spend most of my time running around after my 3 children and hamster! We love spending time outdoors as a family and regularly go for bike rides and visit our local country parks.

I have been the Clerk for 4 years now and really enjoy working with a lovely bunch of friendly, committed governors! I feel passionate about ensuring that all children have the best experience in education. I like to think my contribution helps to make sure children are kept safe, happy, and excited about lots of learning opportunities.



Clare

I am new to governors – I joined in October 2020. I have 2 Children and have had children at the school for 13 years now – I have a child currently in Year 5. I used to be involved in the PTA for a few years and enjoyed raising money for the school and seeing improvements made with that money.

I felt it was time for me to help support a school that has supported my children so well in the early stages of their lives. There seems to be a lot to learn and get involved in and I look forward to helping.



Grace

I live in Hemingford Grey. I am married with 3 grown up daughters. I enjoy walking my dog and going to the theatre and concerts with my daughters. With connections to the school for nearly twenty years, as a parent and then as a TA/HLTA for 13 years. I joined the Governing body as a co-opted Governor in 2018 when I finished working there as I wanted to remain connected to the school and use my knowledge, experience and skills to support the school.

Being a Governor gives you real insight into how the school is run and how hard the Head Teacher and staff work to ensure the school is a safe, happy and exciting place for children to learn. Initially the role was quite overwhelming as the Governing body have such a wide range of roles and responsibilities but support from more experienced Governors and attending excellent training has helped to make it less daunting!



Vanessa

Hi! I live with husband and 3 children in Hemingford Grey. My hobbies are running and spending time in the garden.

I became a governor to gain a better understanding about how the school that my children attend worked, and to apply my skills from work (managing staff, budgets, H&S/ compliance) in a different context. I also wanted to take a different challenge at a time when I had stepped back from more senior roles in work.



Rick

I have two children who attend HGPS and I decided to apply to become a parent governor 3 years ago to allow me to be more involved in their school life. I am a Curriculum Director of Geography across a local academy trust and as a teacher I value the role of governors to have an understanding of the whole school community and support them in providing the best possible learning environment and opportunities for our children.

Outside of school I enjoy a wide range of sports and getting out in the local environment - walking our border collie, cycling, and kayaking.



Helen H

My family really enjoys living in Hemingford Grey and it is a privilege to be a parent governor, representing the school that is so integral to our community. I joined the Governing Body in November 2020; with all the challenges faced over the last year it feels like a great time to support the school in this way.

I am an experienced change practitioner, currently leading the integration design of a new culture for Cambridge University Press and Cambridge Assessment as they go through a merger. Stakeholder management, engagement and communication are critical to my role, therefore I recognise the importance of representing the views of parents and children to ensure we strive for the best opportunities at Hemingford.



Diane

My husband and I recently moved to the village from Kent, where I was a Headteacher of a large primary school before retiring at the beginning of 2019. I loved working with primary schools and was keen to use my experience and knowledge in my new locality, so was delighted when I was invited to join the team at Hemingford Grey Primary School.

I have 2 adult children, and like many of my colleagues, enjoy being outside gardening or walking (definitely NOT running!) with my lively Welsh Springer Spaniel.



Jenny

When I retired after 40 years as a teacher and more than half that time as a headteacher, I knew that I wanted to continue in a role connected to schools and education so I became a governor. I chose Hemingford Grey School because its ethos and philosophy matched mine. Children having a voice, partnerships and being part of the local community are all important to me.

Another voluntary position I hold is Chair of the Steering Group for a Social Enterprise involved with children's mental health and wellbeing. After all no learning can happen if one's head is not in the right place.



Health and Safety Visit Report

Hello, I am Vanessa, the Governor linked to Health and Safety (H&S). As part of my role I am a member of the H&S Committee alongside Mrs Marriott, Mr Birkin - site manager and Mrs Coulter - office manager. I also undertake a termly inspection of the school, completed with Mrs Marriott and Mr Birkin. The purpose of this inspection is to ensure that the school premises are a safe place for staff, pupils and visitors to work and learn.

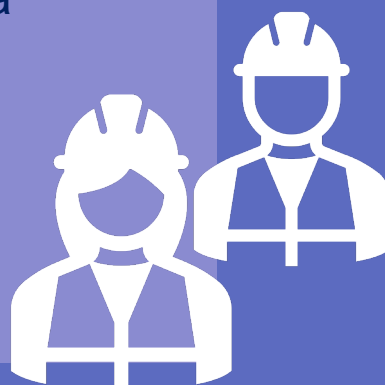
The inspection for the Spring term was undertaken on 19 March 2021. I am pleased to report that overall the school is well maintained, in good condition and the appropriate H&S and compliance checks are undertaken to ensure it is a safe place. We took the opportunity to discuss areas previously identified for improvement that needed budgeting for, such as carpets, internal and external redecoration and doors. With the 2021/2022 budget soon to set this was the ideal time to firm up plans.

Since school reopened in June 2020 to a wider cohort of children, the school inspections have also given me the opportunity to see first-hand some of the COVID safe measures that have been implemented. The school is kept clean and is benefitting from daytime as well as after school cleaning.

The phases (FS, KS1, Lower KS2 and Upper KS2) are kept apart in their bubbles and staff from each phase have their own staff room area. Each bubble has their own equipment, such as for outside play, and it is easily accessible to the children. Hand sanitiser and good hand washing facilities are available throughout school. Windows are open to allow good ventilation.

What I have been especially pleased to see during my inspections is the children happily learning and playing together in their bubbles. Although we as adults in and out of school face restrictions, the impact on our children in school is not impeding their opportunities for learning and play.

- Vanessa



TAKE 5

TOP TIPS FOR WHAT MAKES GREAT GOVERNANCE

There are a few essential ingredients every Governing Body needs, we wanted to share what this means to us.

1. Having the right mix of skills. We all come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and each of us have something valuable to offer, giving a good balance of knowledge and experience.
2. Effective Chairing, we are lucky to have a very experienced Chair (Helen Peat)
3. Professional Clerking, Kathryn always ensures that we have the right information for the right meeting in good time, recording decisions taken at meetings and ensuring we undertake all agreed actions.
4. Good relationships are important to be able to work well together as a team; in partnership with the teaching staff and parents. We all play a vital part in ensuring school life is the best for the children that come to learn at Hemingford.
5. Confidence to ask challenging questions having children’s interests at the heart of everything we do.

Biggest learning since becoming a Governor

I knew teachers worked hard, but WOW they really do work hard to deliver great learning to all children. Also, I hadn't given much thought before to the different ways school keep children safe, but through my time as a governor I've seen that safeguarding and keeping children safe is central.

Vanessa

My biggest learning so far is understanding how much time and effort is put into every aspect of leading and managing a school, far more than I ever fully appreciated before starting my job!

Kathryn



A word from Mrs Marriott about the role Governors play in school life

The relationship with the governing body, is an important one. The governing body plays a key role in the drive for school improvement by holding schools to account. Our governing body acts as a critical friend, systematically monitoring the school’s progress towards meeting agreed development targets. These positive relationships between our governing body and us as school leaders are based on trust, openness and transparency.

Our governing body aims to support honest, insightful self-evaluation by the school, recognising problems and supporting the steps needed to address them. We recognise that the governing body provides the school with a different perspective which contributes to strengthening leadership. The questions governors ask challenge assumptions and support effective decision-making.



*From all the Governors at Hemingford,
a note of thanks to you.*

Thank-you so much for all of the support you have shown the school over the past difficult year. Thank-you for the kind words, the gifts and the fund raising. These have provided a welcome boost to everyone's morale.

