

## OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL



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Head Teacher: Mr C Hirst  
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Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2018

Dear Parents,

### **PARENT GOVERNOR ELECTION**

Due to several long serving governors stepping down, Sonning Common Primary School has a number of vacancies to fill over the coming months, including two vacancies for parent governors.

#### **A brief overview from Emma Ashley, a current parent governor**

Having spoken to friends and parents about the role, I am aware that it is something that many have considered, however I know from my own experience that there are many unknowns, and this can put people off. I was appointed into the role of parent governor just over a year ago and I thought it would be useful to share some of my experience to date, in the hope that it will eliminate some of the unknowns and encourage some of you to apply for these interesting and rewarding roles.

#### **Why did I apply to become a governor?**

I had worked for a number of years within a finance team of a large education charity. In 2016, my eldest daughter started in Kites and if I am truly honest I personally found the transition from nursery to school quite difficult. I didn't know how it all worked and even though I had some sector experience, I really didn't have any idea of how a primary school worked. My husband and I had also moved to the village to be part of a community and this seemed like the perfect opportunity to get involved.

#### **What is the governing body like?**

There are 15 positions within our governing body and these comprise of the headteacher, 9 co-opted governors (some of these are staff), 1 local authority governor, 3 parent governors and 1 staff governor. We are lucky to have several staff members on the governing body as this gives us real insight into school. The governing body is a mixture of experienced and less experienced governors and it is a friendly and open forum which encourages challenging and healthy debate.

#### **What is involved?**

The role of the governing body is to:

- Set the vision and strategic direction of the school
- Hold the headteacher to account for the educational performance
- Ensure financial resources are well spent

To do this, the full governing body meets 4-6 times per year (in the evening) and they will receive an update from the Head and will hear about the school's successes in that term. They will look at the academic results of the school and will review the School Improvement Plan. The School is always looking to improve things and so there is regular discussion on what is not working so well and what needs to be done to improve it.

Schools are operating within very challenging financial constraints and ours is no exception. The governing body review the quarterly accounts and sign off the budgets and forecasts. For me this was a real eye opener as the school has to be incredibly innovative and flexible with its resources and the governing body is here to challenge and support this process.

There are three sub committees that meet during the year covering – Resources, Curriculum and Strategy & School Improvement. I have recently been appointed as Chair of the Resources Committee and we meet 4-5 times per year and look at the finances, health and safety and the premises.

The governors are also encouraged to 'link' in to certain areas of the curriculum and this is the opportunity to meet more of the fantastic teaching staff and to see the school in operation.

### **How much time does it take?**

The role of a governor does carry with it a level of responsibility but it is also recognised that it is a voluntary role and so it is up to you how much time you commit. As a minimum, you would need to devote some time to training (the introduction course is 1 day and can be spread over several days or all in one), you would need to attend and prepare for the full governing body meetings which equates to approximately 15 hours per year and then you would be assigned to a sub-committee which would also require some more time commitment. There are always opportunities to take on more, however if life is busy, this can vary over the course of your term.

### **What skills are needed?**

In order for the governing body to be effective, it is important there is a mixed skill set however, you don't need to have education experience. The ideal range of skills is broad covering health and safety, property, data interpretation, finance, HR, legal, process and governance. You also don't need to be an expert in any of these and so if you have the interest, some available time and a desire to really make a difference, then this could be for you! If this is not for you, the school always needs help in other ways – the PTA and parent helpers are just two.

### **What has been my highlight for the year?**

It has to be helping the staff to serve Christmas dinner to all of your happy and well-behaved children. I was amazed by how many sprouts were consumed – this doesn't happen at home!

### **What next?**

If you are interested, the process is as follows:

To become a parent governor, you must be the **parent or carer of a current pupil**. Anyone who has parental responsibility for a pupil on the school roll at the time of an election can stand.

We currently have **two parent governor vacancies** and so must hold an election. You can nominate yourself or someone else as well as vote in the election.

If you would like a nomination form and fact sheet about becoming a parent governor, please email the school office. All nominations should be delivered to the school office by 3.15pm on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2018. Every nomination must be signed by the candidate, stating that they are willing to stand.

If more than two people apply there will be an election, in which case we will send out the names of the candidates and a statement from each one. Each parent will receive one ballot paper however many children they have in school. The ballot will be secret, and parents will be asked to return ballot papers in a sealed envelope to the school office. In the event of an election, all votes must be in by 3.15pm on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018 when they will be counted.

Please think about taking on the role or suggesting someone who will do it well. We need committed parent governors to make the governing body as effective as it can be.

If you would like an informal chat, please contact Mrs Matthews in the office and she can put you in contact with Emma or any of the other governors.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Hirst  
Headteacher

Barry Perkins  
Chair of Governors