

William Penn Governors' Newsletter – Summer 2021

Farewell ... and welcome!

On 31st March, the Governing Body said farewell to one of our foundation governors – Vanessa Young. Vanessa has made an enormous contribution to the Governing Body during her 5 year term, in particularly as the lead governor for Safeguarding. Whilst her term on the governing body has now concluded, Vanessa very much intends to maintain her contact with the school in other ways. With the vacancy this has created, the Governing Body is delighted to welcome Mariu Hurriaga as our new Foundation Governor. Mariu has a background in education having taught languages for many years and is currently a languages advisor for a multi academy trust.

Governing during a Global Pandemic

I think it is fair to say the last 15 months have been extremely difficult, with every member of our school community being impacted in some way by the global pandemic. Staff have had to acquire a whole new skillset and pupils have had their education impacted by schools being partially closed. Parents have also missed those opportunities to catch up with familiar faces on the playground each day and with school events such as May Day and the Christmas Concert happening behind closed doors, parents have missed the opportunity to celebrate their children's school journey together.

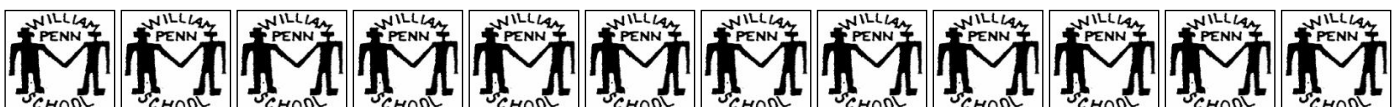
The Governing Body has also been challenged and has had to adapt to a new way of working. The guidance from the DfE is that governors should only attend school for 'business critical' purposes and so most of our monitoring has been undertaken virtually. Each year, the governing body draws up a monitoring calendar to ensure all our core functions are fully discharged and this year is no exception. Whilst the format of visits may have changed, the rigorous monitoring has not!

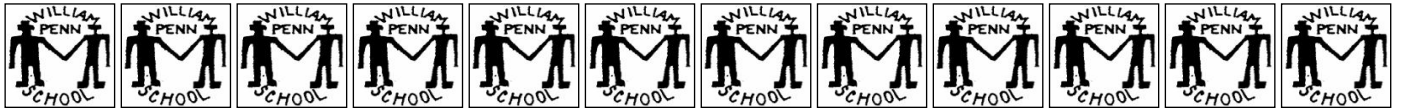
As a reminder, the 3 core functions of the Governing Body are as follows:

- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction for the school.
- Hold the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff.
- Oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well spent.

Below are just a few examples of some of the monitoring we have undertaken since September:

- **Safeguarding:** Review of key school policies; monitoring of records to ensure all staff and volunteers have had the appropriate checks; ensuring the school's responsibility to safeguard pupils extends to remote learning.
- **School Improvement Priorities:** Regular monitoring of the school's 3 key improvement priorities to ensure progress is being made.
- **Curriculum:** Monitoring visits with subject leaders for maths, English and PE with Relationships and Health Education planned for this half term. Pupil conferencing with a selection of pupils from across the school to hear their views on teaching and learning linked to these subjects.
- **Data:** Termly review of data to monitor progress and attainment for all pupil groups. Robust questioning related to the effect of periods of remote educational provision and the potential impact this has had on progress and attainment.
- **Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Pupils:** Termly monitoring by the lead governor for disadvantaged pupils. Consideration of support for this pupil group in particular through periods of remote learning and monitoring of the use of Pupil Premium funding.
- **Special Educational Needs:** Termly meeting with the SENDCo to gain a greater understanding of the current level of need and how the school is supporting pupils with special educational needs.





- **Finance:** Half-termly budget monitoring, approval of the budget for the new financial year and 3 year projections to ensure longer term sustainability. Financial benchmarking against other local schools.
- **Premises:** Termly premises walkround with the school caretaker, review of health and safety issues including risk assessments.
- **Wellbeing:** Last September we created a new role within the governing body to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing. Termly visits now form part of our monitoring calendar to consider how support for the wellbeing of staff and pupils is embraced and implemented throughout school.
- **Stakeholders:** As we do every year, governors have engaged with staff, parents and pupils to carry out stakeholder surveys, acting on the feedback received.

As this academic year enters its final half term, we still have work to do and will be collaborating with staff on the inset day to review and develop the school improvement plan.

As a Governing Body, we send our very best wishes to the year 6 pupils who will leave us at the end of this year to continue their education at secondary school and look forward to welcoming a new cohort of children to Reception in September. We very much hope that the new academic year will see a return to more normal times.

Best wishes

Nicola Waters
Chair of Governors

