



Governor's Newsletter. Summer Term 2015

Welcome !

Hello. Can I say a big welcome to the governor's newsletter? This is something new for us and we hope it will encourage better communication between governors and parents. I'm Peter Falconbridge, your new Chair of Governors. I was elected in May. I hope you find our newsletter informative and a good way of finding out who we are and what we do?

Who are we?

Your governing body is a collection of 12 dedicated volunteers from the local community, parents and staff. Currently we are:-

Peter Falconbridge	Chair/Co-opted governor
Cathy Irons	Co-opted governor
Jo Goldsmith	Co-opted governor
Mandy Staiano	Co-opted governor
Julia Thurlow	Co-opted governor
Ange Wallis	Head teacher governor
Joe Pring	Staff governor
Denise Barrows	Parent governor
Jay Raynam	Parent governor
Rev. Paul Parks	Foundation governor
James Harvey	Foundation governor
Scott York	Foundation governor

We can have a total of 14 governors and so currently have vacancies for a parent governor and a local authority governor. We will be sending out information in the autumn about filling these vacancies. You can find out more about each of us on the school web site in the governor section.

What do we do?

People often get confused about the role of school governors. Although governors do many things they are essentially responsible for 3 key areas;

- ensuring the school has a clear vision, ethos and strategic direction,
- holding the head teachers to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils,
- watching over the financial performance of the school, and making sure its money is well spent.

Governors work with the head teachers and staff at St. Catherine's to make sure your children learn and develop, to their potential, in the best environment possible. We meet as a full governing body 5 times a year and in smaller committees at different times to focus on school improvement, managing the budget, maintenance and resources, pupil and staff welfare. These are not secret meetings and all minutes, once approved by the full governing body, are posted on the school web site. Throughout the year we also attend governor training sessions to keep us up to date with the ever changing landscape – this academic year the whole governing body has received training on 'Effective use of Pupil Premium', 'Holding the school to account', 'Exclusions' and an in-house Finance course. As individuals, we also attend other relevant courses such as 'Safeguarding Children' and 'Governor Visits'.

Knowing the school

A key part of our work, as governors, is getting to know the school really well. We get lots of information from the Head teachers and staff about how well your children are progressing, but just like you we like to get into school at times to see what is really happening. When we visit the school we meet with the Head teachers or other staff, walk around and drop into lessons, talk to your children, attend school events and activities. We also get along to parent's evenings and other social events and activities. Some of us have special responsibilities and work alongside staff in school who look after specific areas, e.g. safeguarding and child protection or health & safety. Just to give you an idea of our work over the last term we have;

- checked and agreed the school's budget for next year,
- completed an annual audit to make sure all our financial practices match local and national expectations,
- completed an annual health & safety audit to make sure the school and its facilities are in good working order,
- checked the school's reports on your children's attainment and progress to make sure standards are kept up,
- checked and agreed the school's improvement plans to make sure your children's curriculum provides the best opportunities for learning and development.

Pupil voice

Another key thing we do is do listen to your children and find out what they think is really good about St. Catherine's and what they think could be better. We are really interested in the views of the School Council and encourage pupils to be honest about their experiences at school.

In May I and another governor met with a group of Year 4 and Year 6 pupils to ask them specifically about what they thought about their classroom environments and display work. We were very impressed with the mature and confident way in which the pupils expressed their views. On the whole they were very happy with their classrooms and the use of display work. They enjoyed being included in decisions about displays and how they should be used. Most felt the displays were helpful with learning certain topics, e.g. 'key word displays' and 'maths' displays. They thought some of the teachers were really clever at designing displays. For example, one group of pupils talked about a computer display which had been set up to make them feel as though they were inside the computer looking out. The pupils also talked about things they felt could be improved, e.g. arranging classroom space and desks more effectively and providing better storage for the personal stuff.

I was really excited about our talk with the pupils because it gave me a great insight into what school is like from a pupil's eye-view. This helps governors to think more clearly about how they can best support the school to get even better.

Parent Voice

As governors we also very interested in your views as parents. In January 2014 we carried out a partner survey in which many of you responded. Your main concerns with the school were;

- need for better communication,
- don't know governors well enough,
- need better information on homework and marking.

I am confident the school has responded very positively to your views and I know you have had a recent letter about what has been done to address your main concerns. For my part, as chair of governors, I take very seriously the concern about needing to know governors better. I hope this newsletter, which I want to send out to you

termly, will give you a much better idea about who we are and what we do. My aim is to make sure that parents become more familiar with us as governors and are clearer about what our job is. This, I know, will build trust and confidence and help us as parents and governors to work together to make sure St. Catherine's continues to be the excellent school it is.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind parents about 'Parent View'.

Parents and carers can give their views of our school at any time of the school year and at the time of a school inspection using an online questionnaire called Parent View.

When our school is notified of its next Ofsted inspection, parents will be invited to give their views about the school to inspectors using the Parent View online facility as this has replaced Ofsted's paper questionnaire. Please make sure we have your most up-to-date contact details.

Please register with an email address and a password at <https://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk>. Once your login has been activated, it only takes a few minutes to complete answers to 12 short questions about aspects such as bullying, the quality of teaching, level of homework, etc. There is also a direct link to Parent View on the school web site under the key information section

Your views are important in helping inspectors make a decision about our school, and to help us know what is going well and what could be improved.

If you do not have a computer or an email address or if you would like help to use Parent View, please come into school and ask at reception.

Mr P Falconbridge, Chair of Governors

St. Catherine's School
Haslewood Avenue
Hoddesdon
Herts
EN11 8HT

☎ 01992 463214

Email : admin@stcaths.herts.sch.uk