



Atwood Primary Academy Governors' Newsletter December 2018

Hello

Welcome to the first in what will hopefully be regular, if only occasional, newsletters from the Governors to update you on what we have been doing and where we see the school both now and in the future.

We are conscious that recently, parent governors apart, there has been little in the way of communication to you from the Governing Body (GB) and the aim of these newsletters will be to partly rectify that.

What is the role of Governors?

The role of the GB, and therefore the Governors, can be summarised into 3 key areas:

- To ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- To hold the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff;
- To oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well spent;

In particular Governors are encouraged to concentrate their efforts on driving the strategic direction of the School rather than getting involved in day to day operational matters—this is often easier said than done!

Another way to describe the Governor's role is that of a 'critical friend' congratulating the school on success but also asking challenging, constructive questions to ensure that the school continues to improve.



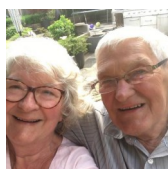
Atwood Primary Academy Governors' Newsletter December 2018

Who are the Governors?

Apart from Mr Veale who sits on the GB as Headteacher the other Governors are as follows:

Alison Morgan (Chair of Governors)	Andrew Henderson (Vice Chair)	Vincent Chan	Amanda Lawrence
Philip Luff	Neil Mackenzie	Samit Bhat	Sophie Skelley
Carl Knightly	Anna Carroll	Kerry McSweeney	Adam Ward

There are biographies of Governors on the **Governors** page of the School's website but here are two for members of the GB with very different experiences and skills.



Alison Morgan is our Chair of Governors and has a granddaughter at the School. Alison's career included financial and management accounting roles and work in Further and Higher education including responsibility for quality improvement and learning development. She is too modest to admit it herself but her former careers combined with a detailed knowledge of the School makes her an ideal Chair of Governors for Atwood.



Kerry McSweeney joined the GB in March 2018 and , as well as Mum to 3 daughters at the School, is the Equalities Governor. Kerry has spent over 20 years working with young people in her role as Assistant Vice-President & Marketing Director for Camp America where she is a Child Protection lead. Camp America is a cultural exchange organisation sending 1000's of young adults from around the world to work on US summer camps. She is passionate about ensuring that every child gets the best possible start in school and is committed to ensuring Atwood is a school where all children feel empowered and encouraged.



Atwood Primary Academy Governors' Newsletter December 2018

How have Governors contributed recently?

The following outlines just some of the activity with which the GB has been involved over the last few months.

The Governors were delighted they could congratulate the entire school staff on the recent KS1 and KS2 results in the summer term. For example the percentage of our children reaching the expected standard overall at KS2 was 83% compared to 64% nationally placing Atwood in the top 11% based on FFT). However the school is always striving for improvement and the role of Governors is to ensure that is always the case. To give one example: based on data presented at a recent GB by Mrs Gambier the percentage of boys reaching the 'Greater Depth' standard in reading , writing and overall (Re, Wr and Ma) was higher than the overall national figure but significantly lower than the percentage of our girls who did so. However, for maths, the position was reversed. The school has already started work on trying to understand the reason for those gaps and reducing them in future. Governors will be monitoring the impact of the action taken.

In 2017 the School was introduced to Barker Associates by one of the Governors and with their expert help we were able to get central capital funding (CiF) for the very first time in 2018. This meant we could make improvements to the school roof and fire alarm system. Hopefully Barker Associates can help us with further funding requests to deliver much needed improvements to the fabric of the school.



Kerry has been working closely with Mrs Townsend and Mrs Standing to submit a funding application to Aviva so we can develop a sensory/safe space room in the school. Many thanks to all of you who registered and voted for the application—we await the outcome with interest.

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Atwood Primary Academy Governors' Newsletter December 2018

Alison and Neil, together with Mr Veale, met with our local MP, Chris Philp, earlier this term primarily to discuss the funding pressures faced by smaller schools. Mr Philp understood our concerns and promised to raise the matter in Government - although he also suggested that funding allocations by the Local Authority had contributed to the problem. Mr Philp has since taken part in an interview on Lion Radio as part of our Parliament week.

What is our Vision for the School?

The School's stated Vision is to provide ***'outstanding education and care that allows every child to reach his or her potential, regardless of background.'***



Tied to that is the aim for Atwood to be in the top 20% of schools for both attainment and progress for Reading, Writing and Maths overall—as defined by the Fischer Family Trust. Our latest, excellent, results for KS2 meet that aim as did the KS1 attainment score with KS1 progress in line with the national average—but of course we want to be meeting that target every year.

The Governors have discussed the School's Vision a couple of times in the last 12 months but have decided not to amend it for now. We intend that, in the next Parent Survey, you will get a chance to have your say on what our Vision should be.

In addition to our educational goals both the staff and the Governors want Atwood to provide a range of activities and experiences to help develop all the other personal and inter-personal skills that young people need as they move to secondary education and beyond. This is obviously limited to a certain extent by the resources available—both time and money—but we generally feel that Atwood does very well in this regard. Lion Radio, FOREST School, music and a wide range of sporting activities being just some of the ways in which our young people get a chance to learn such skills outside the usual classroom setting.



Atwood Primary Academy Governors' Newsletter December 2018

Our concerns for the future

You will not be surprised to know that funding for Atwood is, as with most State funded schools, a concern for Governors. Over the last 2 years we have had to make some uncomfortable decisions—mainly around staffing—to ensure that the school has a workable budget. Mrs Groves has also worked hard to get better value for money in a number of areas—but there are only so many times you can cut costs in these ways. We know we are better off than some schools but our reserves cover less than 2 weeks of expenditure so any unexpected costs are always a concern. The School's fund raising activities and Government support for recent teacher pay increases will help to alleviate some of the pressure this year but may not be enough in the long term. We are considering partnerships with other schools (this does not necessarily involve forming or joining a Multi-Academy Trust) and we will keep you informed.

The main impact of the funding pressures has been on staff and their workloads. The Governors really do appreciate the hard work that **all** the Atwood team put in to running the school. As Governors we try not to impinge too heavily on their time with queries and overly long meetings but we are sure they will say we could do better!

As you may have seen in the national media the number of children in the UK who require additional support has increased substantially over the last few years. Atwood, like all schools, wants to ensure that those children get the help and resources they need without impacting the quality of the teaching received by other children.





Atwood Primary Academy Governors' Newsletter December 2018

How you can help

First of all thank you for all the help you are **already** providing — it really does need to be a partnership between families and the School if our children are going to get the most out of their education and reach their potential. In particular a big thank you to everyone involved in running Friends of Atwood (FOAP) and all the activities they organise on behalf of the School.

The Governors issue, through the School, an annual Parent survey and thank you to all who have replied in the past. If you have not done so before please do so in future as it really helps Governors focus on areas of concern and ask appropriate questions of the Senior Leadership Team at the school. This is particularly true for the non parent/staff governors who don't always see how the school is functioning day to day.

We have been very pleased to get several very good new Parent Governors over the last few months many of whose children are just at the start of their time at Atwood. It will obviously take a little while for them to settle into their new roles but hopefully they will be able to contribute to the School for many years to come. We are always looking for Governors, usually with specific skills (such as Finance or Health & Safety). If you see a Governor role advertised in future and think you can contribute please do apply.



Finally, best wishes to you and your families for a happy Christmas and a safe, healthy and successful 2019.

Governors of Atwood Primary Academy