



Atwood Primary Academy Governors' Newsletter July 2019

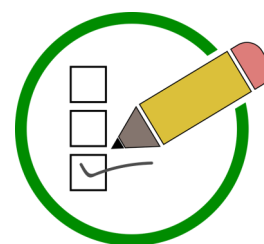
Hello again!

The summer holidays are now upon us and another school year seems to have flown by. This is the second Governor newsletter in which, following on from our first effort in December, we give examples of the role of Governors in the life of the School and show how we try to make a difference.

Any feedback on the newsletter would be much appreciated and can be sent to Neil Mackenzie (neil.mackenzie@atwood.eu). In particular Neil would like to hear your views on how we might better explain the role of Governors as the recent parent & carers survey showed a reduction in those of you who understood this.

Parent & Carer Survey

Thank you for your taking the time to complete and submit your views via the recent Parent and Carer survey which, this year, was organised by one of the Governors, Carl Knightly, together with Mrs Standing. Gauging your views is really important to the school, and as the school senior leadership team (SLT) plan future learning activity, your input via the survey is both valued and taken seriously.



As you will have seen from the results of the Survey which were shared via email, we were encouraged to see your views that 90% of parents and carers would recommend Atwood, and that there was a 21% increase in parents and carers view that pupils are well behaved. Following the results of the last Survey the SLT have focused on general behaviour and bullying so it was good to see a broad view from parents and carers that there has been significant improvement in this area.

Of course there were and are areas for improvement which were suggested, both in the survey and in the comments that accompanied the Survey - and we take these seriously. All comments as well as data, have been reviewed and they were direct contributors to the SLTs priorities for the next academic year.

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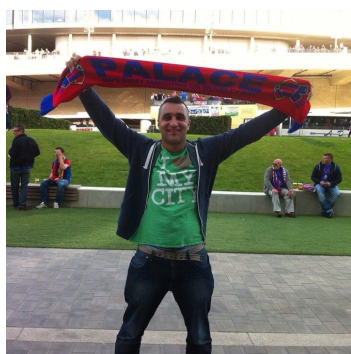
These priorities were included in the results which were sent out via email, but were also pinned up on the windows of the gym for parents and carers to see when walking past that area of the school. We aimed to present the results and following priorities in a clear way that compared the results from last year, but also highlight your current views in terms of successes and areas for improvement. We hope the format was helpful, but always welcome feedback.

In all areas of the Survey, whether positive or less so, the school will always strive to improve, and as a Governing board, we will always support the SLT in their plans to continue to aim for excellence.

The Parent Survey is an important tool for Governors at any school as we are always encouraged by Ofsted to obtain information and views from sources other than the Headteacher or the SLT. So if you did not complete the Survey this time please, please do so next year—it is a relatively painless (and free!) way in which you can support the School and your child's education.

Who are the Governors?

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.



Carl Knightly

I was elected a parent governor at the beginning of this academic year, joining the Governing Board (GB) shortly after my son Jacob entered Atwood in Reception. I work in the charity sector leading an organisation that seeks to support older people, and I am passionate about building communities and all the benefits that can bring.

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With a background in strategy and communications, I previously worked as a Senior Manager in the Public Sector, in a variety of roles, including working with the charity Barnardo's and sitting on the board of the West Sussex Safeguarding Children board.

Having had some high points in work and away from work in recent years (my petition to save Cbeebies that was signed by 132,000 people in a couple of weeks was fun), I am currently most proud of winning the recent "Dads race" at the reception classes fun day. In part due to an overly competitive nature but also a lot of luck, I am now immediately retiring- not least as it took me about a week to recover!

I am enjoying being a Governor and I value the opportunity to provide both support and challenge, as the SLT continue to seek to drive the school forward, always with our children at the centre. If you would like to know more about being a Governor, please do ask.



Neil Mackenzie

I joined the GB in July 2016 having taken early retirement/redundancy after 32 years working for HSBC. I finished my time there supporting the finance and budgeting processes throughout Europe—essentially producing a lot of spreadsheets (fun times!).

I have a long term interest in the charity sector (holding a post graduate diploma in Charity Finance) and have previously been treasurer of a small mental health charity.

Apart from the education sector my main interest today is researching the First World War and I was involved in the research, redesign and rededication of the memorial at Trinity School.

More and more is expected of Governors these days but the education sector is a very interesting area so, if you get the chance to be involved, I do recommend it.



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Premises and the Atwood estate

A few years ago the Governors and Mr Veale all agreed that the premises and estate at Atwood were in need of some considerable attention after many years of significant under investment.

We want to ensure that children are safe, happy and are achieving really well at school and that there are high levels of parental satisfaction and staff morale. Achieving these goals is easier in buildings that are safe, bright, warm, well cared for and purposeful. In addition, learning should go beyond the classroom and Atwood's extensive grounds provide a wealth of opportunities for learning and play from football to Camp Atwood. However, use of this outside space also needs a lot of hard work and consideration.



Much time and effort has been spent in improving the look and feel of the building in order to directly improve the learning environment for children and staff. To date, focus has been on the redecoration of the KS2 side of the building, including extensive re-flooring and painting of the communal areas, Computing Suite, Junior Hall, Music Rooms, Lion Radio and Children's Kitchen. Our attention recently shifted to the long awaited redecoration of the KS2 classrooms and, with some of our Capital funding, replacing carpet with hard-wearing Altro flooring—which is also easier to clean. We have decluttered the classrooms, and taken down many of the display boards at high level in favour of a more light and airy feel. The aim is that, by July 2019, all of the KS2 classrooms will have been finished and thanks are due to our Premises team of Steve and Ian who have saved us a lot of money by doing all the painting themselves.

Next on the agenda next is the Infant Hall. The leaking roof in this area meant that redecoration would have been wasteful and we had no funds to fix the problem. Thanks to an introduction from Neil Mackenzie (our Finance Governor) we secured the help of Barker Associates who, with considerable input from Steve and Mrs Groves, were able to secure a Capital Improvement Fund (CiF) grant from the DfE.

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This not only enabled us to fix the roof but also meant we could implement a much needed upgrade to the fire alarm system.

We are aiming to fully decorate the Infant Hall, re-site the projector and screen and investigate the feasibility of adding an internal door by Blue Class to improve heat efficiency and security. Beyond this, our attentions will then turn to the decoration of the Year 1 and 2 classrooms- including their shared areas. This is going to be a huge job, as these rooms have never been redecorated or improved since the early 1990s.

Sadly, Atwood's bid for Capital Improvement Funding was not successful this year. We bid for monies so that we could improve the perimeter fence and install CCTV across the site, but it was not to be. Also on the agenda will be upgrading the double glazing and doors. These are around 25 years old and becoming tired but, without capital grants from central government, there is simply not the money to carry out these improvements.

Did you know, Atwood's usual Capital Allocation is less than £10k per annum—this is all we get to spend on our huge site?

Finally, it is worth mentioning some of the other projects that have taken place.

Last year Chancellor Hammond announced his 'little extras' budget pledge for schools, and this was a welcome boost as it meant that we were able to update the children's tables and chairs in some classrooms and commence the roll out of 4K smart TVs.

We converted one of our long and thin cloakrooms into a DT room, with sink, electrics and network points, which now houses the children's DT tools and materials. Our thanks go to the families who kindly donated their time and resources to make this happen.

Outside, with considerable help from FOAP, we have improved the football goals and improved the Trim Trail. Thank you to everyone who was involved in these projects.



We are getting there, but there is much more for the School to achieve working in partnership with parents, carers and Governors.

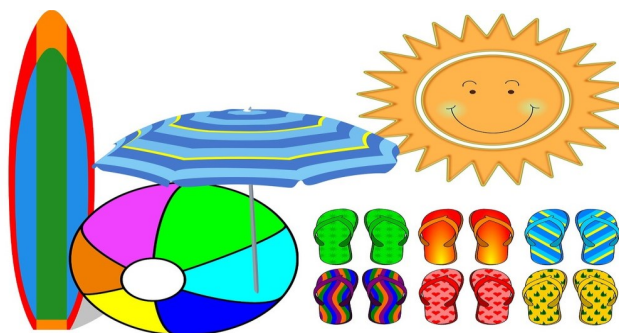


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Coming up next term

There will be 4 main areas of focus for the Governors over the next 12-15 months:

- i) Making our governance more effective so we contribute to the School as best we can without interfering in day to day activity. Our support team at Octavo have just completed a light touch review of how we are working and that will no doubt lead to a number of changes.
- ii) Improving Governor 'visibility' and accessibility to parents and carers..
- iii) Recruiting new Governors to bring new blood into our team, to broaden our range of skills and experience and to reduce the workload of existing Governors.
- iv) Supporting the School in managing it's finances—this is always an issue but even more so at present with uncertainty surrounding the continuation of substantial funds from September 2020 onwards.



Finally, best wishes to you and your families for a happy, relaxing and safe summer. In particular our best wishes to those young people moving on to Secondary school and those members of staff who are moving on to other roles or retiring. Special mention is due to Mrs Sachs who is retiring after 22 years. Many thanks to all of you for your contributions to Atwood and please keep in touch. We really look forward to seeing the rest of you again in September.

Governors of Atwood Primary Academy