



Learning for the Head, Heart and Hand



Dear Parents/Carers/the School Community

As we all crawl to the end of term, I'd like to introduce you to the Governing Board at Lady Joanna Thornhill. The Governing Board are a mainly invisible but important part of the school community. We have three key functions- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction, holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils and overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

We are made up of 9 people which include the Headteacher and a staff governor. Many of us are parents with children at the school but we all bring something different to the Board with our different professions and skill sets. Our decisions are focused on looking at strategy, vision, performance and finance. We do not get involved in the day-to-day decisions which fall into the operational side of the school.

We were extremely busy last academic year and the most important thing we had to do was to appoint a Headteacher, which we successfully did. We give thanks to our Interim Headteacher Ms Adams of Goat Lees, who stepped into the breach and managed the school fantastically together with our incredible Deputy Headteacher Mr P and Senior Leadership Team, during a time when the school's systems were down and through no fault of the school's. Ms Adams was in constant conversation with our current Headteacher to ensure that Ms Foster hit the ground running when she joined us in September.

As much of what we do is behind closed doors in meetings, I thought I'd share with you some of the exciting things we have been up to over the past months. A very large part of what we have had to do, particularly over the past 6 months, has been to look at policies to make sure our school is fully compliant with legislation and its statutory duties. These are no mean feat; lots of reading is involved and we have to constantly challenge and hold the school to account.

Much of this challenge takes place outside of meetings. Each Governor has a role and an area which fits their expertise. We carry out monitoring visits specific to our role, visiting the classrooms, ask probing questions of the children, staff and Senior Leadership Team. We write up our visits and set targets and goals for future visits.

Another part of our job is to consider quotes and approve spend as soon as we are sure we are getting best value for money. Many of you will not have noticed but towards the end of the last academic year, we approved a significant sum of money to change all the lighting in the school to LED lighting which was carried out over the summer holidays. Not only have the children and staff all benefitted from a brighter, lighter environment to learn and work in, but this has a positive impact on our environment and commitment to reducing our carbon footprint.



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In addition, this year already, we approved monies to be spent on replacing the carpets in the KS1 areas. This work was undertaken in the October half term and has made a huge impact on the learning environment in those areas. We are due to consider quotes for replacing the carpet in the rest of the school and hope to see the same positive impact over the next few months.

We have approved monies to be spent on resurfacing part of the playground where the equipment is and this work will begin as soon as the weather is suitable.

We have also approved the budget setting aside monies for new whiteboards, laptops, tablet computers. A lot more spend is planned, which, although I cannot share details with you at this stage, will be very exciting for the children.

In case you think our work is limited to fun-approving-spend, some Governors were also part of the Ground Force team who volunteered their time on two days helping in the Quiet Area of the school, clearing away leaves, digging out the bushes, ready for it to be planted in!

As part of our commitment to openness and transparency, we look forward to updating you again at Easter with more of our adventures!

Finally, I want to give thanks to the school community: the children who have been wonderfully resilient despite the challenges they have faced over the past 20 odd months; the parents, carers who have all been so supportive of the school; the Friends who have been working tirelessly to raise money for the school; my fellow Governors and their impressive commitment to the school, in total volunteering hundreds of hours over the past year; the CARE Foundation and the Thornhill Trust for their unrelenting support; to Mr P for his 14+ years of service to the school and to wish him all the best for his next adventures, and last but not least, all the staff, Senior Leadership Team and Ms Foster whose dedication to the education, safety and well-being of children of Lady Joanna which has been unwavering.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a restful New Year

Rachel Chan

Chair of Governors