

# InTouch

## **GOVERNORS' NEWSLETTER**

### **STOP PRESS...**

- After two years as Chair of Governors, Chris Chappell has stepped down and is replaced by Sarah Stoney who was voted in as new Chair at the last Governors' meeting. We would like to say a really big thank you to Chris for all the time, effort and commitment you have given to Pirton School.
- A huge well done to all the staff for your hard work this year. Two independent review visits in the last two terms, which looked at school performance, found that Pirton School is making excellent progress against its targets for the year. More on this later...
- We held a successful Governor/Headteacher/Parent surgery this term. Keep an eye out for the time of the next surgery in the school newsletter, and if you haven't already, please drop in if you have something you want to discuss.
- Next term we will be actively looking at how the school communicates with parents, and vice versa, and how to improve the school/parent relationship. If you have any thoughts or ideas on this please get in touch with us  
[governor@pirton.herts.sch.uk](mailto:governor@pirton.herts.sch.uk)

### **Joint Annual Review Visit**

Every year, Pirton School receives termly visits from our Hertfordshire Improvement Partner. This is a service

that we buy in from the County Council to help us review how we are doing. It provides some external evaluation so we can be sure that we are not over, or under playing our progress during the year. The autumn term visit reviews and analyses the school's performance data and sets new data and development targets. During the spring term visit, the Improvement Partner normally spends the morning with the school staff leadership team, through the books and other evidence of pupils work across the school. Following this there is a review meeting to discuss the morning's findings which a school governor normally attends with the staff leadership team. The summer term visit is a review of the targets set during the year.

We thought it would be useful to provide parents with feedback from the spring and summer term meetings. The feedback received was extremely positive.

One of our school priorities for this year has been ensuring consistency across school. Maths and literacy books were scrutinised and in the Improvement Partner's view they revealed significant strengths in terms of presentation, reflecting positive attitudes to learning by pupils and the level of challenge being set for pupils. There was strong evidence of consistent marking across the school and opportunities for children to extend their understanding further through this. There was also a close match between our Pupil progress data and the evidence in the literacy and

maths book seen. This provides us with some confidence that as a school we are accurately evaluating the progress our children are making.

Another priority has to been to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good across the school, with a significant proportion of teaching being outstanding. It was acknowledged that good progress had been made towards this priority and teaching within school promotes high expectations. Planning was described as rigorous and well differentiated, which supports the learning of mixed-age classes particularly well.

It was acknowledged during the review meeting that there were a small number of parental concerns in relation to some aspects of behaviour in school. However, the Improvement Partner's view, following consideration of books and progress, was that there was nothing in the evidence to demonstrate any detrimental impact on pupils' progress.

Following this visit, a progress review was carried out on 4<sup>th</sup> July, with the

senior staff and a representative from the governing body present. The feedback was, again, very positive particularly with regards to evidence of consistency. Evidence indicates that systems are embedded in the school's on-going practice, resulting in greater accountability, commitment and confidence amongst staff.

High quality teaching is reflected in 2012 attainment and progress data. There is evidence that the most able pupils are being stretched and that there is good progress in all year groups, particularly in mathematics, which was a priority area for development. Feedback from the review is currently being included in the school development plan for 2012-2013.

We would like to thank the entire school staff who have worked extremely hard this year in taking us forward to meet our development targets. The incredibly positive feedback received from our Improvement Partner provides strong evidence of the effort and hard work staff right across the school have put in this year.

## **Good 2 Outstanding Programme**

As you will probably be aware this year, we have been taking part in the Good 2 Outstanding Programme for Small Schools, being run by Hertfordshire County Council. The programme has really helped us focus our priorities in terms of areas for school development over the last year, and real progress has been made in these areas. Although the programme only runs for a year, it does not end for us with the end of the programme. This is really only the beginning. The work we have done this year will feed into our priorities for the

next academic year, and those that follow, as we continue to strive towards being an outstanding school.

One of our areas of focus over the next year will be parental engagement and how we can improve the two way relationship between the school and parents to the benefit of the children. We are open to all ideas and suggestions on how we can take this area of work forward. Please do contact us with any thoughts on this at [governor@pirton.herts.sch.uk](mailto:governor@pirton.herts.sch.uk)

**PROFILE**

**Nicola Robbins**

(parent governor)

**Occupation:** Full time mum, previously government press officer

**Family:** Married to Matt. Children: Emily, 7, currently in yr 2 at Pirton School; Lauren, 4, will start reception at Pirton in September, and Sam, 2, who has just started Pirton pre-school.

**Reason(s) for joining the Governing Body:** I wanted to use my skills to make a positive contribution to the village, and at the same time exercise my brain cells as they have been rather neglected over the last 7 years!

**Did you know?** I once appeared in two episodes of the BBC Children’s TV show Byker Grove!

.....

**Changes to the monitoring system**

As you know from the last issue of ‘In Touch’, OFSTED has recently changed the way it inspects schools. Inspections are now much tougher and the overall effectiveness of a school is judged on just four factors:

- Achievement
- The quality of teaching and learning
- Behaviour and safety
- Leadership and management

In response to this the governors at Pirton School have decided to change the way in which we monitor the progress of the school against its targets.

The purpose of monitoring is for governors to gain greater knowledge and understanding of the school to help with our strategic role in setting targets and making sure the school is meeting them.

Previously governors have been linked to a specific academic subject and have worked with subject leaders in measuring success, and observing lessons across the school once or twice a year.

However, from September, governors at Pirton will be linked to one of the four OFSTED judgements in teams of three. We will still be making visits to school and looking at the children’s work but we will be able to observe all aspects of school life on any given day and gain a greater understanding of how the school is doing in each of the four areas, making sure we are on track to meet the high targets we have set.

We are also planning to increase our visibility by getting more involved in the general life of the school by taking assemblies and joining in staff meetings on a more regular basis. This kind of involvement is as important as taking part in lessons as it builds relationships with staff and pupils, which is vital for governors if we are to do a good job.

Not only will these changes make it much easier for governors practically, as we can gain a wealth of information regardless of what subject is being taught, but the remit is much broader, allowing for knowledge to be built up of the school as a whole rather than of a specific academic subject.

## About... the Resources Committee

The Resources Committee covers both financial and staffing matters within the School. This ranges from the budget planning and monitoring through to setting effective personnel policies for staff. The Committee is made up of the Head Teacher, School Business Manager, and up to three Governors including the vice-chair.

The Resources Committee monitors the school's financial well-being both in the short and long term, and provides guidance to the Head teacher and the wider Governing Body on financial matters. It sets financial procedures for the way the School runs its finances, ensuring that the appropriate controls are in place over expenditure. It considers the way that the School allocates funds, and makes recommendations for the wider governing body to discuss.

.....

Over the last year the Committee has undertaken work that has included reviewing proposed areas of major expenditure (e.g. IT equipment) and the way that future pupil numbers may impact the financial health of the School. Particular attention is placed on the budget process both in developing the budget for the School, but also monitoring spend against forecast and ensuring effective financial management during the academic year.

The school is actually given two budgets annually – a “revenue” budget used to fund the day to day expenses of the School including things such as pay and heating, and a “capital” budget used to fund items of major expenditure such as IT equipment of significant building work. The Committee review the funds allocated to the school each year and prepare a budget proposal for discussion by the wider Governing Body.



## Contact Us

The best way to contact us is via our email address:

[governor@pirton.herts.sch.uk](mailto:governor@pirton.herts.sch.uk)

We welcome your comments and suggestions, including on:

- ideas for improving how governors and the school communicate with parents
- the aims and objectives of the school
- targets that have been set to achieve these
- the school's budget
- the content of this and future newsletters