

Prior Heath Infant School

Parents/carers,

Prior Heath Governing Body

I hope that your children are enjoying their time at Prior Heath and that you, as parents/carers, are feeling supported by the school. During the last couple of years I have seen significant developments within the school and feel that we are better placed to continue the high level of education for your children that has been embedded during the last 15+ years!

There are a couple of groups that are actively supporting the school. Most of you will be aware of the PTA who do a fantastic job fund raising for much needed resources within the school, however, many of you may not be aware of the role that the Governing Body do.

Essentially the Governors, as a body, have 3 key roles:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
- Holding school leaders to account.
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

The Governing Body is made up of 12 members from across different disciplines and backgrounds, including Local Authority, Co-opted, Parent and Staff Governors. Over the summer we reviewed our efficiency and have made some significant changes to our structure. Traditionally we have met as a Full Governing Body (FGB) 4 times per year with 3 committees meeting termly. In addition, we would have completed a 'learning walk' for about an hour per Governor per academic year. Whilst this 'ticked the box' in terms of Governance we didn't feel that it added significant value to the school in order to help the children. Consequently, we have moved away from committee meetings and extended our time in the school with two governors spending a full morning in the school each half term, all of which is now documented more thoroughly and shared at the FGB meeting. The major changes include:

- Being available to meet parents before school.
- Specific focus on Governor role topics (e.g. finance, phonics, technology, published materials, etc.).
- Meeting children to hear the 'Children Voice'.

Governor monitoring visit – 29th September 2022

Report from Martyn Keates (Chair of Governors):



At the end of September Paul Heagren (Vice Chair) and myself undertook the first monitoring visit and it was insightful to speak with a selection of parents about the school and their experiences. Some feedback included:

- The children and the parents were exceptionally happy with the school and were extremely thankful for the personal support they had received.
- Parents don't know what the Governing Body is (hence this communication!).

Phonics

One of the roles that I undertake, as the governor responsible for the curriculum, includes monitoring the implementation of the new phonics scheme. This was put in place during the summer term last year for Reception and I observed an incredible amount of enthusiasm and engagement from the children. Phonics is a fundamental part of the school curriculum and we have supported the school in this development, with the expectation that we will see continued improvements in attainment during the next couple of years (as our post-COVID children move through the school having started this new methodology).

Report from Paul Heagren (Vice Chair of Governors):



As part of our monitoring role I took the opportunity to be in school for a half day with a particular focus on safety, security, safeguarding and resources / finance.

Having been a governor since 2012, I have attended the governing body meetings and have been in the school many times but this was my first formal review post COVID. I made sure I had time to see and speak to staff and children alike and met parents at drop off outside Reception classrooms.

I was expecting great things, but I was pleasantly surprised how impressive the care, attention and dedication that the staff have for the children and how that has fostered such an amazing creative environment for the children to thrive.

I was able to speak to a number of children who all seemed happy, enthusiastic and desperate to talk. The answered questions very intelligently around on line safety, respect for other children and their trip to Marwell Zoo last year.

I had the opportunity to attend the celebration assembly with the Mrs Chivers and saw the children happy and well behaved. All around the school the staff seemed knowledgeable, attentive, engaged with a clear plan and objectives.

Our monitoring visits will continue – two Governors twice a term – so please feel free to say hello at drop off and ask us any questions or give us any feedback.

Moving forward

The next governor visit takes place on Thursday 10th November. Please come and speak with the attending governors who would love to hear about your experiences of the school. Our actions have a positive impact on the school and you will recognise that we are normal, everyday people who are looking to improve as many aspects of the school as we can.

Yours sincerely,
Mr. M. Keates
Chair of Governors