

Fawbert and Barnard Governor Newsletter 2022

Review of the Year 2021/22

Last academic year was the first school year that many pupils at F&B had experienced without interruption from coronavirus and it is impressive to see that in spite of the disruption to learning over the past couple of years, that the children are still making the progress that would be expected of them and caught up quickly. However, it was also great to see that staff went beyond this and were able to offer additional assistance to children who were particularly affected by either COVID itself or by the prolonged absence from school.

As many parents will be aware, the major role for Governors last year was the recruitment of a new headteacher. Governors delegated the recruitment to a small panel of Governors, including the Chair, and we were supported by our School Improvement Partner, a former headteacher herself, and by a representative from Herts for Learning leadership recruitment team. The recruitment day was exhausting for both candidates and the panel and included a number of practical tests such as meeting with children and lesson observations as well as an intensive interview. Governors on the panel were thrilled to recommend to the wider Governing Body that we appoint Mr Wells, and we believe that he's already demonstrating to us all that he's living up to the expectations he set out when we interviewed him!

Sadly, Vice Chair of Governors, Lucy Strutt resigned at the end of last term and I wanted to wish her all the best in the future. Likewise, huge thanks to Sarah Brown and Neil Bramley, two outgoing parent governors: Sarah has spent a lot of time working on our growing area and has been an immense support to us all with her wellbeing expertise, and Neil took on the huge task of chairing the Resources Committee and the role of our Data Protection Officer. We have been joined by two new parent governors, Megan Sutton and Andrew Dongworth, and we look forward to working with them over the course of their term of office: they have already stepped up to take on roles and I am sure that pupils and staff will be seeing them in school shortly.

Sarah Evans, Chair of Governors
Chair of Governors

Help us identify future governors!

The Governing Body consists of a number of types of Governor: Parent (5) and Staff (2; Head and one other); Local Education Authority (1) and Co-opted/Community Governors (7). Our co-opted are sometimes former parent governors who stay on the Governing Body when their children leave the school (see Lesley's story overleaf), or other individuals with an interest in supporting the school such as former teachers or those with an interest in education.

We are always interested in harnessing the talents of any potential Co-opted governor but rely on word of mouth and recommendation for this. It would be great to involve some younger people (former students, although they must be over 18) or anyone with an interest in the Sawbridgeworth community or the school itself. If you think you know someone who might be interested, please feel free to speak to a Governor or Mr Wells or contact the chair at sevans@fandb.herts.sch.uk. We'd be happy to share more information about what being a Governor means and what the role involves.

Future Challenges for Governors

As part of the role of Governors, we support the headteacher in financial plans for the future and these in particular will be a huge challenge this academic year. Schools are funded by Government through the Local Authority per head of pupil, with some additional money available where a child is classed as pupil premium or has a specific SEN need. F&B is very fortunate that the school is full so funding is maximised, and we are able to raise a small amount of additional funds through charging for some nursery hours and from hosting an after-school club.

There are increasing pressure on budgets this year due to cost of living issues; the cost of fuel being the main issue here, although we're experiencing issues with maintenance costs too. Whilst Governors fully support the pay awards made to teaching and non-teaching staff by the Government and Local Authority, the impact of these and the other increased costs upon the budget, is likely to place a lot of pressure on the budget because there is currently no proposed increase to the funding being offered per student head. Hopefully this will be something that the new Government will be looking into and increased funding will happen, but if this does not occur schools will be impacted. F&B's current budget is healthy, but the increasing costs could impact in later financial years, so Governors and Mr Wells will be working hard to minimise future impact in their plans, as well as ensuring every penny counts in terms of current spend.

Another thing we will be monitoring is the new government's approach to academisation. This was something that was very prominent a few years ago but the impetus appeared to fade until recently, when the Government stated that all schools should be part of an academy by 2030. Governors will be monitoring the approach of the new Education Minister to academisation and will thoroughly explore all options available to the school should the policy be maintained.

Hopefully sharing the above information with parents will give some understanding of how governors are involved in the strategic oversight of the school rather than its day-to-day running.

Meet one of the Governors...

Lesley is a long-serving governor who is currently subject link for PSHE, RE and Wellbeing

Hi, I'm Lesley Hines – I'm a Co-Opted Governor at Fawbert and Barnard School and have been a member of the Governing Body for 11 years.

My 2 daughters went to F&B and Reedings, the eldest at 22 is now working in London and the youngest is currently studying at Leventhorpe for her A Levels. I'm a single mum and work full time as a Retail Account Manager.

I joined the School Governing Body as a Parent Governor whilst my youngest was still at the school. I was a stay-at-home Mum and wanted to support the school, learn more about how the school operates and if I'm honest – keep my brain active by learning something new. Having worked in commerce in the private sector I had no real understanding of the education system other than learning as my children moved through the school. I'd really encourage other Mums (or Dads) to get involved - I truly believe anyone can contribute regardless of age, experience or background. It's a commitment of a few hours a month, more if you have the time.

Governors are the biggest group of volunteers in the country – it's a very rewarding way to give something back to our community and with the fabulous Team at F&B it's fun too.

Feel free to contact me via the school if you'd like to talk more.



Lesley Hines