

the Governors' Newsletter



Welcome to the governors' newsletter.
It gives a snapshot of what we've been doing recently.

The beginning of the school year is always a time for updating our improvement priorities; ensuring we are focusing the school's efforts and resources on what matters most.

Read on for more details of this and other work that has been going on this term.

'Why do schools have governors?'

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland every state school must, by law, have a governing body.

Their job is to provide strategic management to the school, acting as a 'critical friend', supporting staff but asking the difficult questions too.

Their 3 key functions are:

1. To ensure the school's strategic vision is clear. Asking, "Why are we doing it like this or not like that?"
2. To hold the Head teacher accountable for the educational performance of pupils. Asking, "Why did group x do better than group y? Why are we in the top 10 %, not the top 1%"
3. To oversee the budget, making sure all money is well spent. Asking, "What benefit do we get from spending £x on that?"

They are not involved in the day-to-day running of the school.

School Improvement Plan (SIP)

The SIP is the summary of our improvement priorities for the year. We review school's results and progress from previous years, combine this information with our aspirations for the future and input from outside agencies such as OFSTED and Derbyshire County Council then summarise our conclusions in this plan. This helps ensure that time and resources are used in the best way.

We have three main points in our plan this year:

1. Maths – to continue to raise achievement in each year group. This is continuing the work the school has undertaken since 2018, when changes in the curriculum were introduced. In particular we are focussing on reasoning skills; ensuring that children can apply their maths knowledge to real life circumstances. We also wish to stretch those of a higher ability as they progress up the school.

The other two areas relate to the curriculum. We will be reviewing the curriculum across the school, ensuring it is broad and balanced. This work is split into two areas:

2. Ensuring the teachers that lead the particular parts of the curriculum have the resources, time and training they need to do this effectively.
3. Reviewing and developing the school's curriculum using the 3Is framework that is now recommended by OFSTED:
 - Intent: clarifying the end knowledge we want each child to have at each stage
 - Implementation: ensuring it is planned, taught and assessed effectively
 - Impact: checking the effect the syllabus has on the children's knowledge and skills

This is a welcome move from OFSTED to broaden focus beyond reading and writing.

The governor role in this process is to approve the validity of the year's plan (this happened in the Governors meeting on 23rd September) and then to check on progress through the year.

The was started with a Maths focus at the beginning of November, see below:

Maths – How are we doing?

We were joined this month by our Derbyshire County Council school improvement partner, Alice Littlehales for a 'Maths morning'. She reviewed the current situation with Claudie Patterson, our Maths subject leader, then spoke to children, looked at their books and sat in on some lessons before feeding back to Simon Beahan and Jane Taylor (Chair of Governors) in the afternoon.

Alice was very supportive, both of our analysis of our strengths and weaknesses, and of the plans we currently have in place. She could clearly see evidence of high quality learning taking place. One new point raised was that children typically did not see themselves as being 'mathematicians' in the same way that they had happily described themselves as 'writers' or 'readers' when she had previously discussed the topic of literacy. They also did not appear to notice the maths knowledge that they used in other subjects. This has given us food for thought... watch this space.

Finance – Schools Forum

George Wolfe, chair of our Resources Committee, has been elected as a representative of primary schools on the Derbyshire County Council's Schools Forum. The main purpose of the Forum is to consult all sections of education in the county on financial issues. The main issue is the National Funding Formula fixed by the Department of Education in London. The main elements of this are a basic allowance for each School plus an amount for each pupil. The County Council has a limited right to make small adjustments and retain some funds to deal with higher needs pupils and other local issues. The overall proposal this year is an increase.

So far as Curbar is concerned, the increase is significant and means that the threat of further cuts has been removed at this time, subject to maintaining the existing number of pupils in future years. Money remains tight however and funding from the PTFA and others will be needed to pay for any major improvements.

Recruitment

Interviews for a High Level Teaching Assistant took place on 25th November. We were delighted by the calibre of applicants, and most especially by our chosen candidate Jen Callard, whose skills and experience will be a wonderful addition to our team. Jen will be based in the Beehive, working primarily with the Reception children. We look forward to her starting in January.

We are also in the process of recruiting a Teaching Assistant whose main responsibility will be to work alongside those children who require extra support. We hope to also have this position filled by January.

GDPR

David Jackson, our governor with particular responsibility for GDPR, met this month with our Business Officer Suzanne Cass to review progress. External reviews have also taken place. Overall it is agreed that we have a good understanding of GDPR requirements, though we still have some processes to document. As GDPR gets embedded into the education system as a whole, DCC have updated their GDPR guidance, which should help to reduce the overheads associated with managing it.

Training

All governors took part in a Safeguarding training session at the beginning of the year, ensuring they are up to date and aware of their responsibilities to keep our children safe.

Two Governors, Jane Taylor and George Wolfe, went to the Derbyshire County Council Autumn governor strategic briefing, covered topics including OFSTED, National and Local Education news, High needs provision in Derbyshire and a Safeguarding update.

Governor vacancies

We currently have a vacancy for a governor who is not currently a parent at school. We would particularly be interested in hearing from applicants with a finance background, however the main criteria are enthusiasm and a commitment to the values of Curbar Primary.

We will be holding an election for a parent governor next year.

If you, or anyone you know, would be interested in either of these roles please speak to any Curbar governor or contact Jane Taylor at jane.taylor@curbar.derbyshire.sch.uk

A reminder of who's who and their particular responsibilities:**Standards and Curriculum Committee**

Jane Taylor, chair of governors, SEND, Pupil Premium

Helen Walton, chair of committee

Alison Thorpe, vice chair of governors

Angie Cottle

Linda Berry

Simon Beahan

SIP responsibilities

Maths

Helen Walton

Role of Subject Leaders

Linda Berry

Resource Management Committee

Jane Taylor, chair of governors

George Wolfe, chair of committee, Safeguarding and Anti-bullying

David Jackson, GDPR

Alan Cain, Health and Safety

Simon Beahan

Don Leitch

Curriculum

Angie Cottle

Behaviour for Learning and Welfare

Alison Thorpe

You are always welcome to email governors.
Each has an email address with the following
format:

firstname.surname@curbar.derbyshire.sch.uk

