

Governing Body End of Term Report – December 2016

Let me start this report by sharing two particular highlights of this winter term. I am sure that all who attended either of the school Christmas concerts will have been impressed with what they saw and heard. So much work goes on behind the scenes to prepare for those occasions and I thank in particular Mr Rowlands, Miss Devonshire and Mrs Pike for their part in such successful events. Similarly, at the 'Lights of Love' event which traditionally heralds the start of the festive season in our community we saw our school choir make a lovely contribution to an excellent evening. I am particularly grateful to those members of staff who were present to support our young singers and who helped make it such a rewarding experience for all.

This has been a busy term for the school's Governing Body (GB). It will come as no surprise, I expect, that much of our attention these last six months has been focused on continued efforts to move the school forward. We got a very welcome endorsement of those efforts back in October in the visit from Ofsted, who confirmed that '*Senior Leaders and Governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement*'. However, we all recognise the importance of continuing to have high expectations of further improvement. Governors have also spent more time in school and have been especially keen to talk to pupils and to learn how they feel about the changes that have been put in place. It is always very rewarding to spend time talking to pupils across the year groups and listening to their feedback about the changes made within the school. It's been pleasing to hear their own perceptions of improvements in pupil behaviour, a reduction in low level disruption and how the new Marking Policy is helping them with their own learning.

Mrs Gant has been working hard with Middle Leaders to drive up the standard of teaching and ensure a consistency of 'good practice' across the school. I thank her for her drive, energy and strong leadership and commend all the teaching staff for the way they have responded to the challenges placed before them and the huge amount of work that has gone into delivering the improvements we are all seeking.

Of course, it is imperative that we sustain the pace of improvement and, after a very well deserved and much needed holiday, I am sure they will come back refreshed and just as determined to continue on our journey back to 'Good' and beyond. Our pupils deserve nothing less.

Sandra Jones, who chairs our Curriculum committee and has considerable experience of Ofsted and their expectations, has played a particularly important role this term, not only in chairing that committee, but in providing some very valuable support and guidance to the Senior Leadership Team at Edwinstree. My thanks to her for all she continues to do for the school.

Many of you will be aware that Mrs Gant took up the one year appointment as our Headteacher at the start of the school year. Early in the New Year, we will be looking to make a permanent appointment to that post and the process to make that happen will begin very shortly. Mrs Gant has already confirmed that she will be one of those candidates, though we both recognise that it is in everyone's interest to follow an open and transparent process and invite applications from all suitably qualified candidates.

We have two new Parent Governors who joined the Governing Body this term. I am grateful to Caroline Spacey and Paul Ryman, both experienced Governors from previous school settings who have much to offer as we refresh the makeup of our very own 'Team GB'. They replace Alan Hammond and Claire Markey whose four year term of office came to a close recently. My thanks to them both for all their hard work in support of the school. Clare Markey, in particular, made a very important contribution in helping to keep our young people safe. She was tireless in her efforts over a number of years, to reduce the risks faced by our pupils whilst crossing a busy Bowling Green Lane. It was Clare who worked with the Highways Authority to reduce the risks from traffic and increase pupil awareness of basic road safety. We all owe her a great debt of gratitude.

The Governing Body has its own 'Action Plan' to improve the way we go about our business and fulfil our responsibilities. We're well on the way to completing all of the recommendations which came out of our independently conducted Review of Governance. You will find more information about that on the school website which also provides information about the Governors and their roles and responsibilities. My thanks to Susan Chiapinnelli, who joined the Governing Body in the summer and who has taken on the role as our communications 'lead'. As a whole school, much work has gone into trying to improve our communication, particularly in that vital link to parents. We hope you have noticed an improvement, but once again, any more feedback on how we can improve in that area would be welcome. Contacting me via ChairGB@edwinstree.sch.herts.uk is one way of doing that, but so too is dropping a note to the Headteacher.

My apologies if this end of term report has been something of an 'epic' and my thanks and congratulations to any of you who have made it this far! It only remains for me to, once again, thank all our teaching and support staff for their hard work this year. I hope that all of them, as well as our pupils and their families all enjoy the end of term celebrations and I wish everyone a happy Christmas and a healthy, prosperous New Year.

John Boulter
Chair of Governors
Edwinstree Middle School