



Annual letter from governors to parents - 2017

Dear Parents and Carers

Welcome to the 2017 annual letter from the governors of Longstone CE (VA) Primary School. This letter briefly introduces the current governors and gives a summary of some of the work we have done during the 2017/18 academic year.

Who are we?

We currently have ten governors on our governing board. We are: Mark Taylor (Chair), Chasca Twyman (Vice-chair), Gemma Harvey (Head Teacher), Claire Colver, James Croft, Al Darlow, Matthew Dennison, Jo Mizon, Sharon Spibey and Dan Williams. A full complement would be twelve so we have two vacancies. We are all volunteers; many of us are parents of children at the school or staff.

What do we do?

A school governing board has three primary duties:

1. To set the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school.
2. To hold the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school.
3. To oversee the financial performance and ensure that money is well spent.

We are not involved in the day-to-day management of the school. Operational decision making is performed by the Head Teacher and senior leaders. Instead we are focused purely on the strategic and the longer term. (For more detailed information on what we do and the role of each committee, please see the 2016 annual letter on the school website <http://www.longstone.derbyshire.sch.uk/governors.html>).

What have we done in the last year?

The governing board collectively volunteered around 500 hours of their time (approximately 60 working days) during the 2017/18 school year. Below is a selection of some of the notable decisions, actions or events we were involved in during the last twelve months:

- In September 2016 we had our Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS). This is like an Ofsted inspection but with a more spiritual focus; all Church of England schools are inspected. Several governors were called upon to be interviewed by the inspector. The school received an overall grade of 'good', with 'outstanding' scores for Leadership and Management, and RE.
- We approved the move to an online payment system (ParentPay) which should hopefully make payments easier for parents.
- Governors contributed to the priorities on the School Improvement Plan. This is a document that contains the main short- and medium-term targets for the school.
- We examined the effectiveness of the new whole-school spelling programme. This was introduced by the school to improve results in writing.

- We checked how the school is spending pupil premium money to make sure that it is correctly targeted at closing any gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. We check that the spending plans are reasonable and are likely to produce the hoped-for effect on academic outcomes.
- We approved the staff performance management process and the resultant pay progressions.
- We analysed the current provision of before- and after-school clubs and benchmarked ourselves against other schools, both in terms of hours provided and pricing. This led to changes to the provision and price structure for the 2017/18 year.
- We contributed to the new e-safety working party which is looking to audit the school's e-safety policies and practices.
- We approved staffing changes for the 2017/18 year which included the recruitment of a new teacher (Mrs Robinson) to cover the maternity leave of Miss Bell and a new music teacher to replace the departing Mrs Durkin. Governors were part of the recruitment panels for both new appointments.
- We performed analysis on historical and projected pupil numbers to better understand how the school should be structured in the years to come.
- We began a strategic discussion about the school premises and potential future improvements.
- We scrutinised the wider school curriculum and broader education beyond English and Maths.
- We began a discussion on the future of our swimming provision. We will be consulting parents on this subject in the next school year.

Finances

Given the extensive news coverage on the topic, it probably hasn't escaped your attention that school budgets are under growing pressure at the moment. School income per pupil is currently planned to remain constant but costs will inevitably continue to go up (as prices and salaries rise). Around 85% of an average primary school's costs are its staff, so making efficiency savings with the remaining 15% has a limited impact.

Longstone is no different to any other school in feeling this financial pressure. Added to this, our school population is gradually decreasing (part of a demographic trend in our area) which will reduce our total income. The school finances have been well managed for the last few years so we are in the lucky position of having a secure base to move forward from. Our Resources committee will continue to focus on the difficult job of plotting a sustainable financial future whilst maintaining all the things that are good about our school.

Interested in becoming a school governor?

We have two vacancies. Being a school governor can be a very interesting and rewarding role, allowing you to contribute to the continuing success of a vital part of the local community. We are always looking to expand the range of skills and experience on our governing board, so if you are interested in becoming a school governor, or would just like to know more, please get in touch.

Contact details

To contact the governing board please feel free to speak to one of us in person, contact the school office, or email us at: governors7@longstone.derbyshire.sch.uk

Enjoy your summer holidays!

With best wishes,

The governing board of Longstone CE (VA) Primary School