



YORKE MEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL GOVERNOR NEWSLETTER

Summer Term 2017

Letter from the Chair of Governors

Dear Parents, Carers and Staff of Yorke Mead,

When I sat down to draft this letter it was SATs week, those days in the second week of May when our Year 6 pupils were engaged in days of national testing. We want Year 6 to have done well. First and foremost because it is important for them to demonstrate what they can do in key aspects of English and mathematics before they head off to secondary school. But also because their performances on these tests, along with national assessments for other year groups, are important to how we are judged as a school. Many thanks to all staff, pupils and parents for the tremendous efforts that go into ensuring that our children leave us with the best possible skills in English and mathematics. That they are as ready as can be for the adventure that is secondary school.

But Yorke Mead is not an exam factory. As chair of governors I am delighted that we continue to strengthen our provision of a broad and balanced curriculum for our pupils. This is exemplified by our commitment to: outdoor play and learning including Forest Schools; Philosophy for Children; French; music; and the after school clubs. And our curriculum is complimented by a strong and positive mental health and well-being agenda. Systematically supporting our children in developing the personal and emotional skills to cope in a challenging world with strategies such as Mindfulness.

So when I sat down to analyse the returns from the recent parent questionnaire, knowing all the efforts that have gone into improving our school, I was delighted to see yet another rise in the numbers of parents who are very pleased with the work of the school. Many thanks to all parents who found time to complete the questionnaire. The detailed responses contain many ideas that will be invaluable to governors in seeking ways to support the trend of improvement, and yes a small number of parents have raised concerns and we will redouble our efforts to address those.

Over the last five or six years, school leaders and governors at Yorke Mead having been working together to assemble a jig-saw puzzle incorporating a wide range of improvements. We have done this while expanding the school and developing new facilities. For now that process is largely complete, and the emphasis has shifted to ensuring that these improvements are fully effective.

As the school has changed and improved so has governance. The expectations of governors have increased and we have set out to raise our game in line with this. While we have seen a number of changes in the membership of the governing body I am very

pleased that we continue to secure a team of very high calibre with a wide range of professional skills. We have set out to become as highly trained as possible. This has meant all members of the governing body regularly attending external courses in addition to the provision of termly training for all members of the governing body on site here at Yorke Mead. This year we are prioritising our need to understand fully all of the statistics around pupil performance. We have had one training session on this and another is scheduled for later in the summer term. And as part of our commitment to continuous improvement we have been changing some of our organisational arrangements. So for example we recently merged our Resources and Personnel sub-committees with the aim of improving efficiency.

Another change for governors is the degree to which we are having to monitor the external environment. For example we are keeping a close watch on what is happening around the development of academies. If at some point it is in the best interests of our pupils then becoming part of an academy trust is something that we will consider. Up to now being part of Hertfordshire Local Authority has been highly successful and in an ideal world we would not want this to change.

Finance is an area where we are aware that challenges are set to increase. A progressive tightening of school budgets is well underway. While we have a strong track record of excellent financial management this does not mean that some difficult decisions may not be needed in the future.

Leading Yorke Mead is a partnership between school leaders and governors. At Yorke Mead we have an excellent partnership with Ms Pollard and her senior team based on a strong shared vision. In Ms Pollard we are fortunate to have such a strong and visionary leader. We are pleased that the high quality of her work has been recognised by the local authority.

I close by thanking everyone involved in the school community for continuing to make Yorke Mead a great place to learn, to play and to work.

Yours faithfully,

Will Connolly
Chair of Governors

You can email us at: governors@yorkemead.herts.sch.uk
Or leave a message at the school office and we will contact you.

