

# Governors' Newsletter



## Message from the Chair

This has been an academic year unlike any other. It seems almost inconceivable that our last newsletter, published at the beginning of the year, contains no mention of COVID-19. The contrast six months on is stark, but we are hugely pleased that all of our pupils have had the opportunity to return to school, see their teachers face to face, and engage in activities and learning with their classmates ahead of the summer holidays.

We know that pupils who have been able to spend just a few days in school this term have experienced significant benefits to their emotional wellbeing and we anticipate that this time in school will also stand them in good stead when they return to classrooms in September. However, we also know that not every pupil has been able to attend and would like to reassure the families of these children that considerable effort is going into ensuring that all pupils are able to reintegrate safely, smoothly and happily on their return.

Thank you to all those in our wider community who have supported the school throughout this crisis. As a Governing Body we have sought to be as transparent as possible in terms of our decision making and hope that our communications to the community have provided both reassurance and explanation where necessary.

A massive thank you must go to our Headship Team who have worked ceaselessly and tirelessly throughout. Their dedication has been simply phenomenal. Similarly, a huge thank you to our brilliant teaching and support staff. We are incredibly proud of how they have continued to respond and adapt to the constantly evolving situation and of the enthusiasm that they have demonstrated.



*The ESPS Governing Body working during lockdown*

As we look to next term, we remain hugely upbeat about the future for all of our pupils. There are undoubtedly further challenges ahead, but our core purpose of nurturing happy, confident children remains unchanged. Regardless of how the COVID-19 situation evolves, we will continue to prioritise the health, safety and wellbeing of our pupils and staff, and will work to ensure that our pupils continue to aim high and achieve in their academic endeavours, developing a real and ingrained love of learning along the way.



I wish you all a happy, healthy and restful summer and a well-earned break from home learning.

Helen Wrigglesworth, Chair of Governors

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# Learning during COVID-19

None of us could reasonably have predicted the turbulent 2020 we have had in terms of teaching and learning at East Sheen Primary, an experience we have of course shared with every school in the country and across much of the world. Different schools in different communities have responded in different ways, as would be expected. ESPS has had to show great resilience and adaptability in order to make sure the learning needs of all children are met, while ensuring that the health of the children and the community at large is protected.

The school has had to make a lot of difficult decisions, regarding closure, home learning, and return to school, acting upon an enormous amount of guidance from the government and the local authority. Some of this guidance has been clear and straightforward, some of it confusing and contradictory. In meeting these challenges, the Governing Body is absolutely confident that at the heart of these decisions has been the best interests of the children and their families.

The school has made good use of existing resources, produced a lot of its own new resources, and

Above all, teaching is about communication and interaction, and we recognise that the children have



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*Year 5 Fairtrade fashion show, during COVID-19*

missed their teachers as much as their teachers have missed them. Excellent use has been made of resources such as Class Dojo and Tapestry to try to maximise this communication. But it is clear that technology, however useful and advanced, is no substitute for face-to-face interaction. That is why the school was so keen to get every child back in school for a period of time towards the end of term. We have seen how proud the children have been to put their uniforms on again and to regain some sense of normality. It is also clear that children have had different learning experiences outside the classroom, spending more time with family, and this has been positive.

As a Governing Body, we will be working closely with the Headship Team to set priorities for the next academic year, to ensure that the impact of disruption to their education is minimised. This will be key as we aspire to provide the very best education for all our children in the year ahead.

As a reminder, if you would like to know more about the academic standards and expectations at ESPS, the governors have produced a "FAQ" document giving a lot more information. This can be accessed by clicking [\[here\]](#)

*Andrew Miller, Teaching and Learning Committee*



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## *Remote learning platforms*

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discovered still more that have been made available through the Department of Education and the BBC. It has been clear that there is a wide range of home learning situations across the school, in terms of the amount of time that parents/carers have been able to devote to home learning, and the resources that are available when a number of children within families are sharing devices. The school has had to accommodate this range and has met the challenge well.

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# Wellbeing and Engagement



*Lockdown mural in the new build*

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East Sheen Primary is a school where the wellbeing of pupils has always been championed. We embrace the belief that children learn best when they are happy and engaged and taught by similarly happy and engaged teachers.

Throughout lockdown, the health, safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff have been the priorities that have

## Behaviour in School

One of our key roles as governors is to ensure that we are enacting our key policies and procedures so that we run the school in the most effective and efficient way. With that in mind, the Governing Body last academic year introduced a process of conducting audits within the school to reassure us that we are doing what we say we are doing. This might sound quite formal, but it is a way for governors to visit during the school day and meet with teachers, pupils and staff.

Before lockdown (which seems like a long time ago), I conducted a mini audit on our behaviour and anti-bullying policies. This involved spending time across all areas of the school and taking the opportunity to speak, in depth, with pupils about their experiences. I sat down with a group of Year 6 pupils and was very impressed by not only their understanding of the policies, but, more importantly, that they were enacting them. They showed real concern for fellow pupils and understood the need for good behaviour. I also spent time in the playground over lunch and again was impressed by conduct and behaviour. That is not to say that a playground at a primary school is not a bustling and noisy place but the children played together and I saw first-hand one or two lovely examples of different year groups interacting.

Part of what makes our school so special is the supportive and caring atmosphere that we have. This was very clear during the audit. It is now more important than ever that we continue

informed all decision-making processes; however, paradoxically, remote working has fundamentally challenged the ability of schools nationwide to support the wellbeing of pupils. In fact, the COVID-19 situation has presented a considerable learning curve, not just in terms of understanding how to deliver remote learning in an accessible way, but also in terms of how to achieve remote engagement.

The Headship Team have listened carefully to the range of experiences and difficulties faced by families in our community and have constantly developed the way in which teachers connect and interact with pupils remotely. The school has also sought to cherry pick from the experiences of other schools, whilst continuing to act on the best guidance available. As a result, there are undoubtedly positive practices that the school will carry forward that will help support and promote wellbeing and engagement in the future, lockdown or no lockdown.

More information about Wellbeing at ESPS is available [here](#) on the website.

*Helen Wrigglesworth, Chair of Governors*



*Saying thank you to our bin men*

to be caring and supportive as we begin to return to a new normal. We as a Governing Body will continue to support the school to tackle the inevitable challenges that will come with opening the school in the new academic year.

Emmet Regan, Children, Families and Community Committee

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## Parent Satisfaction Survey

The School Governors operate a continual programme of dialogue with the school community. The Parent/Carer Satisfaction Survey is one of several methods used to capture feedback and we place great importance on your responses. It has been completed annually since 2005 and provides invaluable year-on-year comparative feedback which the governors analyse and evaluate. The survey findings contribute to policy and direct actions within the school and these are published in the Governors' Newsletter and on the school website.

Due to the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across our lives, the governors decided that conducting the survey would be inappropriate this year, being an extra task for busy parents and with little value as a year-on-year comparison. The usual satisfaction survey will be reinstated next year, circumstances permitting. Meanwhile, the school is instead continuing its dialogue with parents by launching a survey to help better understand the detail of how families in our community have coped with the home learning experience. We believe it is important that we gain as much understanding as possible of what has worked well, and less well, in lockdown. We very much hope that we will not need to return to a full lockdown, but the feedback from this survey will help to inform how remote learning is accessed and delivered in future, so please do take the time to share your experiences with us.

Chris Styles, Children, Families and Community Committee

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## Reopening school after lockdown



*Y1 learning outside*

It has been fantastic to see the majority of ESPS children return to school over recent weeks. The positive atmosphere at pick-up and drop-off amongst children, teachers and parents has been wonderful.

While it may not quite be school as they knew it before, the children have transitioned back amazingly well and have demonstrated great positivity and resilience. They have clearly loved seeing their friends and teachers again, and the teaching staff have been delighted with how seamlessly the children have returned to school. They have been extremely well behaved and settled quickly back into learning.

Nearly 80% of Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children returned to ESPS, which is high compared with levels reported nationally, and we would like to thank our parent community for their support.

The governors are particularly pleased that all children have had the chance to come back ahead of the summer holidays and to finish off their year with their current teachers. We wish our departing Year 6 cohort all the best as they move on to their new schools and hope that restrictions continue to be eased as planned to that we can welcome everyone back after the summer.

Helen Haworth, Teaching and Learning Committee

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# Air Quality

Throughout lockdown, the school has continued to use diffusion tubes to monitor the levels of nitrogen oxides present in the air in and around the school. Results continue to show pollution levels in the playgrounds remain comfortably below the  $40\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  legal threshold, with significantly lower levels recorded in the classrooms.

Air pollution is a problem across London and it's important for our community to recognise that in our locality, the greatest exposure anyone is likely to experience will most probably occur whilst travelling on the South Circular or other busy roads to get to work, to school or to the shops. It is important that we persist in promoting awareness so that individuals can make informed choices about how they travel and take steps to reduce their exposure.

We continue to reiterate the following advice when travelling to and from school:



*Year 6 at the rear of the school during lockdown*

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- *When walking, cycling or scooting: use a route that avoids busy roads*
- *Walk, cycle or scoot to school. Exposure to air pollution can be higher inside cars*
- *Don't idle*
- *Enter/leave school by the closest entrance and keep off the road as long as possible*
- *Use the Sheen Playground "pen" in the mornings and please make space for others*
- *Keep away from the kerbside. It's safer too!*

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# Finance

Another year, another school budget!

The school's financial year, just like the government's, runs from April to March every year. This year has been no exception especially with the added consideration of the COVID-19 issues. Once again, all places in Reception for the coming year have been offered (there is also a waiting list) which means the financial planning for this year has been a more straightforward task than some previous years with an initially balanced draft budget submitted back in March.



However, that was before the virus decided to mess with everyone's plans for the year. The Headship Team has worked incredibly closely with the staff and the school's contractors to ensure that there will be no disruption to the necessary services, such as catering, cleaning, sports provision, breakfast and after school clubs (when allowed again) both during the normal term time and with the additional services required to be provided during the holiday periods.

Given the uncertainty and potentially complex arrangements when schools return after the summer

break, the decision was taken to recruit new staff with significant experience to ensure the school continues to provide an excellent educational environment across the school during these difficult times.

These changes will inevitably come at a cost, and whilst some of these additional costs should be recoverable from the local authority, it is not yet clear exactly what costs these are or when they will be repaid. It is also worth pointing out that there has still been no sight of any of the additional education funding that was promised last year. That said, the governors have therefore taken the decision to again utilise some of the school's financial reserves to fund a small deficit budget before even beginning to consider any form of cutbacks in resources or equipment. Unlike last year where the deficit was a direct consequence of the government's funding formula, over which we had no control, this has been a very measured decision taken in the best interest of the school.

Once again, we have to give praise and a big thank you to the stellar efforts of the PTA who through their (and of course your) fundraising last year provided

significant assistance to the school in providing additional resources and IT equipment.

For those interested in contributing financially directly to the school, please consider the school fund. Details about the fund and how to contribute can be found [here](#).

Graham Dyer, Resources Committee



*Year 6 on the trim trail and astro*

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## Safeguarding

Just before lockdown Mr Easeman signed East Sheen Primary up to the National Online Safety Certified School Community Accreditation in online safety. This course was made up of several modules of videos which provide an understanding of the risks children face online, how schools can recognise those who might be at risk, and practical ways to support pupils. It also included useful case studies and explained terminology in a clear way. This accreditation shows the high level of training staff and governors have in online safety and the importance we place on this area at East Sheen Primary.

The course was taken by Mrs Page, ten teachers and one governor (Lindsey Kavanagh) and we are very pleased to have received accreditation on the 14<sup>th</sup> June.

More information about safeguarding at East Sheen Primary is available [here](#) on the website. You can also find useful tips on e-Safety which complement the annual e-safety talk for parents on the website [here](#).

Lindsey Kavanagh, Children, Families and Community Committee

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## Governor Information

In September, we hope to be in a position to be able to run parent elections to elect a new parent governor. If you are interested in participating, please watch out for relevant Parentmails next term.

You can find out more about the work of the governing body and about all the ESPS governors on the school website [here](#). For further information about the board and our activities, you can also get in touch with us via our clerk at:

[clerktogovernors@eastsheen.richmond.sch.uk](mailto:clerktogovernors@eastsheen.richmond.sch.uk).