

Governors' Newsletter



The climbing frame back in action next to our new hall

Message from the Chair

We finally have our school back! The building work is now complete and it's been worth coping with: we finally have an assembly hall where we can accommodate the whole school and our classrooms are now larger and fit for 21st century education. We have to thank Liz, Debbie and Rebekah, the Leadership Team, for managing the project so effectively while still ensuring our children receive a first class education,

and also the builders, Thomas Sinden who have worked really hard to limit the disruption to our normal working.

We finally received our official accreditation as a Thinking School from Exeter University. The governors recently took a learning walk around the school and were delighted to see the thinking school concepts in action from Reception to Year Six. The Pupil Leadership Team

were especially keen to discuss how the Habits of Mind were helping them both in learning and life generally. We hope this will stand all our children in good stead for their future. In the meantime we won't be standing still and are now looking for new aspects of Thinking Schools that will help the children. Watch this space!

Two of our governors stood down this term: Ben Merrick, a parent governor, is leading the government's response to the fallout from the Caribbean hurricanes and can no longer commit the time required. Dawn Clacher, a staff governor came to the end of her term. I would like to thank them both for the hard work they put into their roles.

We recruited three new governors at the start of the term, Adelaide Lee-Warner, Becky Prowse and Mark Pring and you can read more about them in this newsletter. I would like to welcome them to our governor team and thank them for the time they have already given in getting up to speed.

We have decided to reduce the number of elected parent governors from four to two, and co-opt the other two, in order to ensure we can recruit for the skills we need. We feel it is important to continue with four parent governors on our team to maintain their input to our decision making. We will shortly be recruiting for the parent governor vacancy left by Ben so if you are

interested in getting involved in the strategic oversight of our school please watch out.

Our governors have recently been assigned their link classes so you may hear about our visits from your children. I recently met my Year 6 classes and told them about the work of the governors, and they had some excellent questions for me. I look forward to continued visits throughout the year.

I would like to thank the PTA for the incredible efforts they put into fundraising and supporting the school. The summer and Christmas events raise enormous sums that make a real difference, and I am delighted that the PTA are funding the installation of a "Green Wall" to help reduce the effects of pollution from the main road.

Finally, I would like to thank you, the parents and carers, who are such an important part of our school community. I hope you have a happy Christmas and New Year, and I look forward to working with you in 2018.

Raz Khan, Chair of Governors

A final note about the build



The final completed classroom

It was wonderful to observe the children's reactions as they saw their new hall and climbing frame for the first time last week! We are very impressed with the high quality finish of the new building work. Every classroom is light and spacious and the hall is cleverly designed; not only is it light and airy but it can also be split to provide two areas for learning activities. Having the climbing frame behind the hall, adjacent to the allotments and away from the road is also a great improvement.

The contractors worked very closely with the school to try to keep disruption to a minimum during the 18 months of building work and we managed to keep the school timetable unchanged and almost all activities continued as usual. We were able to use the hall at Richmond Park Academy to ensure last year's Year 6 did not miss out on their famous drama production-an important school tradition-and to use our astro field for whole school gatherings to mark special occasions. The staff and children have shown great flexibility and resilience as the build

progressed around us, but everyone is delighted with the end result and all are now enjoying the space and new facilities on offer. It is very special being able to meet as a whole school again in our hall! We are also delighted that we can once again invite parents to enjoy the KS2 Christmas performance at school. An official opening is planned for 26th January 2018.

We were delighted that Thomas Sinden's site manager said that we are the nicest school he has ever worked in.



A trumpet assembly in our new hall

Lunchtime

Now that our hall is complete, we will be relaunching the changes we had made to the lunchtime experience.

We can now sit the children in smaller groups around the tables and they have more space to move into their places. Already it feels calmer and they are enjoying the view out over the play areas.

We will once again be encouraging children to take responsibility for their dining area and to think about others who share the same space. They will be expected to show good manners and keep their place clean. We are very pleased with our new chef, Julia, who has quickly fitted into the school team and is getting to know the children.



Year three at Laleham Farm



Together again in our new hall

Thinking School Accreditation

We were delighted to gain accreditation as a Thinking School in early November. The 8-page accreditation report summarises the assessment against 15 criteria for which a wide range of evidence was submitted.

The report is very positive, stating that “The head teacher with the governing body, have made a formal commitment to cognitive education as part of their development priorities. They view nurturing the thinking abilities of all their pupils as not only an essential component in raising standards of learning and teaching, but also as part of their wider responsibility of developing caring, thinking adults of the future.”

Governor Learning Walks continue to confirm that Thinking School practice is embedded and children are eager and able to explain how the maps, hats and habits of mind support their learning.

There is a common language associated with Thinking Schools throughout the school; children in Reception are already using the maps and challenge cards linked to the habits of mind and books and displays show progression of thinking skills right up to Year 6.

The school’s next step on this journey is to develop strategies to monitor and assess the children’s progress in thinking ability and reflection.

In February 2017, when the most recent list of accredited schools was published, there were only 50 schools/federations in the UK with recognised Thinking School status. This is a milestone along the East Sheen Primary School journey and we will continue to develop our Thinking School practice further as we set ourselves new and challenging targets to drive school improvement onwards.

Wellbeing Award for Schools



Reading Twins

We have committed to applying for the Wellbeing Award for Schools. Wellbeing has always had high focus at our school and when considering the criteria required for this award we realised that we already have much excellent practice in place.

We are now in the process of collecting evidence and developing new initiatives to promote and support wellbeing throughout our community.

We have always understood that good emotional and mental health are critical elements for successful learning and that focusing on wellbeing has a positive impact on pupil outcomes.



Playground buddy

Staff have already attended training in trauma and counselling and a play therapist has just started in school. Our reading dog, Tango, continues to visit and we have a number of "buddy" systems operating throughout school. We are mindful of staff wellbeing too and try to arrange social events and occasional treats to maintain a happy and positive working environment.

The School Vision

A reminder of our school vision:

Our purpose is to nurture happy, confident children who think deeply about themselves and others in preparation for the challenges ahead.

We do this by inspiring and celebrating:

- curiosity and love for learning
- collaboration and kindness
- creativity and enthusiasm
- resilience and achievement

And the snappy distilled version which the children have embraced:

Happy, Curious, Resilient and Kind



Thinking Schools Display

Governor News

Ben Merrick

Ben resigned as a governor in November. He had served on the Children, Families and Community Committee as well as the full governing body since his election as a parent governor in May 2015. His experience and knowledge of channeling lines of enquiry through local authority and government departments has been invaluable to the board. His articulate appraisal of situations and experience of contributing to and chairing boards will be much missed. We thank Ben for his efforts and wish him very well.

Dawn Clacher

Dawn served her full term as a staff governor between November 2013 and November 2017. As a longstanding member of the Children, Families and Community Committee, Dawn contributed her invaluable knowledge and understanding of children, staff and parents in the East Sheen Primary community (as well as her good humour) to meetings, helping to ensure that discussions and actions remained pragmatic and focussed on delivering the best possible care and education to the children in our school. Dawn's commitment to ESPS is unrelenting; not one to rest on her laurels, she has now taken on the role of staff liaison to the PTA! Thank you Dawn.

New Governors

Amy Reynolds



Some words about Amy

I originally became an Associate Governor, to help from a school governor perspective with the build the school were undertaking. Towards the end of my year I was asked if I would become a Co-Opted Governor, staying in the Resources Committee for a further 4 years. I wanted to be a governor so I could give something back to a school that I think is fantastic. I have 2 children at ESPS, my daughter is in year 5, and my son in year 1.

My role is interesting; along with my colleagues I get to act as "critical friend" to the head teacher to help her improve through support and challenge. The resources committee are responsible for ensuring the school budget is spent as it should be and so we challenge on all aspects of the budget from the number of teachers per pupil, to the cleaners. It's a big responsibility and I'm lucky to be in a committee with very experienced, long serving members who can guide me as I learn how to challenge effectively. We also monitor the Head Teacher setting her objectives and managing her against those.

I didn't realise how involved the role was before I became a Governor. ESPS are so fortunate to have a large governing body, with plenty of experts in the mix to ensure we can fully support the school.

Adelaide Lee-Warner



I am really interested in education and have worked and volunteered in this area in a number of different ways. I have been a mentor in the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience programme and a volunteer with Refugee Action Support Programme, helping to settle new refugees into the education system in Australia. I previously have worked as a secondary school teacher in Economics and History, both in the UK and Australia. I currently work at the London School of Economics as a Graduate Selector and I am looking forward to taking on a different role in a school.

When I first met Raz and Liz, I was really impressed with the way they talked about the school and it really made me eager to be a part of the community. I feel really strongly that education should also be about developing skills. I was impressed to hear about the Thinking Schools Accreditation and think this is a great indication of the dedicated nature of the staff and governing body to furthering the students' minds and skills. I am looking forward to contributing to ESPS and it continuing to be such a great place of students to learn and develop.

Becky Prowse



I am delighted to join the board of Governors at East Sheen Primary School. As a Marketing professional I have been working in education for the past 5 years with a strong focus within secondary and further education. When the opportunity arose to join as a Governor I was thrilled, keen to develop my knowledge in primary education and utilise my skills and training in safeguarding. I am enthused by the sense of community at East Sheen Primary School, and look forward to learning more as well as getting involved!

I graduated from Southampton Solent University with a BA (Hons) in Media Culture and Production. Alongside my current position in school liaison at a further education college based in West London, I am training to become a Careers Advisor. I currently live in Notting Hill with my partner and have a keen interest in fashion, gardening, photography and hula hooping!

Mark Pring



As a parent of two teenage children who loved their time at ESPS, I was delighted to re-join the school as governor in October 2017.

I am a disputes lawyer in the City, which means that I have to go to Court a lot. My work has also taken me to many countries, including a two-year stint living in Dubai (where the weather was definitely better ...).

I believe that my legal experience will help me as governor in many ways. In my daily work, I need to apply the law in an organised and efficient way on behalf of my clients and I can see that this mirrors the approach that the governors take. Alongside the senior leadership team, they focus on what their “clients” - in particular, the children - actually need.

As a member of the Resources Committee, I see this in action. We help to oversee the financial management of the School, which means that we have to make sure that its money is well-spent - definitely the case with the splendid new hall!

I am a season ticket-holder at Fulham FC, which can be painful. I also love rugby, tennis and reading history books



The back of the school, now complete



Jan Regan

Unsung Heroes

Jan Regan is the School Business Manager and works diligently behind the scenes to ensure the school budget is managed effectively, staff and bills are paid, contracts drawn up, policies in place and adhered to and that the site is safe and meets health and safety requirements.

At a time when school budgets are under pressure, Jan has ensured that any efficiencies and savings that can be made are implemented and that we can continue to resource our school within our budget. Jan is a highly valued member of the school team.

School Finances Benchmarking

Graham Dyer, Chair of Resources

Back in the Governors' summer newsletter I explained some of the key financial issues that this school faces as the Government and Local Authority both continue to tighten their purse strings in the light of the current economic and political climates.

Rest assured, nothing has changed significantly since then, unfortunately no new sources of income have been uncovered, but then neither have any significant new costs.

We are always looking at effective ways to help the school's business management team run the school in a cost efficient manner. One of the tools commercial businesses use is to benchmark their costs against similar organisations and then understand and learn from the reasons behind those differences. The Dept of Education has endeavoured to provide a similar tool for us so that a school can compare its costs with other schools in the country based on a wide variety of criteria such as: size, location, catchment, inner or outer metropolitan areas etc. This has been available for several years but it has required all schools, irrespective of their accounting system, to capture their revenues and costs in an identical fashion across the country. Needless to say this has taken a

considerable time for schools to appreciate the need for this rigour and understand the benefits this analysis provides and it is only in the last year or so that the information generated has begun to make useful sense.

So what, I hear you ask? How does this provide any benefit to ESPS. Well it allows us to compare our costs against similar schools. The costs are provided both in absolute quantum but more importantly as a cost, or income, per pupil. This then enables us, where we see significant discrepancies, to make enquiries as to why this is so and to put in place measures to take advantage of the methods or buying power that others have uncovered to the benefit of ESPS and its finances. Having looked at many of the options, we have come to the conclusion that the most meaningful and practical comparison is compare ourselves against other schools in the Richmond locality; we know we are all trying to produce meaningful information and our contacts with the other leadership and business management teams means that we can ask searching questions and we know that they will share real information with us as to the reason behind the variances in these costs!

When we recently ran some benchmarking comparisons for 2016/17, it made interesting reading and I thought it worth sharing with you some of the key information this comparison was telling the management team:

Teaching costs – East Sheen has the one of the lowest overall teaching staff costs, critically important as this is the biggest single cost to the school, at about £1.95m this is 75% of our total costs!. The larger schools tend to have lower costs per pupil anyway due to the spread of the headship teams across more pupils, but more important is the teaching structure we operate. Here at East Sheen our teachers are carefully chosen to provide a balance of skills from the more senior experienced members of staff through to the most promising NQTs, and it is this deliberately chosen range of experience that helps us keep control of these costs.

Resources – Overall East Sheen is just below the average across the locality, and like many other schools shows a 5% decrease against the previous year costs. However looking only at the ICT Learning resources, East Sheen is higher than most others but this is explained by our purchase of iPads last year. That shows we have good control of the general learning resources and the administration supplies that make up the bulk of the remainder of this cost.

Catering – the net cost of providing school lunches at East Sheen is the highest in the locality. Whilst

the actual cost of the lunches is reasonably consistent across the sample, East Sheen has maintained the lowest price to its parents for the meals. By comparison other schools prices range up to £2.50 per meal and at the moment there is no intention to markedly increase prices!

Income – in total our income per pupil hits the average across the locality. However this masks a number of issues. Renowned for our capability in the SEN arena we have the specialist unit and by consequence also have the highest SEN income. However other schools have materially more income from their lettings and from other grants that they have obtained. As a consequence of this information we have given ourselves the challenge of finding new sources of grants and external donations (not I hasten to add, donations from parents) to attempt to bolster our income.

I hope this helped you understand a bit more about the workings of the school finances. As a governing body we are always happy to answer any general questions about the costs of running the school so that you better understand the challenges we face on a continuing basis.



Year Three at Laleham Farm