



Striving for Excellence

Wentworth Primary School

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Headteacher: Mrs D. Dack

Deputy Headteacher: Mrs J. Tinsley

8th September 2022

Dear Parents/Carers,

It has been some time since I last wrote to you to explain the work of our governing body and the issues that have occupied our time and efforts. Firstly, I would like to provide a brief explanation of the role governors perform in the state run education sector.

In England, most schools have a governing body with the composition of that governing body being dependant on the type of school they are. Governors are volunteers (usually with an interest in education) and are there to provide a level of accountability for their school.

Wentworth is a maintained school meaning it is controlled by the local authority (Essex County Council) and is funded from general taxation, which is passed by the government to Essex and then to the school.

As a governing body, our main tasks are:

- to work effectively with leaders to communicate the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school and develop a culture of ambition for the school and its pupils
- provide a balance of challenge and support to leaders, understanding the strengths and areas needing improvement at the school
- performance manage the headteacher rigorously
- understand the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on the progress of pupils currently in the school
- ensure that assessment information from our leaders provides governors with sufficient and accurate information to ask probing questions about outcomes for our pupils
- ensure that the school's finances are properly managed and we can evaluate how the school is using its funding - specifically, funding for disadvantaged pupils, sport premium and special educational needs
- ensure that the school is transparent and accountable, including in recruitment of staff, governance structures, attendance at meetings and contact with parents

As a maintained school, Wentworth has co-opted governors (from the local community), four parent governors elected by parents, one elected staff governor, a governor nominated by the Local Authority and the Headteacher.

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The governors meet as a whole group every term and also have two committees which meet every term. One committee deals with matters relating to Pupils, Personnel and Performance and the other deals with Finance and Premises. Both committees report to the main governing body. Some of our governors take special responsibilities for such things as pupils with special needs, health and safety and safeguarding. Governors often visit the school to look at areas of interest and report back on their findings. When we need to recruit new members, we are always mindful of the range of skills and expertise needed by our governing body.

Much has happened since my last letter, so now is perhaps the time to reflect and to look at the challenges we are likely to face over the next few years.

- The pandemic brought a huge number of challenges for schools. We felt that Mrs Dack and her staff did all they could to keep our children learning throughout this period. Often advice from Government arrived at the last minute which did not aid effective planning. A good example of this is the numerous re-workings of the necessary detailed risk assessments during lockdowns and returns with bubbles. Our staff often had to deal with confused systems put in place for things like school meals which led to increased administrative burdens to get what our pupils were entitled to. It should be remembered that the school hardly ever shut down as it was always open for certain categories of our pupils. The school was able to take many valuable positives from this period particularly in the areas of setting up for remote learning, changes to communication with parents and how to make that more effective. The Governing Body are really grateful to Mrs Dack and her staff teams for the work they put into trying to ensure our pupils continued with their education, albeit in ways they were not used to, such as working in bubbles. We are now seeing the benefits of the work put in on remote learning and catch-up and the pupils and staff are to be congratulated on the good set of SATs results announced in July.
- As many of you will have noticed in recent months, there has been a huge amount of building work taking place on our site. Given the age and construction of our buildings, many areas were well past their expected life span resulting in roof leaks and a constant programme of planned maintenance to try to make good the building. Fortunately, we were able to convince Essex County Council that we needed a considerable capital investment to make our buildings fit for purpose. This has resulted in a new roof and windows to the main building. The next stage of this investment programme is to make the building much more energy efficient. The Finance and Premises Committee has worked closely with our Business Manager to approve and monitor the building work. Another important area has been the development of our IT infrastructure within the school with improvements to our networking capability and the replacement of dated hardware.
- The Governors have been so grateful for the efforts of our wonderful PTA and their efforts to raise funds for agreed projects in the Library, Computer Suite and Swimming Pool.
- The Governing Body continue to keep a weather eye on national developments in education policy and regularly consider both national and local proposals for the organisation and deployment within the school sector.

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- The picture for the school (and all schools) over the next few months and years will be problematic. The main concern will be our funding and the likelihood that it will fall far short of ever increasing costs. A great deal of work has been put into securing the best energy deals we can get in the current situation. We continue to try to secure best value on all of our contracts.
- We have always supported the head and her staff in trying to offer our pupils a broad-based curriculum and experiences that give them a good platform to develop their knowledge and skills to enable them to have a good transition to the next phase of their education and that they are happy and flexible learners.

Finally, we would like to thank our staff for the efforts they make on behalf of our pupils and community, as well as the parents and carers who join with us in support the school and what it is trying to achieve.

Yours sincerely,

Geoff Skewes
Chair of the Governing Body.