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October 2016

Governors' Newsletter 2016/2017

Chiltern Edge is now well in to the new school year; the Year 7s are settling in and the Year 11s are working hard in their final year.

Last year we enjoyed another brilliant show "Footloose". We saw some incredible dancers, some of whom have gone on to a new National Dance Company to make a career from dance. I hope you will all come and see this year's production of "The Little Shop of Horrors". Other highlights from the year included a really great Leavers' Prom and a successful Summer Festival. We extend our thanks to CESA for their support during the year, and to the hardworking staff going over and above the call of duty to make these events happen.

We said a fond farewell to Mr Robinson who retired at the end of last term. I know he will be missed by many students and staff alike. We wish him well in his retirement and thank him for his incredible service to the school.

Many students and parents feel disappointed when staff move on and we experience change. The teachers who have left us have done so to progress their careers, and this is normal. It is natural that some years we see more change than others as teachers move to new areas or retire. Whilst we can be disappointed in these losses, fortunately we have been able to recruit some really good replacements. It speaks volumes about the school when we see good teachers like Mr Harte, Head of Performing Arts, return to the school.

The GCSE results saw some fantastic performances from our top students with some achieving 6 to 7A*s and 4 to 5 As. We saw excellent results in Geography, Performing Arts, Drama, Physics, Food Tech and 3D Design. Maths and English were, however, disappointing. There will be a sharp focus in these areas with robust action plans put in place to ensure we improve on those results for this year. New Curriculum changes and budget constraints will continue to challenge us greatly, but School Leadership and Governors will continue to work hard to try and deliver the best for all our students.

Below is a short report from each of the Governing Body Committee Chairs.

Pauline Conway
Acting Chair of Governors



Curriculum and Achievement Committee

The focus of this committee is to review key aspects of teaching and learning within the school, as well as to monitor GCSE results and student progress against targets. Our contact in the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is the Deputy Headteacher.

We met six times during the academic year 2015/2016. As usual, our first meeting in September was to review the previous summer's GCSE results. We analysed and discussed results by different groups of pupils, and in different subjects, both in terms of actual grades and by progress made. We also compared Chiltern Edge against similar schools nationally on a number of measures. We talked in detail about any areas requiring improvement, and supported the school in acting on this.

We regularly invite Heads of Department (HoDs) to talk about their departments, successes and challenges; this year we heard very interesting presentations from PE and Science. Engaging with the teachers in this way enables us to be better informed about the quality of teaching and learning. We met with the GATE coordinator to understand how pupils on the GATE (Gifted, Aspiring, Talented and Enterprising) programme are being stretched. We liaised with the SLT on pupil premium, and the actions being taken to reduce under-attainment by disadvantaged pupils.

Chiltern Edge constantly strives to improve teaching and learning across the school, and we receive regular updates from the Deputy Head to monitor the effectiveness of this. We discussed anonymised lesson observations carried out by the SLT and by HoDs, and looked at the comprehensive work scrutiny carried out on pupils' exercise books – are they being marked regularly and are pupils responding to feedback given?

As you know, GCSEs nationally are undergoing significant changes. Students taking English and Maths in summer 2017 will already be studying the new curriculum; their GCSEs will be graded 1-9 instead of the current G –A*. The 'new' GCSE takes effect the following year for many other subjects. Heads of Department have worked hard developing the new curricula, and we have taken an active role in monitoring this. The Lead Practitioner in Maths showed us the detailed planning undertaken to implement the new curriculum.

Our Governors Day in February gave us the opportunity to spend the day in school, sitting in lessons and talking to pupils. The vast majority of pupils were fully engaged in and enjoying their lessons, well-behaved and polite. I was also privileged to be invited into school to help judge the students' presentations following their Maths visit to Ewelme Park, and was impressed by the enthusiasm and imagination shown.

Julia O'Farrelly

Children Families and Community

Welcome back to the 2016/17 year and we hope that it's a great one for all our students. Particular welcome to our new year 7s and to year 11 as they begin their final 'school' year.

The Children, Family and Community committee will be working hard this year, focusing on listening to all parents; look out for us at Parents Evenings and please don't forget to our answer our short questionnaires, (we bought Show My Homework last year after homework was the biggest issue raised by parents of all year groups). Your comments are fed through to the Senior Leadership Team and the full governing body, and used as the basis for all discussions. We will continue to monitor student's attendance as this is a huge factor in the final result they will get, so worth all our efforts.



We will carry on working with the local community, and any ideas or suggestions you have to strengthen school links to groups or businesses in Sonning Common, Caversham and Reading are gratefully received.

Last year was my last year as Chair of the Committee and I am happy to announce that your new chair is Helen Beville, a parent governor who has boys in years 11, 8 and 7. I'm sure you'll join me in wishing her well for what is bound to be an interesting and dynamic year ahead.

Faith Lusted

Resources Committee 2015/6

The Resources Committee has covered the following items over the last academic year, with an initial outline of what we plan to cover in the next year:

1. Finance & Budget

The school continues to face tight budget pressures and the committee feel that the new School Business Manager has done a very good job in the last year to control costs and expenditure in difficult circumstances. The school continues to have a carry forward budget deficit due to several historical outstanding loans, and we expect this position to improve in the next few years via the following initiatives:

- Increased pupil numbers intake for Year 7 (2015 = 97, 2016 = 128+).
- Increased revenues from lettings (2015 = £26,000, 2016 = £35,000+).
- Our New Assistant Headteacher, who will take responsibility to closely monitor the timetable to ensure minimum use of costly agency/temporary staff.
- Sale of some school land as part of the Neighbourhood Development Plan - this will raise substantial funds to greatly improve both the schools facilities and ongoing running costs.
- Applications for Grants for additional funding for particular projects and facilities.

2. Staffing

There have been a number of staff retirements over the last 12 months which has meant bringing new teachers into the school. We are pleased with the quality of the appointments we have made and they have been received well by pupils and staff alike. The recent appointment of a new Assistant Headteacher will provide valuable support to the Headteacher and allow the Senior Leadership team to focus on delivering the strategic objectives of the school in challenging times. There has been a rearrangement of the support team this year to make them even more effective in the future. The recruitment of good experienced Maths and English teachers continues to be challenging due to a national shortage. The committee will be discussing staffing at each meeting as a priority.

3. Premises & Land Sale

The premises continue to be well maintained by our in-house team, and they have made considerable efforts to deliver a large number of maintenance and premises improvements during the school holidays. The new catering and cleaning contracts are functioning well and



the recent Health & Safety Inspection of the school was very good and demonstrated a high level of attention to this by the staff.

A Sub-Committee was formed to assess the viability of building a Multi-Use Games Area at the school to both improve sporting facilities, and raise funds through lettings. A visit to Langtree School was arranged, as they completed a similar project last year. It was decided that this project should start after the imminent sale of the school land, as the required funds would be immediately available and will avoid the school having to take out any financial loans for this project.

Ian McGowan

