



MILLFIELDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Governors Newsletter – Spring 2016

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter. This time we have an introduction to our two new Parent Governors Annie and Sue and I'm really pleased that they're already making a great contribution. There is also a summary of the new School Development Plan. This sets out what we aim to improve over the next few years and the governors monitor it every term to make sure we are making the necessary progress. It is also checked in "real life" through visits to the school looking at books and meeting staff and children. You'll also see that learning through training is an important part of our governance role.

I'm writing this just after the Full Governors meeting that set the budget for the next year. So whilst schools budgets have been protected "in cash terms" this doesn't fully allow for inflation in the form of government initiatives such as changes to National Insurance, Pensions and minimum wage. As around 85% of the cost of the school is staff expenditure, this has a big impact. We also have to take account of the growth of our community through new housing developments and the pressure that puts on available school places in the two Wivenhoe schools.

Our collaboration with Alresford and work with other local schools has been very effective in sharing resources and keeping costs down, but looking ahead, we will have to look closely at solutions to keep the school financially sound whilst preserving the precious Millfields ethos.

Nick White
Chair of Governors

Welcome to Annie and Sue – our two new parent governors

Sue Whytock



I'm delighted to be a Parent Governor at Millfields now that I have time and energy to devote to the role, with both my children (Nancy and Bobby Lumb) established at school.

I have a Literature degree and a Masters in Women's Studies, as well as a PGCE and two diplomas (in Counselling and in Creative Writing). In my career I have worked for a well-known charity for a decade, before retraining to become a teacher myself. I work in post compulsory education; in FE (teaching AS/A level English) and HE (PGCE lecturer), so while I share similar concerns about educational policy and understand well the pressures and constraints on teaching staff, I have no experience of primary teaching.

I have a parent's perspective and it is important that parents can be involved in governance and in strategic discussions and decisions which affect our children. What I have observed from my children's experience at school and from helping in the classroom and with trips, etc. is that Millfields is an excellent primary with committed, talented and approachable teaching, admin and support staff. I'm pleased to be in a position to help to support the

school's continued development. I will be the link Governor for Literacy and SEN and look forward to being involved in these and other areas and learning much more about primary education in the process.

Annie Melin



Hello! My name is Annie (Annabel) Melin and I am writing to tell you a little bit about myself, as I was recently elected as a parent governor of Millfields. All three of my sons have attended the school - the oldest two are now in Year 9 and 7 at the Colne and my youngest, Finn, is currently in year 4.

I am a stay at home Mum, but previously, I worked for the Essex Wildlife Trust at their Nature Reserve and Visitor Centre at Abberton Reservoir, near Colchester. I was their Education Officer and Centre Manager for about 12 years, where I welcomed primary schools every day and taught them about nature and the environment through a variety of activities - pond dipping and mini-beast hunts were always the most popular with teachers and children alike! Because of this interest I have been involved, alongside others, with restoring the schools wildlife garden and making it more accessible to children. When I first came with my oldest child, who is now 13, it remained fenced off and covered in brambles, but now has a small, covered pond, sensory plants and walkways to allow better access. When the field is dry enough and KS2 children are allowed onto the field at lunchtime, they can access this area. Quite a few parents and dedicated members of staff have worked hard on it for a number of years and it is always a work in progress! I have also helped regularly in many different classrooms over the years and with numerous school trips.

I very much wanted to run for a governor post as I felt it was high time I gave something back to the school in terms of my time and energy and I am very much looking forward to getting my teeth into it!

Essex School Governors Conference – Dave Roscoe

ESGA

ESSEX SCHOOL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

On Saturday March 5th, Jan Richardson, Dave Roscoe and Nick White attended the annual Essex School Governors Conference at the Weston Homes stadium, which provided an excellent opportunity to network with governors from all over Essex and to share ideas and experiences.

Governors heard a keynote speech about the future of the education landscape and also heard from Stephen Drew (you may recognise him from Channel 4's 'Educating Essex' and 'Mr Drew's Boys') who gave some interesting insight into behaviour management.

We also attended various workshops during the day, picking up really useful information on topics such as 'closing the gap for disadvantaged pupils', 'safeguarding and extremism', 'recruitment and retention' and 'school-led improvement systems'. We will be feeding back this information to the school's governing body in order to further our support of the school.

School Development Plan

Since last term we have been working on our new SDP which runs from September 2015 to August 2017. If you haven't had chance to see it, here are the main themes:

Achievement of Pupils at the School

- To develop in the children a deeper understanding of maths by embracing the concept of Maths Mastery, ensuring practical apparatus is used throughout the school to support mathematical learning. To identify children who are not making progress or are vulnerable mathematicians and put in place plans to ensure progress. *This objective was conceived, following discussions with the Colne regarding their Mastery programme that they are running with their Year 7 cohort. It will allow us to consider the manner that we teach practical maths.*
- To look at how we deploy additional adults in the classroom and investigate ways which our LSAs can have a larger impact on the development and progress of the children. *This was an objective that we have been looking to develop. Budgets decrease year by year and we need to ensure that we focus on value for money as well as the impact of additional support.*
- To develop a love of reading, establishing the importance of reading in all aspects of Literacy. *Our children learn to read quickly and our fantastic SATs results confirm an excellent comprehension of what they read. However The National Literacy Trust states that reading for pleasure is more important than either wealth or social class as an indicator of success at school and in later life, so we will look to foster a love for reading that will give our children those life-long advantages.*

Quality of Teaching in the School

- To ensure that marking is of high quality and that feedback is constructive, enabling pupils to know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve. To extend this high quality marking and feedback into other subjects. *Our staff recognise the impact that our Marking and Feedback Policy has had on the way that we plan, teach and assess. So far, we have focussed on English and Maths, however, when OFSTED visited, they felt that our policy could be introduced into other subjects.*
- To instil an expectation of an 'Open Mindset' so that the children recognise effort as being instrumental over talent and build resilience that leads to increased achievement. *We were introduced to the work of Carol Dweck and started to think about the ways that our children approach problems. Statistically, some of our children will have a Closed Mindset, and this objective will help us to develop those children into more robust learners.*

Quality of Leadership in, and Management of, the School

- To ensure that Millfields Primary School takes a central role in the Teaching School Alliance and to investigate ways which Millfields, as an outstanding school, can share the expertise of its staff in working with other schools. *In November the school were judged as outstanding. Our practice was seen as exemplary and we felt that our next step in school and personal development would be to avail ourselves to opportunities of outreach, sharing our good practice.*

Technology

- To develop the computing curriculum of the school, and investigate ways which we can prepare our children for life in an increasingly technological society. *Technological advances are increasing exponentially. Our children will be living and working in a world that will bear little resemblance to the one in which we are now living. This objective will allow us to investigate ways that we can develop our Computing provision so that we can prepare our children effectively.*