

Dear Parents and Carers

Governor's Newsletter – October 2020

It has been some time since the last Governor's Newsletter. The delay has been less about what to say but where to begin! Since the last Chair's newsletter, Martin Tomlinson has now retired from his position as Chair of Governors, after over twenty years of service to JYS. Our thanks go to Martin's loyalty to the school and for the many ways in which he supported the school. You could say that he was nearly irreplaceable as we have now have two Co-Chairs to replace him!

The Year started so well. We had come out of a "Good" Ofsted report and plans were in place to take the school forward. Everyone was relaxed and confident as to the direction we were heading. That was until the world heard of Covid-19 and the havoc it has reaped. Contrary to public perception, the school did not close when lockdown measures were announced in March 2020. It remained open for the children of key workers and a dedicated group of JYS staff (leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, support staff etc) continued to work and became 'front-line' workers themselves. Little was known about the disease at that time, although risk assessments were undertaken in-line with very limited government guidance. PPE supplies were not guaranteed and there was an element of uncertainty in everything the staff undertook. Whilst understandably, the NHS received the nation's heart-felt thanks, the work undertaken by our own school staff needs to be acknowledged and appreciated. Certainly, the Governors at Jessie are very proud of everything they did.

June brought a partial return of Years R, 1 and 6, together with the continued provision of an increasing number of key worker children. This necessitated a revision of our Risk Assessments and the need to be flexible. The numbers returning were un-predictable and the school's resources limited; but thanks to our fabulous leadership team and staff, the return was managed without problem. Those year groups who did not return to the site in June continued to be supported in their home learning.

Clearly, we are still mindful that this disease has not gone away and further closures remain a real possibility. The overriding priority at JYS is now to re-integrate the children as quickly and as smoothly as possible. The staff are very aware that the time out of school has had varying effects on pupils and much work is taking place to identify and address any gaps in learning. We would like to praise and express our sincere thanks to all the parents and carers who worked with the school to manage home learning for their children. We understand the huge problems that it caused and without their efforts the children would not be as happy and enthusiastic as they are at present. The priority now is to ensure that the children can re-adapt to school life and start to catch up to where they would have been had the disruption not occurred. Every effort will be made to provide support for individual children in whatever form that is needed. A full recovery plan is being implemented together with a catch-up curriculum.

It was not all bad news and the lockdown and partial closure did have some unexpected benefits. We were able to do some of the jobs that would otherwise have been difficult or delayed. The Library area at the school has been revamped, and the books extensively restocked. Many outdoor areas, including the pond area have also been improved. Once again, the Governors are extremely thankful to all the staff who made this happen. Despite the year being far from normal, Governors continued to monitor and be involved in the work of the school. Zoom became a much-used tool, although we now have had our first full meeting at the school in September, with all the appropriate safety measures being in place. As Co-Chairs we spend a lot of time in contact with each other, the leadership team and the office.

September has brought yet another significant change with the temporary appointment of our current Deputy-Headteacher, Paul Neaves, as Co-Headteacher alongside Mrs Sadler. Mrs Sadler is now working two days per week in preparation for full retirement at the end of July 2021. Consequently, JYS will now be looking to recruit a new Headteacher for September 2021. The Governors have already appointed a recruitment panel and that work has already started with the support of West Sussex County Council.

Finally, whilst we do have a very strong and dedicated governing body, we do currently have a vacancy for a co-opted governor (as opposed to a parent governor or Local Authority nominated governor). If anyone is interested in talking through what they may have to offer JYS and what is involved please do not hesitate to contact either of us through the school office or by email at governors@jys.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Clare Few
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Co-Chair of Governors