

Easter 2015

Dear Parents, Family and Carers

As another amazing term at Eleanor Palmer draws to a close, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank everyone who makes up the school community for all the hard work, effort and contributions that go towards ensuring our school is the happy and high achieving learning environment our children deserve. I would also like to take this opportunity to formally introduce myself. I took up the post of Chair of Governors in September and feel very privileged to be involved with, and play a part in, such a fantastic school. You can find out more about the governors that make up the governing body on the school website and, whilst I would like to emphasise that the teachers are still the first port of call for any questions or requests, you can contact us directly on governors@eleanorpalmer.camden.sch.uk.

I was fortunate enough to meet and talk with a number of parents, carers and family members at the recent Parents' Evening and would like to say a huge thank you to those of you that took the time to stop by and answer the questions we posed about homework and the role of the governing body. Broadly speaking, the results of the survey were very positive, with over 83% of respondents stating that they felt their child receives the right amount of homework and two thirds of respondents stating that they understood the role of the governors. However, all responses have been taken into account and shared with the governing body and headteacher. We are aware that, in particular, we need to be clearer on what the governors' role is – hopefully, the following list is a good start.

What governors do and don't do:

- We DON'T have a role in the day-to-day running of the school – we are not staff, you won't see us teaching any lessons!
- We DO maintain an overview of the running of the school, and we help determine the vision and strategic direction of the school e.g. deciding whether it was right for the school to become a Teaching School.
- We DON'T observe lessons, pass judgement on individual quality of teaching or take responsibility for teachers' performance management – this is the role of the senior leaders in the school.
- We DO use achievement and progress data to help us assess and form a wider picture of teaching quality as a whole/throughout the school, and we hold the senior leaders to account.
- We DON'T fundraise for the school – this is the role of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA).
- We DO ensure that the school budget is healthy and secure, and that we have a sustainable operating model in place.
- We DON'T write school policies – most of the school's main policies are based on Camden Council model policies/guidance. They are adapted and amended by the senior leadership team as necessary.
- We DO review, check and sign off school policies – we have specific committees that take responsibility for monitoring the relevance and necessity of specific policies.

In terms of the specific topics we have been discussing recently, these include: staffing structures and what works best for the school in terms of part time and full time staff; the recent Challenge Partners review and its implications for our future working; our response to the new coding curriculum and whether we are on track with this; the pressures on school leadership with regards to Teaching School responsibilities; how to increase the diversity of parents that engage in school life; and our ongoing responsibility to ensure that our admissions are as fair and equitable as possible. We have also welcomed representatives from Camden Council to talk to us, and ensure we are confident, about our legal responsibilities as governors. Coming up, we will be discussing computing in the school and looking at SEN provision amongst many other things! Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any thoughts on any of these topics.

This really is just a quick snapshot of what our role is; please contact us if any of the above isn't clear or you would like more information. There will also be governor representation (and more sweet treats!) at the summer term Parents' Evening, so please do stop by for a chat. The annual parental questionnaire will be distributed at the end of next term as usual – I hope that you will all have time to complete this and feedback your thoughts on our school's performance.

I hope you all have a lovely break,

Alice Barling Gasson

Chair of Governors