

June 2018

# Governing Body Newsletter

Little Gaddesden C. of E. Primary School



## Welcome to our Governing Body newsletter

School Governors form the largest volunteer force in the country, but it's not always apparent what the role involves. The detail may vary from one school to another, depending on its type and size, but all schools have three core roles in common;

-Making sure the school's vision is on the right track

-Overseeing the financial performance of the school

-Asking the Head critical questions about the school

You can read a more about what this means in practice at Little Gaddesden School in this newsletter.

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## What do the Governors of Little Gaddesden School do?

Governors play an important strategic role in the running of Little Gaddesden School. The role is often likened to that of a 'critical friend' – to challenge and hold to account the decisions made by the Headteacher and the teaching staff.

The Governing body meets as a whole once a term, while individual committees meet more frequently. We have two key committees - Learning, which deals with teaching and the curriculum; and Resources, which deals with Personnel, Premises and Finance. Each committee has its own chair, and all Governors sit on at least one committee.

Every year the Head and Governors meet to discuss the School Development Plan – a document that sets measurable and timely goals for the continued development of the school. It is the Governors' responsibility to ensure that these goals are met, and that targets are challenging but achievable. Governors are also responsible for devising, maintaining and overseeing School policy (there are quite a few areas of policy!). Further details about policies can be found on the school's website.

Governors also have individual areas of responsibility, such as liaising with teaching staff about early years, literacy and maths, and sport - and monitoring safeguarding and the school's provision for Special Education



What do the Governors of Little Gaddesden do?

Needs & Disabilities (SEND).

The Governing body is also responsible for overseeing the Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural (SMSC) development of pupils; and the Governors meet with pupils to discuss their experiences on a regular basis.

All Governors are offered training sessions to keep their skills up to speed and to ensure that we are able to monitor additional demands made by the Department for Education, such as the prevention of radicalisation. We also receive in-house training from our School Improvement Partners and from the Hertfordshire Finance Team.

Finally, many of the Governing body act as willing school volunteers – helping with clubs, spelling practice, reading and accompanying children on School trips.

The role can be complex and demanding, but it is always rewarding!

## Could you be a school Governor?

We asked our current Governors what makes a good Governor, and what do they get out of it?

You can read what they said in more detail on page 3, but some common themes emerged;

Many said it was a rewarding experience, they enjoyed working as part of a team and valued gaining an in depth understanding of the education system as well as a chance to learn new skills.

They also valued giving something to the local community and feeling part of it. Many Governors acknowledged that there is undoubtedly a time commitment, but that it's worthwhile.

If you would like to learn more about being a Governor, please speak to Charis Geoghegan or contact our Chair, Briony Sutcliffe.  
chair@little.gaddesden.herts.sch.uk

## Our school's vision

**The vision for our school can be summarised as 'curious thinkers, independent learners, confident individuals gaining excellent results'**

In Autumn 2017, a number of parents made comments and suggested changes as part of the Governors' process to review the school vision. This is always helpful for enabling Governors to understand what parents most value and want to keep for the future and where changes could be made.

At Little Gaddesden School, we do not have any immediate plans to join a MAT, but we do keep close links with other local schools, keep abreast of changes in national and local policy and periodically review all the options.

As Governors, we always need to be looking at the long-term plan!

One of the key strategic decisions that many governing bodies have been looking at during the last couple of years is collaborating with other schools either as part of a Federation or a Multi Academy Trust (MAT).



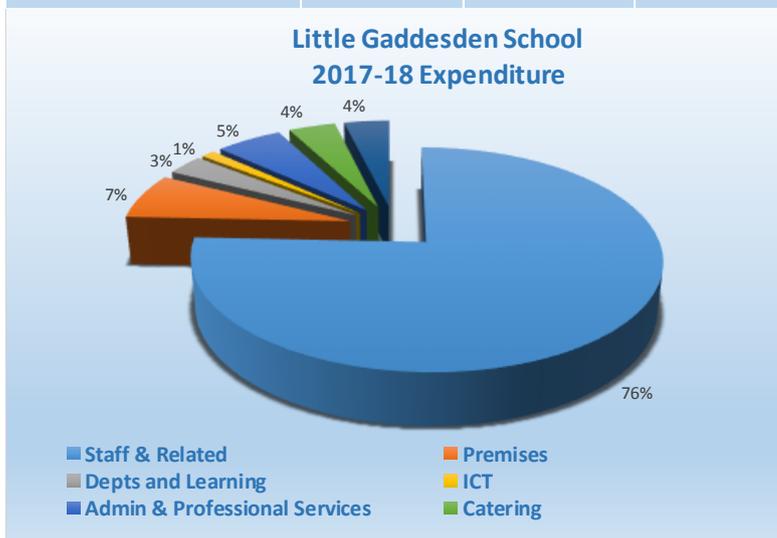
## Overseeing school finances

Governors play a key role in ensuring that the school's financial position remains healthy, so that it can continue to provide an excellent education for its pupils and that our school's money is well spent. This involves agreeing a budget at the start of the year and monitoring it regularly to ensure it remains on track.

The figures for the end of the last financial year are shown on the table and pie chart on the right.

At the start of the Summer Term 2018 we completed an exercise to compare our school's expenditure with how other local schools spend their money. This is useful to help identify areas where we might be able to make additional savings.

2017-18 FINAL BUDGET POSITION			
Budget Area	Budget 2017-18	Actual Spend 2017-18	% of total expenditure
Staff & Related	£397,124	£399,724	76%
Premises	£53,802	£36,366	7%
Depts and Learning	£13,936	£16,221	3%
ICT	£5,016	£6,222	1%
Admin & Professional Services	£28,852	£29,132	6%
Catering	£24,674	£20,681	4%
Direct Revenue	£7,000	£19,879	4%
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£530,404</b>	<b>£528,225</b>	<b>100%</b>
Revenue Income	£505,177	£520,408	
	Balance b/f	Carry forward	
Revenue Balances	£63,445	£55,626	



## Checking the school's performance

School Governors question and review performance in a variety of ways; looking at results, considering advice and reports from our Herts Improvement Partner and observing for ourselves.

The Learning Committee takes the lead on reviewing the school's results at both Key Stage 1 and 2 as well as the wider Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of pupils.

When looking at results we look at both the levels pupils reached and how much progress they made. We ask questions to identify if any subjects are particularly strong or weak and if there any patterns over time. We also look to see if any particular groups

of pupils have achieved particularly well or might benefit from additional support. We don't look at individual's results and all the data is anonymized.

Individual Governors lead on a particular subject or area of provision such as maths, literacy or sport and PE. They will meet regularly with the school's subject leader.

Governors also meet with pupils to get their views on life at school. They may take part in trips as well as visiting during lesson time.

## What is it like to be a Governor?

We asked current school Governors to say what it takes to be a Governor and what they get out of it. Here's what they told us.

I have been a Governor at Little Gaddesden since my children were at the school and I wanted to 'give something back'.

When my children moved on to senior schools, I certainly didn't think that my time as a Governor was over, as I have really enjoyed working with such a great group of people, including other Governors, the Head and staff.

I started as a associate Governor when my son was in Reception. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do in terms of returning to work, but knew I wanted a change of direction and to keep my skills up to date. I had some experience of managing grants, so my first job was in the school boiler room looking for funding to replace it!

I have gradually used the experience to gain an MSc with the OU and a new job.

"For someone who had gone from running large-scale communications campaigns in London, to working alone from my kitchen table in Little Gaddesden - becoming a Governor was an ideal opportunity for me to 'get back out there'! Knowing that you have usable and transferable skills is a great confidence boost.

Being on the Governing Body has not only given me a unique insight into the way our school is run, but also into how education and Government policy works. It's a genuinely interesting field.

What makes a good Governor? Someone who is confident in their questions and opinions, and who recognises that our pupils and their outstanding education have to be at the heart of everything we do."

"It gives me an insight into how the education system works and helps me to understand the teacher's point of view. It is extremely interesting and gives me a sense of satisfaction to be part of a team that has worked together to improve the school to the point that it has been rated Outstanding".

"I have been a school Governor for many years. I was invited to attend a school wedding at the Church last week. As always, the staff had worked so hard for the children and a Governor can gain enormous satisfaction from assisting in anyway possible".

"Being a Governor is all about the children's outcomes; everything we do should always have that at the top of our agenda, and I believe that is how the governing body does and always has worked. I have been very lucky as I love my Early Years remit; it gives me the chance to be in school regularly, to observe children's progress and to know them as individuals.

I have learnt so much since joining the Governing Body and am very proud of being a part of it".

## Governor vacancies

We currently have vacancies for 2 Governors and in addition are able to appoint associate members. The core role is the same but there are some small differences in the focus and process of appointment.

**Associate Members** are appointed by the governing board to serve on one or more governing board committees. They may also attend full governing board meetings. They do not have a vote in governing body decisions, but may vote on decisions made by committees to which they are appointed.

**Foundation Governors** ensure that the



school's character (including its religious character as a Church of England School) is preserved and developed.

**Parent Governors** are elected by other parents at the school or can be appointed if only one person stands for election. Any parent, or carer, of a registered pupil at the school is eligible to stand for election. A parent Governor is not a delegate of the parents of the school - although they are in a good position to represent the perspective of a parent.

### How much time is involved?

Typically, most Governors would be a member of either the Resources or Learning Committees and attend full Governing Body Meetings

4 Governing Body Meetings per year (7.30pm - 9.00pm)

3 Learning Committee Meetings (8.00am - 9.15am)

4 Resources Committee Meetings (8.00am - 9.15am)

PLUS

-One visit per term in school hours  
-Linked Governors - one meeting per term with subject leader (30 mins).

## Governor skills

You do not need to have experience in or understanding of education to be a Governor.

Training is provided and support is available. A wide range of skills can be useful including; finance, IT, HR, property management, special needs, health and safety, communications and creativity.

Most of all we need people with an interest in education, a willingness to learn and time to commit.

If you would like to learn more about the Governors and how you could play a part in shaping the development of our school, then please speak to Charis Geoghegan or contact our Chair, Briony Sutcliffe.  
chair@little.gaddesden.herts.sch.uk

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The National Governance Association is a charity that works to support Governors. Their suggestions about the skills and attributes of good Governors include:

**Committed** Prepared to devote time, skills and energy to the role; and being ambitious about achieving the best possible outcomes for schools and young people.

**Confident** Able to contribute to and - if necessary - lead conversations, to express opinions and to play an active role on the board.

**Curious** Knowing how to question and analyse.

**Challenging** Not being afraid to challenge the status quo, not taking information or data at face value and always working towards effective solutions.

**Collaborative** Understanding the importance of working as part of a team - alongside other Governors and with staff, parents and carers, pupils, and the local community.

**Creative** Being open-minded about new approaches to tricky issues; and recognising the value of innovation and creative thinking.