



# Governors' Newsletter

DECEMBER 2016 - Issue 3



Dear Parents/Carers and Students,

Please find below our Christmas Governors' Newsletter. It has been another busy term for the school as we welcomed many new students and embarked on new curricula that resulted from the various and continuing changes imposed on our education system.

In this edition Emma Payne provides an overview of some of the varied tasks that governors are involved in. Paul Thompson gives a detailed report on the Governors' and school's joint initiative to look at staff wellbeing, Andrew Perks updates the building works and finances and Angie Williams welcomes two new parent governors. Looking to the future we have embarked on a project to explore and implement fundraising opportunities to support the costs of the new build. We hope to provide details shortly on how parents can get involved and help.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank staff, parents and carers, and my fellow governors, all of whom continue to work so hard for the benefit of our TGS students.

Finally, I wish you and yours all happiness over the festive season and every good fortune for 2017.

Kind regards,

Jeremy Slater  
Chair of Governors





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Emma Payne—Co-opted Governor — HR Committee

## A Governor's Report



So another term as a governor has flown by. Where does the time go? This term as a governing board we've been getting updates on the existing building work that will enable us to have some modern bright classrooms and more space for the students and teachers.

We've been focused on how we maximise the build and put the money we have to best use. We've looked at the exam results and discussed how the school is focused on continuing to improve results and how teaching staff are being trained to cope with the new GCSE marking system. During the meetings we've worked with the staff on the development plan, had the Head Boy and Head Girls in to update on the school council and had a presentation from the PTA on their fundraising. We've also welcomed 2 new parent governors. It made me realise how many of the educational acronyms I now understand 2 years in.

We've also looked at the future of education and the option of forming a MAT (Multi Academy Trust) and will be having more conversations next term on this. And finally on the HR committee we've been supporting the HR Manager and teachers to look at retention and the challenges of hiring.

All in all another enjoyable and interesting term at Tolworth.





## Chair of Finance, Assets & Audit Committee Andrew Perks - Community Governor



There are two important but separate updates regarding the finances of the School.

### School Finances

The School's finances continue to be managed in an effective and efficient manner. Due to the continued hard work of the Headteacher and the Finance Office, the unsung heroes of the School's prudent financial management, TGS is in a better position than most to face the on coming storm of shrinking real terms budgets and increasing costs. Whilst our cup does not runneth over, the cupboard is NOT empty as it is in a large number of other schools.

### School Development

The School Development, or at least Phase 1, is now up and running and is on time, on budget and to the original design. This is not to underestimate the level of difficulties that have already been overcome in getting the actual building works off the ground. Our project manager has poured oil on troubled waters on numerous occasions and the School owes her a big thank you for navigating us to this enviable position.

We are also now looking at the next phases 1b, the playing surfaces and phase 2 the new block. Phase 1b, the playing surfaces is actually going to be started 3 months early so that it can be completed over next summer and be ready for use by the start of the 2017 Autumn term. The planning of Phase 2 is still under review. The School needs to ensure that it will meet the requirements of the ever changing curriculum. However, one feature that will be retained from the original plan is the community theatre.





**Chair of HR Committee  
Paul Thompson – Community Governor**



## Staff Wellbeing

The wellbeing of staff should be a top priority for all employers and no more so than at a school such as ours. Teachings and working in other capacities in school is by no means a cushy number but full of stresses. At Tolworth, as with other schools of our type, the pressures caused by constant educational policy and regulatory change and by finite resources are unremitting. Meeting these challenges is very hard work, whilst going the extra mile including, for example, undertaking extra curricula activities, filling in for colleagues at short notice and working late are also a fairly constant feature. The pressures on our staff are therefore significant and we are very fortunate that they rise to the challenges so well.

With all this in mind and realising too the important influence which all our staff have as role models for our students, as they prepare for life after school and when their lives can already be very stressful too, we have been seeking in the Governors' Human Resources Committee to encourage and support the Academy in advancing wellbeing initiatives. During 2016, the primary focus of these has been a work/life balance review which culminated in the summer term with a series of proposals developed in liaison with staff representatives. These have now almost all been actioned and include, for example, new arrangements, some quite small but nevertheless significant, to limit unnecessary attendance at meetings, to adjust marking practices and to lessen the burden of emails. Inevitably, not all proposals that have come forward from staff have been able to be taken forward but, overall, we are very pleased to note that the mantra '*you asked, we listened, we actioned*' has been fulfilled.

The next step is to carry this forward a further stage. Again, this needs to be very much inclusive and, so far as practicable, staff led rather than being just a 'top-down' exercise.

Cont'd





**Chair of HR Committee  
Paul Thompson – Community Governor**



## Staff Wellbeing cont'd

As it happens, the encouragement of wellbeing is now very much at the forefront of business thinking and management consultancy. In the UK, we have a government sponsored Centre for Wellbeing and the London School of Economics has just sponsored a 2 day international conference on the subject, in liaison with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and a body called 'the CEPREMAP [a French research centre's] Wellbeing Observatory'. New ideas are being developed on the subject all the time and we may well be able to take advantage of some of these. Very probably, however, the best ideas and the ones which can have the greatest impact for us are likely to be quite simple ones for smarter and less burdensome working practices, developed by our own people to fit their own situation, as they know the challenges of their particular working environment best.

In pursuing this further as governors, we are very conscious that this fits into what may be seen as a wider agenda. For example, actions to support mental health (and reduce stress) and to ensure that the training made available to staff is as good as it can be, in supporting their career development and job satisfaction, are important objectives in their own right but also are integral parts of any wellbeing policy. We will be seeking to keep that wider agenda very much in mind too.





Angie Williams - Clerk to Governors/Company Secretary

## NEW PARENT GOVERNORS

We warmly welcome and introduce two new parent governors to the board, who bring with them a wealth of skills. We very much look forward to working with them.



**Ms Sarah Miller**

I am a working mother with a daughter who has just started at TGS in Year 7. I would like to be involved in the school and use the skills that I have developed over many years in management to help, where help is needed. I believe that I have a pragmatic approach to most situations, whether they are people-related, financial or project based.

The academic world seems so much more complex these days and must be a minefield for teaching staff and management to navigate. I am hoping that acting as a sounding board for full-time staff, from a governance perspective, will be useful and beneficial to both parents and teachers alike.



**Mr Ismail Laher**

I have noticed a determined effort by all to promote the school's status. Not only to improve facilities but to develop an all rounded student prepared for the world. Now my daughter has joined I would like to be part of this. I live locally, have a son in Year 4 and work as a Civil Engineer in Kingston. Married to a teacher I am familiar with the Government policy, staff, governor mix, albeit had no related work experience to date. I work with others from a range of disciplines, all with a common goal, and manage staff, workload and resources to achieve that goal. I'm a 'hands on' person, assess options before deciding and am particular when it comes to presentation.





Angie Williams - Clerk to Governors/Company Secretary

## And finally.....

### Feedback to the Governing body

How do you think the Governing body could communicate more effectively with the school community?

Please email any suggestions to the above questions along with any feedback comments raised in the newsletter to the Clerk:

[angela.williams@tolworthgirlsschool.co.uk](mailto:angela.williams@tolworthgirlsschool.co.uk) or alternatively

[ChairofGovernors@tolworthgirlsschool.co.uk](mailto:ChairofGovernors@tolworthgirlsschool.co.uk)

