

GOVERNOR UPDATE

Summer 2018

This year the Viridis Schools Governing body have held three full governing body meetings and visited each school whilst it is in session. The school sub-committees have also held termly meetings.

Our schools' partnership is committed to ensuring that our pupils receive a rich and balanced curriculum alongside high expectations of achievement in the key skills of reading, writing and mathematics. During the last year, there have been many examples of an exciting curriculum offer. Pupils have had the opportunity to learn chess, travel to Madrid, meet writers and artists, demonstrate entrepreneurialism, learn instruments, perform at music concerts, learn how to cycle safely, go on a range of trips (both within and outside of London), as well as taking part in gardening workshops. The school curriculum has been designed to ensure that children receive as many 'real life' experiences as possible alongside opportunities to develop oracy and confidence in themselves as learners. Whilst we are confident that school leaders are doing much to ensure that children are successful, we are never complacent about our important role of holding the schools to account, asking challenging questions and acting as critical friends. We hope that this newsletter is a helpful summary of some of our actions during last academic year.

GOVERNOR VISIT TO ORCHARD SCHOOL



Each term Governors visit during the school day. During the first part of this visit we drop into classrooms and meet with staff and children, comparing what we see with what we understand from the termly reports we receive from the Headteachers. Governors also meet with a group of pupils to talk about their learning and their experience of being at school.

This term a group of us undertook a visit to Orchard School with a focus on provision for pupils with English as an Additional Language. As well as visiting classrooms to see the school in action, we heard from children who have joined our schools from homes where languages other than English are spoken and discussed their experiences with them.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN TALKING ABOUT?



We have many themes and discussion points that we revisit through the year. These are driven by both the national and local agendas. Our school sub-committees focus on areas that are specific to each school, but our full governing body also considers themes which are relevant to all three schools. To explore these fully we meet with school leaders and pupils, look at related documents and visit the school. As well as considering the important matters of financial security and pupil safety, some of the areas that have been a focus in the last year have been:

Schools Futures. Changes to Government policy and the funding of schools have affected Local Authorities. Schools funding in Hackney is anticipated to undergo a significant change in 2019/20 due to a new funding formula and Hackney Learning Trust will not be able to continue its school improvement function in the same way from this point. All schools in Hackney will be asked to make the decision whether to be part of a new Hackney Schools Partnership or to form trusts of their own. Fortunately, as a successful existing partnership, we are confident that we will not be forced into joining an existing Multi Academy Trust or different partnership. We have been discussing the options open to our schools, with the intention of adopting the model which will best benefit our school communities. This remains a live discussion as the details of the proposed Hackney model become clearer.



Buildings and premises. All three of our school buildings are very old, and despite significant investment require a lot of looking after! The school has been developing and improving playground spaces as well as creating new learning spaces within the schools. We have successfully obtained funding for fire door and safety works on all three sites from Hackney Learning Trust.





WHAT HAVE WE BEEN TALKING ABOUT?

Provision for reading and most able readers. Government expectations of pupil achievement in reading when they leave primary school have significantly increased in recent years, with much tougher reading tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Whilst pupils at our school achieve exceptionally well and make progress that is significantly better than other pupils in England, Governors have been hearing from school leaders about the strategies that they are adopting to make sure that confident readers are able to achieve at the highest levels and access reading materials and teaching which will challenge them, as well as the strategies the schools adopt to ensure that children to enjoy reading for pleasure.



Staffing retention and recruitment. There has been a widely reported national shortage of teachers and ongoing challenges for all schools recruiting and retaining staff. This has been compounded in Hackney by rising rents and living costs. Governors have been hearing from school leaders about their work to ensure that good teachers want to work with our schools and in retaining the best teachers. This work has included a review of the schools marking policy, a reduction in the number of assessments during the year and additional time out of class to support with teacher workload. Governors are also regularly updated on the training that our staff receive. During the last two years, a link with London Metropolitan University has been established to attract and train student teachers and we will be employing our first tranche of apprentice teachers in September 2019 as part of a brand new Government scheme.



Website development and communication with parents. Governors have discussed how well the schools communicate with parents and how to increase the level of response to the annual parent questionnaire that is used to help inform our strategic planning. New school websites, a joint Viridis website and a new style of questionnaire will be launched in the new academic year.



Pupil Voice. We have been very interested to hear about the innovative work school leaders have been doing to ensure the opinions of our most important stakeholders, our pupils, are heard. This has included ambassador roles for many areas of the curriculum, active school councils and a pupil action research group.



WHO ARE WE?

The Viridis Governing body consists of eight co-opted governors, two parent governors, one staff governor, one local authority governor and an executive headteacher governor. We meet once a term as a full Governing body and once a term as a school sub-committee.

The Full Governing Body

Co-opted Governors: Richard Allen (Vice Chair), Sara Fox, James Gowland (Chair), Andrea Klettner, Hannah Lownsborough, Alberta Senyah, Laura Theobold, Sara Walsingham

Executive Headteacher Governor: Stephen Hall

LA Governor : Cllr Ian Rathbone

Parent Governors: Lenna Marson, Kay Richardson,

Staff Governor: Claudia Moreira

The School Subcommittees

Each school subcommittee is made up of members of the full Governing body, alongside the Headteacher of each school and non voting associate members who bring a particular skills or expertise which is considered complimentary by the full Governing body.



Orchard School
Holcroft Road
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Hoxton Garden School
Ivy Street
London, N1 5JD
Tel: 0207 739 8591



Southwold School
Detmold Road
London, E5 9NL
Tel: 0208 806 5201

Orchard	Southwold	Hoxton Garden
Voting Members: James Gowland Kay Richardson Laura Theobold Sara Walsingham	Voting Members: Richard Allen Lenna Marson Ian Rathbone Alberta Senyah	Voting Members: Sara Fox Andrea Klettner Hanna Lownsborough Claudia Moreira
Associate Governors: Rachel Davie Owen Puttock	Associate Governors: Noah Birksted-Been Victoria Crawford Stephen O'Brien	Associate Governors: Rachel Adams Sophie Dyer