

Co-Chairs' Newsletter July 2021

At the start of this academic year we hoped that lockdowns were behind us and we were on the path of returning to normal but since then we have experienced two more periods of lockdown, including a return to remote learning in the Spring term, and even now we remain somewhat unsure regarding what is to come. With that in mind, our planning work with senior leadership includes hoping for the best, but continuing to plan resources and staffing taking into account the ongoing risk of the spread of coronavirus.

The amount of work required to ensure a robust and safe educational provision for all students - on site and remotely - during the course of the various lockdowns has been staggering, and we remain so appreciative of all of the efforts of everyone at Queen's.

Beyond the work of our full Board and various Committees, our Covid Risk Assessment Working Group has been active through the year, considering government advice and the needs of the school, and at times, such as when we needed to support the creation of prioritisation criteria for critical worker children in the Spring term, making difficult decisions in order to best protect our children and staff.

School leadership: We are now coming to the end of the first academic year with Ms Demetriou and Mrs Stroud-Turp in post as permanent Co-Headteachers, and with Miss Wilson as Assistant Head. Congratulations, and thank you, from everyone on the Governing Board for such strong and successful leadership in such trying times.

Board leadership: With the departure of Co-Chair of Governors, Bethany Claus Widick and family from Kew, Inga Hall will remain in the role of Chair for the coming year. Cathy Christmas is stepping down from her role as Vice Chair and we are delighted to confirm that Janine Farrance and Mark Ivory will now share the vice chairing role over the coming year. Thank you to Bethany and Cathy for everything you have done and achieved.

Achievements: The determination and resilience of both the pupils and staff has been a key achievement this year. Despite another lockdown and home schooling, children have continued to make good progress and adapted quickly to switching between Google classroom and face-to-face learning and to all of the COVID routines in school. The catch-up programme within the classroom and in small groups has successfully supported pupils to re-visit and consolidate missed learning. Again, there were no statutory end of key stage assessments and therefore no comparative national data, but the school has completed internal assessments, the results of which, along with the other achievements of the year, will be shared in the school Newsletter/website.

A new School Vision for 2021-2024: Governors have, over the past month, started to review our current Mission Statement, Vision Statement and Vision Priorities and consider the path we wish The Queen's School to take over the coming 3 years, and the steps to achieve those goals. Led by our Staff Governor, San Kodia, we will be working on this over the summer, with a view to launching our broader stakeholder engagement in the coming Autumn term. We are delighted too that the new vicar to The Barn and St Luke's, the Reverend Dr Melanie Harrington, will be supporting us in this important work. We will be touch separately with more details on this process shortly.

Finances: The school is in a good financial place, with healthy reserves. As always, school finances depend to a very large extent on the number of pupils on roll, and central government decisions regarding per-pupil funding amounts.

News from the Committees

- Admissions** – On National Offer day we had nearly 2.5 applications for every seat in our upcoming Reception class. Like most Richmond schools, we have some spaces available in higher year groups. We encourage parents to spread the word of availability to local families who may be interested in applying for our limited vacancies in years 2 through 6. Recent legislative changes have necessitated that all schools (including Queen's) update criteria in their admissions policies that relate to looked after children (our criterion 1), to include internationally adopted, previously looked after children. Only a very small number of children throughout the country are expected to be affected by this change, which we have now incorporated into our oversubscription criteria.
- Curriculum and Standards** – This year has seen our work change substantially from our normal school programme. We have been focusing on the recovery curriculum and remote learning, ensuring all the children have access to learning at home and for some at school during the lockdown periods. We have endeavoured to continue our focus, efforts and planning on Learning and Teaching, with the children's progression at the forefront. With the challenges of this year we have been looking closely at making sure the children are where they need to be at this time and putting in place any necessary catch up interventions. Internal assessments were put in place this summer to enable us to monitor progress as the normal tests were postponed.
- Finance** – The Finance Committee has spent much of the last year assessing and reacting to the financial implications to the school of COVID such as the loss of lettings income and extra cleaning and associated costs. We have recently submitted our new budget to the local authority for the year ahead. The committee has continued to ensure that the school's finances are controlled and that we are always getting the best possible value for money – for example we have regular benchmarking with similar schools.
- Pastoral + Kairos** – This year, the Pastoral and Kairos Committees have continued to work together effectively as one committee with two chairs. The Pastoral Committee has focused again on a holistic approach to child wellbeing. This has been more challenging during this academic year due to the ongoing COVID pandemic but the staff and the whole of the governing board have worked hard to ensure that the children's mental health on returning to and being reintroduced to school has been a priority, especially during the initial recovery period. Return-to-school questionnaires were designed by the staff to highlight any areas of concern to help settle everyone back in. Some of the staff have also received training as mental health first aiders to enable children and staff to access services to support mental health during this difficult time period.

The KAIROS Committee has focused on implementing the new Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMs) framework, linking this to ongoing work on Christian Distinctiveness, Collective Worship, the Curriculum, and wider School Vision Plan. There has been an emphasis on prayer within the School, which continued during lockdown/home-schooling periods. The new Collective Worship Policy was written and approved, and Collective Worship continued throughout the year (mainly virtually), supported by Father Nigel, the recently retired vicar at St Anne's Church.
- Pay and Personnel** – During the year we have focussed on supporting staff through the extraordinary demands placed on them in the pandemic. We have also refreshed the policies which support and enable staff. It is a pleasing sign of progress in Queen's striving to be an employer of choice that we end the year knowing that three former members of staff will return to Queen's in September.
- Premises** – Regarding Covid-19 measures, the School has followed the protocols set out in its Risk Assessment to enable the safe operation of the premises on a day-to-day basis. Observance by children and staff have been excellent. The School has applied to Richmond Council for a planning variation to the Community Use Agreement for the all-weather pitch – extending the hours to allow for use on Saturday afternoons and for summer evenings. Neighbour notification and consultation closed on 16 July and we hope for a decision shortly. We have also been working closely with the school, and the original building contractors, regarding the making good of outstanding defects, and to restart the trial of cooling fans in classrooms that are prone to over-heating. It has also been with great pleasure that

the Premises Committee has also been able to approve the recent Year 5 residential trip in Surrey, and the planned Year 6 trip in the Summer term 2022.

Welcomes and Goodbyes

During the year we have said a warm welcome to Mark Ivory, our new St Anne's Foundation Governor. Many of you will know Mark from St Anne's already and he joins the Board with the background of being a social affairs journalist, with extensive strategic and operational experience in social affairs organisations, including charities. Mark has joined our Admissions and Pay & Personnel Committees, and will be stepping up to the roles of Vice Chair and Chair of the Admissions Committee this autumn.

Janine Farrance joined the Governing Board as a Diocesan Governor. Janine is a Queen's parent and an active member of St. Anne's, with a background in corporate affairs and media relations. Janine chaired the Kairos committee this past year, and will serve on the Pastoral & Kairos and Curriculum & Standards Committees, as well as sharing the role of Vice Chair with Mark Ivory.

We also have three farewells:

- We say a fond, and heartfelt thank you and goodbye to Fr Nigel Worn, who retired from St Anne's (and hence the Governing Board) in May. Fr Nigel has been an invaluable member of the Governing Board for many years and has been an integral member of the Pastoral & Kairos Committees and an active participant in FGB discussions. Fr Nigel is the link between school and church, and was crucial to our SIAMs Outstanding ranking in 2016. He has also been the excellent 'headhunter' of a number of our new governors and, over time, closely involved in the appointment of Mrs Stroud-Turp and Ms Demetriou, as well as Miss Bentham, as headteachers.
- Sir David Durie will be stepping down as associate member, after being with the Board since 2009 in many roles, including Co-Chair of the Governing Board, Foundation Governor, Diocesan Governor, Associate Member, Committee Chair and member of the Headteacher Recruitment Group. David has been a guiding light to us all, providing gravitas, wisdom, the perfect level of 'critical friend' support to the school and governors alike, all with kindness, deep knowledge of issues and good humour.
- Bethany Claus Widick will be leaving the Board at the end of July, as she and her family move out of Kew. During her nearly four years on the Board Bethany has achieved so much and become a friend to us all. She joined as a parent governor, and quickly became Chair of Admissions and safeguarding governor and giving her insights and skills to Premises, C&S and Pastoral & Kairos. She has also been an incredible Co-Chair, and instrumental across our Risk Assessment, Vision and Headteacher Recruitment Working Groups. Bethany's fresh perspectives, dedication, energy and enthusiasm will be sadly missed.

We will be holding **parent governor elections** in the Autumn term, as we have positions available for 2 new parent governors to join the Governing Board. We will be in touch in September with further details regarding this process and timetable.

On behalf of all the Governors, we would like to wish you and your family a safe, relaxing and enjoyable summer holiday.

With best wishes, Inga Hall and Bethany Claus Widick, Co-Chairs of Governors