

January 2020



Dear Parents and Carers

Happy New Year from the Chiltern School Board of Governors.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Chair of Governors, having taken over from Richard Cooper just before Christmas. On behalf of the Board and the school, I would like to thank Richard for his commitment and hard work as Chair - he remains on the Board as a co-opted governor so we will be continuing to benefit from his many years of involvement with the school and his passion for improving the experience of all our young people.

As you may know, over the course of last year, we started a new initiative of Parent/Governor Surgeries to give parents and carers the opportunity to get to know the governors and raise any issues directly with them. We had good attendance and some lively and constructive discussions at the two surgeries we have held so far. Attached is a summary of some of the main issues that were raised together with the responses.

We will be running more surgeries soon so watch out for the invitations.

If you would like to contact a governor but are unable to attend the surgeries, please feel free to contact me on this email or one of the other governors via governors@chiltern.beds.sch.uk - your email will be forwarded to the appropriate governor.

Lisa and her team have lots of exciting plans for 2020 and the Board looks forward to working with them to support the staff, students, parents and carers

Regards

Morwenna Scholes
Chair of Governors

Six main points were raised:

1. Parents asked for an app/online method to pay monies directly to school e.g. lunches, trips etc. with special logins for each child.
 - **Answer**– School had already been working on an online solution and were therefore able to send out a message via class Dojo to all parents on 10 October 2019 advising them of the new Parentpay service. Parentpay is now in place and the school continues to offer supportive workshops in order to ensure all parents can use the system effectively
2. Parents were concerned that there was no dining room for young people to use at Beech Road, which for some is causing issues, e.g. young people refusing to eat dinner and others needing to bring in a packed lunch.
 - **Answer**– Following discussion with class teachers the decision was made to make the dining experience less stressful and reduce anxiety and over stimulation for pupils by bringing the food to them in their classrooms. This means that pupils and staff can focus on helping pupils develop social interaction and to create a sense of security and comfort in a familiar environment, with smaller numbers than a larger dining room which can be overwhelming for some young people. However, school leaders had not been made aware of any issues and were happy to discuss individual cases with parents directly should they want to.
3. Parents raised the issue that the hydrotherapy pool at Beech Road was still not working and, as this had been a key selling point for some for their children moving to Beech Road, they were disappointed that it had not been fixed.
 - **Answer**– Unfortunately, following a recent review of health and safety, the costs and human resources needed to maintain the pool, the decision has been made to decommission the pool at Beech Road. This decision has not been taken lightly, the costs c. £60,000 are high and the number of teaching/support staff needed to support each child in the pool meant that learning was significantly impacted. However, young people who have water therapy in their EHCP plans are accessing the pools at Woodlands School and Keech Cottage instead. As part of the PE curriculum pupils will access swimming lessons as appropriate in Phase 1.
4. Parents were concerned about the number of agency staff being used particularly to cover inductions etc. resulting in inexperienced agency staff not dealing with situations appropriately.
 - **Answer**– The school absolutely try to utilise staff in the best way possible to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of our young people, without impacting on learning, including when staff are off sick, on maternity/paternity leave, or are needed to support other activities e.g. staff training, school trips and journeys and induction training for new staff. We always try to cover internally first but agency staff are unfortunately sometimes the only option we have to cover at critical times and keep the school safe. We use approved suppliers to source temporary staff and if/when there is an issue, we deal with the issue by following official guidelines and procedures. If any parent is not happy with the current set up we would really value the opportunity to look at this issue in more detail via the Governors. We utilise a number of staff who are employed on a casual basis and know the school well but do not currently hold a “Bank” of people who we turn to at times of needed additional staff.

5. A question/point was asked around the use of part-time vs. job share LSA's and how they were allocated to our young people. There was a feeling that more job shares would mean that the LSA's had a better opportunity to work together to understand the young person they support more consistently, making handovers etc. easier. There was also a request to see the job descriptions of the different types of LSA's.
- **Answer**– We absolutely agree that it's important to make sure that there is consistency in terms of the LSA's who support our young people and that there are appropriate handovers between LSA's. We take requests from individual employees on an individual basis and discuss the impact with Class teachers and Pathway Leads. Our aim is to make sure that all LSA's have a good knowledge of all pupils they support regardless of whether they are full time, part time or job share. We will happily share the job descriptions of the LSA's.
6. Some parents raised the fact that they are still not clear on the Learning Pathways for their children, what they are, how they were constructed and how they appeal the decision on which Pathway their children are on. The parents want to understand the Pathways and the objectives for their child in more detail.
- **Answer** – Pupils' needs are constantly under review. If a parent is concerned their child is in the wrong Pathway, they would be invited to discuss these concerns with the class teacher and Pathway Leader initially. Using a multi- disciplinary approach, school may decide to make further informal assessment by calling on other professionals, and work collaboratively with the parent to identify needs and ensure they are in the right class and Pathway. We recognise that needs change. We recognise that there is a need to ensure parents are fully informed and understand the purpose of the pathway, particularly in light of the exciting changes in the curriculum. There will be a family Forum dedicated to this in the spring term and updated information will be put on the website. If a parent feels strongly that their child is in the wrong Pathway and they aren't making progress, they can raise their concerns with the Headteacher and a Governor for review.