

Dear Parents/Carers

It has been some time since I last wrote to you to explain the work of our governing body and the issues which have occupied our time and efforts. Firstly I would like to provide a brief explanation of what role governors perform in the state run education sector.

In England most schools have a governing body with the composition of that governing body being dependant on the type of school they are. Governors are volunteers (usually with an interest in education) and are there to provide a level of accountability for their school.

Wentworth is a maintained school meaning it is controlled by the local authority (Essex County Council) and is funded from general taxation which is passed by government to Essex and then to the school.

As a governing body our main tasks are:

- to work effectively with leaders to communicate the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school and develop a culture of ambition for the school and its pupils
- provide a balance of challenge and support to leaders, understanding the strengths and areas needing improvement at the school
- performance manage the headteacher rigorously
- understand the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on the progress of pupils currently in the school
- ensure that assessment information from our leaders provides governors with sufficient and accurate information to ask probing questions about outcomes for our pupils
- ensure that the school's finances are properly managed and can evaluate how the school is using its funding. Specifically funding for disadvantaged pupils, sport premium and special educational needs.
- ensure the school is transparent and accountable, including in recruitment of staff, governance structures, attendance at meetings and contact with parents.

As a maintained school Wentworth has co-opted governors (from the local community), four parent governors elected by parents, one elected staff governor, a governor nominated by the Local Authority and the Headteacher.

The governors meet as a group every term and also have two committees which meet every term. One committee deals with matters relating to Pupils, Personnel and Performance and the other deals with Finance and Premises. Both committees report to the main governing body. Some of our governors take special responsibilities for such things as pupils with special needs, health and safety and safeguarding. Governors often visit the school to look at areas of interest and report back on their findings. When we need to recruit new members we are always mindful of the range of skills and expertise needed by our governing body.

The last year has been very challenging for us financially (along with all other schools) and Mrs Dack and Mrs Doran (School Business Manager) have put in a great deal of time and effort on financial planning and forecasting for the future. The Institute of Fiscal Studies has suggested that total spending on schools has fallen by eight percent per pupil in real terms between 2009/10 and 2017/18. Cost

pressures on the school are likely to continue in the form of salary increases which are not fully funded for schools and potential substantial increases in employer contributions to the teachers' pension fund. Added to this, year on year shortfalls in teacher training recruitment do not bode well for the future in terms of the costs of recruiting new staff and retaining existing staff. We have tried to maintain and improve on our current rich curriculum as we feel this is what makes Wentworth stand out. Given the constraints on our funding we have been really grateful to our PTA for the great work they have done in raising funds (over £14000 including a winning bid to Tesco) for the school and supporting initiatives which we would not otherwise have undertaken, for the benefit of our pupils. We are also thankful for the parental contributions for swimming as this makes the continuation of this great facility for our pupils viable. We receive Sports Premium Funding and this has meant that the school has been able to develop its activities offered to all of our pupils and engage them in a wide choice of activities. Our teams continue to do well in all local competitions and the daily mile has proved to be highly popular. Importantly the impact of what we spend this funding on is carefully assessed and evaluated allowing us to plan ahead with confidence.

We were pleased with the excellent outcomes for our pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and for the SATS at Key Stages one and two. These outcomes and our overall curriculum fully prepare our pupils when they move on to the secondary phase of their education. As a governing body we are kept fully informed by the school on pupil progress and the impact of the funding we receive for disadvantaged pupils. This enables us to challenge and hold the school to account. Importantly for any school to achieve good outcomes for its pupils it relies on having good staff and, at a time of difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers, Mrs Dack has worked tirelessly to maintain a very strong and talented staff at the school. The school continues to lead on its wide and rich curriculum and I have been particularly impressed with our teaching of Mandarin throughout the school and our links with schools from China. This culminated with a visit this term from six teachers from prestigious schools in China who were most impressed with what they saw at Wentworth and with our pupils.

Other areas which have taken up a considerable amount of time for both staff and governors have been the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We are compliant with this regulation and to ensure continued compliance we regularly audit our practice and policies. This also applies to Safeguarding. Mrs Dack ensures that all staff and governors are fully up to date with information and training in Safeguarding, an area which is always subject to change. Again we regularly monitor and audit our practices and procedures.

We continue to try to improve our building and facilities for our pupils and are always looking to access additional capital funding to do this.

I hope that I have been able to give you an insight into the role of governors at Wentworth and the issues that currently confront us.

I would like to end by thanking my fellow governors for the time they give to the school and the expertise they provide for free. I would also like to thank Mrs Dack and her staff team for their efforts on behalf of the pupils and families in our community.

Geoff Skewes

Chair of the Governing Body.