

Dear Parents/Carers

Following the recent decision of the Junior School to mix classes for academic year 2021/22, I am writing to provide some clarification to parents/carers on a few matters concerning governance at Honeywell.

Operational decision

The decision itself to mix classes was made by Ms Clarke and her senior leadership team (SLT), as it is an operational change for the school. Operational decisions concern the every-day operations and management of the school, its pupils, staff and premises and are taken by SLT because their qualifications, experience and position put them in the best place to do so. This is the same for all schools.

Governors' responsibilities

The governing body has three core responsibilities:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff
- overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent

Governors are volunteers and we take our responsibilities seriously. We devote many hours each month to supporting and challenging both schools to strive for excellence and equality for all. We recognise we have skills and abilities to share with the schools, but more importantly we acknowledge that we are not experts in the outstanding education of children. For this, we trust Ms Clarke in the Junior School and Ms Neal in the Infant School, and their leadership teams, to make decisions that will be for the benefit of all the children they are responsible for. It is our role to understand these decisions, and to provide challenge and support at the appropriate times.

Wellbeing of the children and staff

Via meetings of three separate committees and the full governing body, each term **8** meetings are held at which various updates on pupil and staff wellbeing are given by senior leaders. Governors are proactive in their monitoring of wellbeing, especially within the Pupil Welfare & Community and Human Resources Committees.

Governors understood pupil welfare to be an overarching consideration in the rationale for class mixing, which is in line with the school's strong ethos of putting the welfare of its pupils at the heart of everything it does.

Governors' involvement following the decision to mix classes and prior to announcement

The rationale for the class mixing was explained fully to Governors. Governors viewed the responses of a staff survey. Governors challenged the rationale and process at each key stage of development to ensure it was robust. Governors provided feedback on the proposed communications from SLT to the parent/carer community. Data protection sensitivities prevent the disclosure to the parent/carer community all of the bases on which the SLT made its decision, but Governors were privy to this data.

Meetings of the Governors

The decision to class mix was communicated to the governing body in principle on 10th February 2021. Meetings of the Pupil Welfare & Community (PW&C) Committee took place on 25th February 2021 and 3rd March 2021.

As a large joint governing body, it is sometimes our practice to form a smaller working group if there is a particular matter to consider in greater depth; this is an effective use of time and skills. A Communications Working Group was set up, for which seven governors volunteered to participate: the PW&C Chair, the SEN Link Governor, the Vulnerable Pupils Link Governor (who is a parent elected governor), the Chair of Governors (parent elected) and three other governors (including the other parent-elected governors). A meeting with SLT was held on 17th March 2021.

Concerns/Complaints Process

The schools have a Complaints policy. This is available on the website. There is a clear process to be followed in the event that a parent/carer is not happy with a situation at school. The senior leadership teams wish to resolve concerns and issues at an early stage in mutual collaboration and we would encourage parents/carers to adopt this approach.

In relation to class mixing, as has been the case to date, parents/carers are encouraged to discuss their concerns directly with Ms Clarke and Ms Hunt, who will do all they can to help.

Yours faithfully

Emma Healey
Chair of Governors.