



A letter from Chair of Governors and Chair of PTA

Dear Parents

One of the messages to emerge from the 2015/16 parent questionnaire and other feedback since then is that some of you are unsure about the different roles of the Governing Body and the PTA at the School. This letter is intended to explain what each does.

The Governing Body

The Governing Body is legally responsible for certain aspects of the School and exists to provide the Headteacher and the rest of the staff with advice about the overall strategy and direction of the School. The Headteacher and the staff are responsible for the day to day management and organisation of the School, and should always be the first point of contact for parents who have concerns about any aspect of their child's education. Governors may become involved later if parents feel that their concerns are not being adequately addressed, or if there are issues which relate to the School as a whole rather than to individual pupils. This is very rare at Comins Coch, but if Governors are involved then they will comply (and will expect parents to comply) with the relevant policies which the School has (and which the Governing Body approves) in relation to the handling of complaints or other matters. Copies of these policies are available on the website or from the Headteacher, and explain how various aspects of the School are managed.

The Governing Body consists of people with a range of backgrounds and experience which is likely to be helpful to the School, and some Governors represent particular interests, including Parent Governors (who must themselves have children at the School) and Governors who are nominated by the local authority or who otherwise represent the local community. Some Governors have professional experience in education, but others do not, and all volunteer their time. The Governing Body has been chaired by Richard Feasey since 2014 (the Chair is nominated and adopted by the Governing Body as a whole) and normally meets once a term. A list of current Governors is on the website at <http://www.cominscoch.ceredigion.sch.uk/governors/> and vacancies for parent Governors are always advertised to all parents. The Headteacher provides a report at each meeting, and staffing, educational performance and the finances of the School are always discussed. Improving attendance, improving communication with parents, and ensuring that the School has adequate ICT have also been important issues for Governors in recent years. The current priority is the proposed improvement of the School buildings and other facilities, for which funding has been sought from both the local authority and the Welsh Assembly and which, if approved, will be undertaken in 2018. This will significantly improve the quality of the facilities we have, but will also involve some disruption whilst the building works are being undertaken.

Governors will also be involved at other times during the term if new staff are to be interviewed and appointed, in reviewing and approving staff pay and the performance of the Headteacher, for the health and safety audit of the School and for some meetings with representatives from the local authority or Estyn, and when significant financial decisions are taken by the School. Governors also visit during term time to observe lessons, scrutinise books and generally ensure they understand how the School is running. The Chair or other Governors may represent the School from time to time in meetings that are organised by the local authority, and may meet parents if particular concerns arise, as they did when the School made changes to the drop off arrangements last year.

Some of you may have seen that the Estyn report advised that the Governing Body become more involved in the development of the School's development plan, which is the document which identifies the key priorities for the coming year, a summary of which appears in the annual report to parents. The Governing Body had already been closely involved in reviewing the strategy of the School, but have now been working with staff in developing the plan before formally reviewing and approving it. Current priorities around improving attendance, ensuring our ICT, digital skills and teaching of Welsh are all excellent and ensuring that new members of staff are integrated quickly and effectively into the School, all remain. The likely building works at the School during 2018 will be a new area of focus.

The Governing Body is always keen to hear from parents about the overall direction and strategy of the School, initiatives the School could take or benefit from, or how you think resources might be allocated. The 2015/16 questionnaire was one attempt to provide an opportunity to do this, but you should not wait if you have ideas to share. Parent Governors, who will have children at the School, are also expected to represent you and a chat with them is another good way to make your views known. Early in the new year we also hope to have an email address specifically for Governors.

Specific concerns about your child should always be raised with their teacher or with the Headteacher, rather than with Governors, in the first instance. Governors may become involved if the concern reflects a wider issue at the School, or if the matter cannot otherwise be resolved, but this is rarely the case at Comins.

The PTA

The PTA does not have any legal responsibilities in relation to the running of the School, but is a very important way in which parents can support the School in a wide variety of practical ways. The PTA is run by a Committee which meets at least every half term, and meetings are always advertised by email (if you are not receiving emails directly from the PTA then please forward your email address to cominscochpta@gmail.com) and a notice at the entrance to the School. Karen Taylor has been Chair of the PTA since 2016 and is always keen to hear from new volunteers. The PTA decides which activities it will support or undertake. It is entirely independent of the Governors or the Headteacher, but works closely with the school. Committee members are elected biannually at the PTA AGM in November. All parents / guardians and staff are members of the PTA.

The PTA generally supports important School events throughout the year, by providing refreshments at the Sports Day, Leavers Day, and organises the Summer Fete and the Christmas raffle. Most of the activities undertaken by the PTA are intended to raise money which is provided to the School, often for specific purposes or purchases. For example, the PTA has recently raised funds to allow the School to purchase secure storage and charging facilities for iPads and the installation of a 'Buddy Bench' for use at playtimes. Other activities, such as Pancake Day and school discos allow parents, staff and /or children to get together and have fun or, in the case of the clear up day, to improve the school's facilities.

A number of parents have suggested that they would like to support the School in other ways, for example by volunteering their time and skills to improve the facilities or to support teaching activities. All suggestions are very welcome, but they are best addressed to the Headteacher, who is responsible for running the School. It may be that the PTA can help in organising activities once the School itself has determined the best course of action.

Similarly, concerns about the overall strategy of the School are best addressed to the Headteacher, Parent Governors or the Chair of Governors, rather than the PTA. The PTA is not organised or intended to represent the views of parents to the School (which is the role of the Parent Governors) but to allow parents to volunteer their time and skills in support of the School. The Comins Coch PTA has been very effective and very successful over many years because parents have been willing to do so.



