



# Newsletter

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## GOVERNORS ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Dear parents, carers, staff and pupils,

Each year the Governors share a short report to update on what has kept us busy and to celebrate school achievements. We're always incredibly proud of Elm Grove and were delighted at the start of the year when Ofsted confirmed what we already knew – [Elm Grove is a good school](#), where everyone can learn and thrive. Maintaining a good status requires hard work every day, and we're pleased that the staff team were able to showcase their efforts when the inspection took place in January. Several Governors met the inspector too and were able to talk about the school's strengths and future development plans.

Beyond Ofsted, we continue to strive for excellence. In 2022 we launched our [5 year vision](#) and refreshed our mission and values. Before that we spent time consulting staff, parents, carers and children on what they thought about the school and where improvements could be made. Over the course of the last year we have monitored progress against priority areas to ensure that Elm Grove will be a flourishing school. Specifically, we have supported and challenged the school to continue to be ambitious about learning and our goal is that everyone should be able to access learning whatever their starting point. We've placed a big emphasis on wellbeing and encouraged partnership working with other schools and the wider community. We've also monitored improvements to the school environment.

Another group with a keen focus on improving the surroundings for the children is our [incredible and award winning PTA](#), which has delivered some fantastic projects and much needed fundraising results. Nearly £8k was raised at a comedy night and a recent crowdfunder has generated £16k for a new green wall that will enhance nature in the playground and fend off pollution from the main road. School fairs, cakes sales, pumpkin carving competitions and much more have contributed vital funds that have helped to refurbish classrooms and make other improvements. The PTA has gone further, installing the Pantry to help local families with essential goods. We'd like to say a huge thank you to the PTA and to everyone that has supported their activities and other school events – including the fantastic Children's parade in May.

On the next page we have provided brief updates on important areas for the governors. We've had plenty to keep us busy, from evaluating performance to making sure the books balance – an increasing challenge at this point in time. Being a Governor is a rewarding role and if you'd like to hear more, please do get in touch with our co-chairs Diana and Chris.

With best wishes,

Diana Boyd	Co-Chair of Governors Local Authority Governor <a href="mailto:dianaboyd@elmgrove.brighton-hove.sch.uk">dianaboyd@elmgrove.brighton-hove.sch.uk</a>
Chris Adams	Co-Chair of Governors Co-opted Governor <a href="mailto:ChrisAdams@elmgrove.brighton-hove.sch.uk">ChrisAdams@elmgrove.brighton-hove.sch.uk</a>
Hugh Mehta	Vice Chair of Governors Co-opted Governor
Camilla Gauge	Chair of Quality of Education Co-opted Governor
Phil Kelly	Co-opted Governor
Laura Haynes-Copp	Co-opted Governor
Natalie Dodds	Co-opted Governor
Julian Ridge	Co-Chair of Finance & Premises Parent Governor
Tara St John	Parent Governor
Chris McNeil	Associate Governor
Becs Kent	Parent Governor
Louise Willard	Head Teacher Governor
Anna Johnson	Clerk



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# BRIEF UPDATES ON PRIORITY AREAS IN 2022/23

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

At the start of the 2022/3 academic year we established a new Quality of Education Committee, reflecting the need to have a specific space where we could monitor the development and embedding of the new national [curriculum](#) which focuses on all subjects, not just English and maths.

Governors also focused on progress in reading, writing and maths, across Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. We reviewed the School Improvement and Development Plan's Quality of Education milestones and made sure it was acting on the recommendations highlighted in the Ofsted report.

Our governors with responsibilities for overseeing safeguarding and support to vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have worked closely with the team at the school. Statutory reports were reviewed and approved and can all be found on the [website](#). Governors also held consultation meetings for parents and carers of children with SEND, to make sure we could hear and support them.

Attendance has been a key concern for the governors, with increasing numbers of children missing school both in Brighton and nationally following the pandemic. We're supporting the school to help children to be in class which is so important for their learning.

We know that educational outcomes are enhanced by extracurricular and special projects. For example, we were pleased to hear more about the 'Our City Our World' initiative, which is helping bring children closer to nature, encouraging them to be proactive in addressing climate change and also reducing anxiety about the issue.

## FINANCES

The school continues to manage a very tight budget carefully, with the Finance and Premises Committee regularly reviewing the financial position and helping to make tricky decisions. Our annual benchmarking against other schools last year showed that we continued to offer good value for money.

However, our forward-looking budget has also been negatively affected by well-deserved staff and teacher pay rises (as well as the costs for maintaining our aging building). Sadly, additional funding is unlikely to cover increased costs and we will have to work hard to stay out of deficit in the coming years.

The school does however receive ringfenced [funding for PE and sport](#) from the Government, which has been expertly spent to support physical and mental health. Extra-curricular activities are particularly important for wellbeing.

## SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT & EQUIPMENT

Whilst our budgets are stretched, we have had to make investments for the good of the children. Our ICT suite benefitted from much needed new computers, which were secured at a good price and with governor approval. This was something that the children had called for loudly during the consultation on our new school vision.

Classrooms have been refurbished as part of rolling improvement measures, and the school received astroturf donated by the Amex Stadium that would have otherwise gone to landfill. We know that a wonderful group of volunteers have helped maintain and improve the blossom garden, for which we are grateful.

Our Health and Safety Governor continued monitoring visits to ensure that all the necessary precautions are in place to make Elm Grove a safe place to work and learn in.

## STAFFING

Over the year there have been changes to the staffing team. A [full list](#) of staff members and their roles is available on the school website. Funding shortages have meant that we have not always been able to replace support staff when they leave, but we have been impressed by the school's ability to adapt to new staffing structures. We approved changes including the appointment of a staff member to provide cover, thereby saving agency staff fees when teachers need to be out of class.

Throughout the year governors also monitored the annual staff appraisal programme and led the Head Teacher appraisal.

## INFO ABOUT THE GOVERNING BODY

- Every school has a Governing Body, which is a group of elected volunteers including parents, staff and members of the local community.
- Governors set the school's strategic aims, agree plans and policies, evaluate performance, and act as a critical friend to support and challenge the school to achieve the best possible outcomes.
- Full Governing Body Meetings take place at least once a term, as do committees on Quality of Education and Finance & Premises. Governors hold one or more specialist roles, linked to a relevant member of staff.
- For more information, please visit the [Governors page](#) on the website