



Welcome to the new academic year, and the first issue of the Governors' Newsletter. We are the Governing Body of Highdown, and our role is to support the Senior Leadership Team by overseeing the long-term direction of the academy and ensuring that the aims of the academy are delivered successfully. This means regular update meetings, monitoring visits and review and approval of academy policies. We are directors of the academy and are responsible for signing off the accounts every year. We also sit on the interview panel for all senior leadership interviews and are involved in reviewing any complaints that may arise from time to time.

## Chair's Welcome

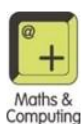
I hope you find this Highdown's first annual Governors' Newsletter useful. Its aim is to introduce the governors to everyone, and to give an update on what we are doing and what our future plans are for Highdown.

The Covid pandemic has made the last two and a half years very challenging for everyone, but we are proud of how Highdown has continued to provide excellent education and support to its students, through swift adoption of online tools during the lockdowns, robust safety measures when the students returned to school, and effective interventions to address any gaps in their learning caused by the disruption. This has been the result of strong and consistent leadership, tireless efforts by the school staff, and the resilience and hard work of our students. The pandemic is not yet over, and it is important that everyone follows safety measures if they need to be re-introduced, to avoid further disruption.

Last year we returned to the events which make our community special, with productions, concerts, and sporting fixtures with other schools to mention a few. Thank you to parents for supporting these events.

We have also been celebrating Highdown's 50th anniversary, culminating in the fantastic summer fair, organised by the PTA. During that half a century, many things have changed, and Highdown has always moved forward with the times. Even though Highdown is in a strong position both financially and educationally, changes in the education landscape mean that standing still is not an option now, either.

Highdown is a very successful school, and a central part of our vision is working with other schools, supporting them but also benefiting from their strengths and from our combined efforts and expertise. In particular, we have been building closer links with GLF, a Multi Academy Trust whose values are a good fit for us and whose approach allows






their schools to retain their own identity. As most parents will be aware, we are working towards eventually becoming part of GLF and getting the full benefits of collaboration and the security of a larger trust, which will be important in the coming years.

To prepare for this, and to enable closer co-operation also with other schools, we are making changes to the way the Senior Leadership Team is organised. Ms Cave will become the Executive Head, with a more strategic and outward-facing role, the day-to-day running of the school will become the responsibility of Mr Grantham, our new Head of School, and Dr Capaldi will become an Associate Deputy Headteacher. This model will give senior leaders more capacity to work with other schools, which will benefit Highdown. The new appointments were made after rigorous interview and task processes. We governors have full confidence in our highly capable senior leaders in their new roles.

Finally, on behalf of all governors, I would like to thank all Highdown parents for your co-operation and support.

*A. Rajantie*

## Meet the Governing Body – Who are we?

 <p><b>Arttu Rajantie</b></p>	<p><b>Chair of Governors</b></p> <p>I was elected as parent governor in 2013. I chaired the Learning and Teaching Committee from 2016 to January 2020, when I became the Chair of Governors. I have two children currently at Highdown, and one already at university. Originally from Finland, I have lived in Caversham since 2005. I work as a professor of theoretical physics at Imperial College London.</p>
 <p><b>Marco Cuttin</b></p>	<p><b>Vice-Chair of Governors</b></p> <p>My son studied at Highdown from 2012 to 2019. I joined the Governing Body as elected Parent Governor in 2017. In September 2019 I became Appointed Governor. I chaired the Finance Committee from January 2020 to September 2020, when I became Vice-Chair of Governors. Originally from Venezuela, between 2008 to 2010 I was Member of the Board of the International School of Caracas (Venezuela). In 2010, I moved to England and since then I have lived in Caversham.</p>
 <p><b>Rachel Entwistle</b></p>	<p><b>Clerk to Governors</b></p> <p>I have been Clerk to Governors since January 2020. Until recently, I also worked at the school, however I enjoy my work with the Governing Body so much that I chose to stay in this role after pursuing a career change. Being a Clerk is a varied role, helping to ensure that Highdown is compliant in all aspects of governance. I have a keen interest in education, especially in the areas of inclusion and diversity, and am glad to be able to use my skills to help Highdown be a credit to our young people.</p>



**Wayne Edwards**

**Finance Committee Chair, Link Governor for Safeguarding and Careers**

I have been part of the Governing Body since July 2019. I live in Woodley, and I have been in the teaching profession for 25 years. In my current role I am a principal of a school in North London. I enjoy working as a governor, as I can support the strategic direction of the school. As the Chair for the Finance Committee, I can use my skills that I use daily to support the school in maintaining high financial management.



**Sabiha Siddiqui**

I am passionate about ensuring the development of a high-quality learning environment for students with special educational needs and bring in a diverse portfolio of personal and professional experience to my governor role. I hold 30 years of experience as a childcare practitioner in Social Care supporting children and young adults with complex health needs. I am keen to raise awareness of supporting neurodiversity in the classroom setting, and I look forward to seeing the development of this crucial agenda item which should be a central part of tailoring education to meet the needs of all our students.



**Caroline Foulkes**

**Learning & Teaching Committee Chair, Co-link for SEND, Link for Curriculum**

I have been an elected parent governor since November 2020 and have two children at Highdown. I work at the University of Reading in Initial Teacher Education having previously been a secondary science teacher, and before that a research chemist. I enjoy working as a governor to help support and develop the strategic aims of the academy. I ask lots of questions to understand the reasoning behind decisions and the potential impact on staff and students! I am passionate about the provision of an enjoyable exciting curriculum that is accessible to everyone.



**Meredith Miller**

**Audit Committee Chair, Co-Link Governor for SEND**

I was elected as a parent governor in April 2021, following 7 years on the governing board of a primary school where I was Chair of the Finance Committee. I have two children at Highdown. My role as governor is varied and I have been involved in interviewing staff, sitting on various panels, approving building projects and ensuring policies and guidance are adhered to. I work as a Tax Director at a large accountancy firm. Outside of this, I am a keen (if slow) runner and am Treasurer (and violinist) at Reading Symphony Orchestra.



**Rick Larsen**

**Staff Governor**

After many years of working in the service industry, most notably with the Jamie Oliver Group, I decided to take the dive into the teaching profession. Part of my PGCE was completed at Highdown and I was delighted when I gained a teaching role within the Maths department of the Academy 6 years ago. I put myself forward for election as Staff Governor so that I could give a little back to the school that has helped to shape me as an educator. I hope to use my variety of skills and experience from management, business and education to maintain Highdown as one of the leading schools in the region.

## Meet the Governing Body – What do we do?

### L&T Sub-Committee – Chaired by Caroline Foulkes

This committee meets termly to review aspects relating to the quality of Learning and Teaching. We look at detailed curriculum reports for different subjects where they have identified strengths, areas to develop and strategies to move forward. These are informed by learning walks, curriculum leader reflection and analysis, and student voice. Classroom assessment data is used for all year groups to identify progress and identify where intervention or a change in approach is needed. Additional activities in this academic year included reporting on a curriculum leader 'speed date' where our subject leaders met with leaders from other schools and our leadership team to talk about their subject curriculum. We have had a review of our SEND provision with input from external experts which has highlighted the excellent practice in this area as well as identifying strategies to support us in developing further for our 3-year SEND action plan. We also review policies up for renewal relating to Learning and Teaching to present to full governors for approval.

### Finance, Staffing and Premises Sub-Committee – Chaired by Wayne Edwards

The Finance, Staffing and Premises committee meet termly to look at how the budget is being used to support all aspects of the school, from curriculum, staffing and management of the building's facilities. As part of the meetings, we plan for any buildings maintenance to improve facilities and forecast the budget for the future. This committee is extremely important, especially in these difficult times, to make sure that the school operates within its budget that is received from the DFE.

### Audit and Risk Sub-Committee – Chaired by Meredith Miller

The Audit and Risk Sub-Committee meet twice a year to review the risks to internal financial controls at Highdown. The Committee reviews the annual accounts prepared for the Academy and meets with the external auditors to discuss the results of any findings and agree a plan of action to address these. In addition to this, the Committee works with the School Manager to carry out risk reviews of Highdown's financial procedures often involving external advisors to assist with this.

## Where to find more information

If you would like to know more about the work of the Governing Body, please visit our dedicated page on the Highdown website at:

<https://www.highdown.reading.sch.uk/governance>

