



The Governing Body of Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre

Chair's Welcome

As the new school year has started, I would like to warmly welcome all new Highdown students and their parents to our school community. I very much hope that you will enjoy your time here, learning new skills and knowledge, making new friends, and having new experiences. I would also like to say farewell to those who completed their studies and qualifications and left Highdown this summer. We are proud of your achievements, and we are sure you will continue to be great ambassadors for Highdown wherever you go next.

The aim of this newsletter 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. As a single academy trust, Highdown has its own Governing Body, whose members – the governors – are the Trustees of the academy. We support the Senior Leadership Team by overseeing the long-term strategic 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 the 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. We do not interfere in the day-to-day running of the school, which is the responsibility of our highly competent Senior Leadership Team.

Highdown's governors are mostly parents of current or former Highdown students. Because of that, we have a personal connection with the school and can understand the perspective of parents and students, we are committed to ensuring that Highdown continues to be a successful and inclusive school where all students are happy and achieve academic success. We are very fortunate to have an excellent team of governors, and we are looking to expand it by running a parent governor election this autumn, so please consider whether you would like to join us.

Highdown is a highly successful school, but we are constantly aiming to improve it even further. We are evaluating and reviewing the curriculum and teaching, to ensure that they are keeping up with the changing times. Rolling out the use of laptops in lessons is an important part of this. We are conscious that the increased cost of living and high inflation are affecting many families, and we are trying to keep any costs to a minimum, for example by reviewing the uniform policy. The same factors are also putting school finances under pressure, and although Highdown is not affected by the RAAC problem which delayed the opening of many schools at the start of term, it serves to illustrate the challenges all state schools are facing. Highdown is in a secure financial position, but like everyone else, we have to be very careful and selective in how we spend our money.

The start of the school year is always an exciting time. I look forward to seeing and hearing all of the fantastic things our students do this year, and to attending the wide range of events such as productions, concerts and



sporting fixtures organised by the school and the PTA, who are playing a very important role in supporting the school. We governors would like to thank the outgoing members of the PTA committee for the fantastic work they have done, and to encourage everyone to get involved in the PTA activities.

Finally, on behalf of all governors, I would like to wish all of you Highdown parents and students a great new school year.

A. Rajantie

Meet the Governing Body – What do we do?



Arttu Rajantie

Chair of Governors, Link Governor for Science

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 three children: one current and two former Highdowners. Originally from Finland, I have lived in Caversham since 2005. I work as a professor of theoretical physics at Imperial College London. I became a governor because I share and wanted to support Highdown's vision of providing excellent education and life chances to all young people in the area, irrespective of their background.



Marco Cuttin

Vice-Chair of Governors, Audit Committee Chair, Link Governor for Mathematics

My son studied at Highdown from 2012 to 2019. I joined the Governing Body as elected Parent Governor in 2017. Once my son finished his education at Highdown, I became Appointed Governor. I chaired the Finance Committee from January 2020 to September 2020, when I was elected Vice-Chair of Governors. I am originally from Venezuela, and between 2008 and 2010, I was a 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.



Jocelyn Crowland

Clerk to Governors

Moving from Thame to Caversham in 2005, this is my tenth year working at Highdown mainly with the data team – one of my jobs being collating and sending out the information parents receive in reports. I have to admit that my favourite days at school are when I help handing out the exam results envelopes to the student – love to see their faces when they realise their hard work was worth it. My twins have just started their second year at university so I have time to take on this additional role.

<p><i>Wayne Edwards</i></p>	<p>Link Governor for Safeguarding and Careers</p> <p>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.</p>
<p></p> <p><i>Caroline Foulkes</i></p>	<p>Learning & Teaching Committee Chair, Link Governor for SEND, Link Governor for Curriculum</p> <p>I have been an elected parent governor since November 2020 and now have three 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 am looking forward this year to working more closely with the SEND team whilst continuing to oversee and support the strategic development of our curriculum aims. In my (limited) spare time I very much enjoy crochet and can usually be spotted wearing a multicoloured blanket/cardigan out and about.</p>
<p><i>Meredith Miller</i></p>	<p>Finance Committee Chair, Link Governor for English</p> <p>I was elected as a parent governor in April 2021 having spent 7 years on the governing board of a local primary school where I was Chair of the Finance Committee. I have two children at Highdown. My role as governor is varied and, as well as sitting on various committees, 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 specialising in providing corporate tax advice to large multinational companies. Outside of this, I am a keen (if slow) runner and am Treasurer at Reading Symphony Orchestra where I play the violin.</p>
<p></p> <p><i>Rick Larsen</i></p>	<p>Staff Governor, Link Governor for Sixth Form</p> <p>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 7 years ago. As a staff governor I bring my experience of working within the Academy to the board and can give insights into how the decisions made by the governors work in the live environment.</p>

L&T Sub-Committee – Chaired by Caroline Foulkes

This committee meets four times a year 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. We review policies relating to Learning and Teaching to present to the full governing body for approval. Work towards the 3 year SEND action plan was presented and scrutinised by this committee and impact will continue to be monitored as the strategies are implemented. Last year we also discussed and approved the curriculum changes to the PHSCE provision and Year 9 options offering.

Finance, Staffing and Premises Sub-Committee – Chaired by Meredith Miller

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 Marco Cuttin

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>