

Co-Chairs' Annual Report 2022-2023

Our Federation has gone from strength to strength this year, with the Executive Head, the Senior Leadership team and all staff growing together as a team, systematically sharing expertise across all three settings. Meanwhile each school retains its own individuality, with close connections retained within their local communities.

Governors have worked hard and everyone's attendance (as well as activity outside of meetings) has generally been good. We have spent much of this year with reduced numbers of governors as some tenures had come to an end, but over the year we have now appointed several new governors who have taken on their role with enthusiasm and professionalism. It has been a pleasure to welcome them on board. Our governors share a wealth of experience and skills which strengthens the Governing Body in its role with the Federation.

Governors have attended a range of training this year, including Safeguarding, PREVENT, Managing Complaints, and SEND. Governors are encouraged to access the training provided from the Local Authority, and also the range of training opportunities available online.

With the amalgamation and Covid behind us we have been able to concentrate on new projects. Carolyn chairs the Curriculum and Standards group and we have had the opportunity to review all policies, including the Learning and Teaching policy which now incorporates the six areas of learning. This gives the individual schools and staff more autonomy to provide a curriculum suited to their children. In September we agreed this year's School Development Plan, where one of the aims is around giving staff more control of their provision.

Carolyn has regularly visited all three nurseries and has been able to get to know the staff at The Fields. She also speaks to Amanda most weeks to be kept informed of latest developments, including any safeguarding issues. Governors have also completed mandatory visits to check the single central record and to discuss support for children with SEND.

We ratified the budgets for all three nurseries in the Spring term. The Fields had to set a deficit budget and this was agreed with the Local Authority. During the Summer term the Local Authority commenced a review of all maintained nursery schools in Cambridgeshire, driven partly by the fact that Local Authorities no longer receive sufficient funding from central Government to cover the costs of maintained nursery schools, so LAs are now needing to utilise their own budgets to make up these costs. Officers from the Local Authority met with governors to explain this review, and we were reassured that the LA is not considering closing any of the maintained nurseries. Whilst the LA had planned to complete the reviews by the end of the summer term, the latest feedback has been that there has been some staff turnover so the timescales for completion have slipped.

In July The Fields had a Section 8 visit from Ofsted. This is a one day visit where no grading is made. The next inspection that The Fields receives will be a graded inspection. Several governors, including both Chairs, were interviewed during the Ofsted inspection.

In the Spring Carolyn managed interim arrangements whilst the Headteacher was absent due to sickness, finally finding the right person at the Local Authority who gave advice and guidance on how to cover her absence. Our thanks go to Ruth who ably stepped up as interim Head whilst teaching and keeping her SENCo responsibilities at the same time.

At the end of the summer term, Amanda told us that she intends to retire. So it is with great regret that we have to say goodbye to her in December. She has been an amazing Head, colleague and friend. We wish her much happiness in her retirement. We hope to organise some time towards the end of this term for all governors to say goodbye to Amanda and to celebrate her time with the Federation.

Recruitment for our next Executive Headteacher is currently underway, with this process being led by a panel of governors. The advert went live on 2 October, with the closing date of 31 October. Interviews will be in early November so we hope to be able to make an announcement by the end of this term.

Lisa Faulkner and Carolyn Purser
Co-Chairs of Governors