

Dear Parents and Carers

The meetings of the Local Governance Committee (LGC) have continued to be held on line since the school opened up again for all pupils in March. Maltby Learning Trust (MLT) took the decision to minimise the numbers of visitors into its academies as a precaution to reduce any unnecessary risks during the pandemic. Despite governors not being able to get into school during the working day as much as we would have liked, the business of the LGC has continued with our meeting agendas including a wide range of issues. Governors have received regular written reports from Mrs Coates and since the outset of the pandemic, a weekly update. It has been very encouraging to see how high pupil attendance has been in the last few months and thankfully, only a very small number of pupils needing to self-isolate. Although still important, it has been very pleasing to see the focus shifting from the very real pressures associated with Covid-19 to how the Curriculum and other areas are developing at Ravenfield. It is important to acknowledge that the pandemic has necessitated significant changes to day-to-day practice in school for everyone and it is hoped that by the start of the next school year, some easing of restrictions might enable schools to return to something a little more familiar!

This newsletter is designed to give you a flavour of some of the areas that governors have been discussing. . .

ACADEMY IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

Four key areas for continued improvement were identified for 2020-21:

- ❖ The development of a more engaging curriculum
- ❖ Further development of reading
- ❖ Building increased challenge into teaching & learning to raise expectations of what children can achieve
- ❖ All the above, to contribute to improving pupil learning outcomes

Governors have discussed these developments during the year, although understandably the pace of activity has 'picked up' more recently, now everyone is back in school. We have been especially pleased to hear about the increasing range of experiences that have been built into the curriculum, specifically designed to engage and excite the children. Maximising opportunities provided through the internet, some children have 'visited' places that would not otherwise have been possible and welcomed 'visitors' into school to share their experiences. Amongst many other projects that you will be aware of, governors were delighted that Ravenfield has become involved in the 'Bears of Sheffield' and thank you for your generosity in the fund raising for the Children's Hospital. Governors have heard about ways that increased challenge has been built into teaching and learning approaches and Reading remains a very high priority too with activities to further enthuse children to read contributing to ensure success in this critically important area of learning.

A key role of governance is to provide a balance between *support* and *challenge* in discussions with leaders. In the LGC's scrutiny of progress data, whilst supportive of the steps taken to raise standards, governors also continue to offer challenge to staff to incrementally increase the proportion of our learners that are reaching the higher levels in internal and national assessments, including those children with identified special educational needs. Despite best efforts by families and staff, the events of the last 15 months have sadly impacted on the progress of many pupils across the country. Governors are reassured that Ravenfield has in place clear strategies for 'catch-up' programmes and tutoring which will continue in the autumn where necessary, but we will continue to scrutinise pupil outcomes in coming months.

ACADEMY PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Governors continue to discuss aspects of the MLT performance audit for Ravenfield which provides a structured approach to judging the performance of each of the MLT academies, against a set of criteria similar to that used when a school is inspected by Ofsted. Governors have high ambitions for Ravenfield and have been pleased to see that an increasing number of areas in the audit have incrementally improved over the last year as changes in practice have become more embedded under Mrs Coates' leadership. Governors have also been focussing on those areas where our school is judged to be performing at a consistently 'good' level with a view to minor adjustments being made so these can be judged 'outstanding'. Two areas that are currently being targeted for outstanding are *Pupil Behaviour & Attitudes* and *Personal Development* where there is much excellent work going on across Ravenfield Primary Academy.

STAFF WELLBEING INITIATIVE

In addition to the focus on our Ravenfield children, governors have been pleased to hear about positive developments which are focussing on staff wellbeing, not least given the considerable pressures that adjusting to the impact of the

pandemic has brought to staff in all schools. LGC has asked for regular updates on the BeWell@Work initiative which is being rolled out across all the MLT academies.

ACADEMY FINANCES

In addition to setting the strategic direction for a school and *holding leaders to account for performance outcomes*, *oversight of the school's finances* is one of the three core areas of governance in which the LGC is involved. Each school's budget is generated primarily by the number of pupils attending the school, so this has been another challenging year for us. There has been no escaping the fact that over time, spending levels, particularly on staffing which is by far the largest share of the budget, have exceeded our income. Governors are sure you will recognise that this position was no longer sustainable.

Ravenfield, along with all MLT academies has recently been involved in a review to ensure parity of adult roles across the trust and by necessity, this has resulted in a number of changes to the staffing profile. It is always sad when posts have to be declared redundant, but every effort has been made to redeploy affected staff within the trust. Governors are mindful that ability to offer redeployment opportunity is but one of the reasons why it has been so fortunate for Ravenfield to be part of a very supportive Trust. The LGC felt it was important that you were made aware of the significant level of financial support that MLT has provided over the last 3 years, amounting to over £350,000 to supplement our budget. This has enabled Ravenfield to continue without the necessity to make the huge savings that many maintained schools would have had to make when facing a similar deficit. This funding has paid for major renovation to the Y5 and Y6 teaching areas, maintenance and improvement work across the site and in the last year, the set-up costs of opening of our new nursery. Further work will take place over the summer, including to improve the ICT infrastructure which has been inadequate for some time. The additional funding from MLT has also enabled Ravenfield's in-year deficit to be written off. This amounted to £65,000 even after significant savings on expenditure had been made. All academies contribute towards the Trust centrally funded services but MLT has waved this charge for Ravenfield in 2021/22. We still face some challenges in coming years, but this level of financial support will enable Ravenfield to begin to plan provision within its *own* means rather being dependent upon support which cannot be sustained in the long term.

WHAT ELSE HAVE GOVERNORS BEEN DISCUSSING?

Although the LGC operates on a corporate basis, MLT has recently further developed the system where some individual governors take a lead on behalf of the LGC on specific aspects of school life. Individual governors have been taking part in training sessions provided by MLT but also accessing national training modules. Individuals have also been having 1:1 discussions, albeit virtually, with members of staff to gain further insight into specific aspects of life at Ravenfield. Helpfully, these governors have raised the awareness of all LGC members by feeding back to governors on the key messages regarding strengths and next steps for development. We have recently had inputs from individual governors on these areas:

- ❖ Safeguarding
- ❖ Provision for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- ❖ Development of Early Years provision
- ❖ Development of the engaging curriculum

Governors hope that you find it useful to know a little about our work which by necessity, often goes on 'behind the scenes'. It is hoped that this complements the regular newsletters you receive from staff.

With best wishes to you all from members of the Local Governance Committee

MEMBERS OF YOUR LOCAL GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE		
Local Governance Committees in all MLT Primary Academies are made up of 9 members. Community and Business/Education governors, the Chair and Vice-Chair are all appointed by the Trust in consultation with the LGC.		
Elected Parent governors	Community governors	Business/Education governors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott Brighton • Gemma Haigh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emma Peach • Vacancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liz Buxton (Chair) • Ruth Berry
Elected Staff governors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amy Parker – teaching staff governor • Vacancy – associate staff governor 		Academy Principal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caroline Coates is automatically a member of the LGC
	Ravenfield Primary Academy is a Maltby Learning Trust School. Maltby Learning Trust is an exempt charity regulated by the Secretary of State for Education. It is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (Company number 7033915). The Trust's registered office is Maltby Learning Trust c/o Maltby Academy, Braithwell Road, Maltby, Rotherham S66 8AB.	