**Annual Report from the Governors of the Three Hares Cluster**

**July 2020**

The academic year of 2019 – 20 has seen the building of the Three Hares identity led by Elizabeth Underwood, who officially started her role as Executive Head in September, but has also faced the impact and challenges of COVID and National Lockdown.

All three schools had the topic of Three Hares in the Autumn term, and I was lucky enough to be able to attend the Showcase at Chagford highlighting the different ways in which the children had learned about the origin of the Three Hares and its associated local history. It is lovely to see the variety of artistic Three Hares symbols in the schools - you always know that you are in a Three Hares school!

Governors attended Welcome meetings for parents held by Elizabeth Underwood to introduce herself to the parents and to set out her visions and values for the schools.

Under Elizabeth Underwood’s leadership and working closely with the Heads of School, Sarah Marvin, Tara Penny and Sunita Chauhan, there has been greater collaborative working across the Three Hares. The Three Hares curriculum has been developed and improved. This working together became invaluable in the Spring and Summer terms when schools were impacted by lockdown.

In the Autumn term the Three Hares governing body changed the format of their meetings. We disbanded the Resources and School Improvement sub-committees, and instead increased the number of Full Governor meetings from half termly to monthly. These meetings had a focus of either Resources or School Improvement, which followed the recently-changed format of the Trustees’ meetings. We formed working parties which were more focussed on visiting the schools rather than spending the time at meetings analysing data. This also followed the focus of the new Ofsted Framework. In the Autumn term and the start of the Spring Term, governors were busy visiting the three schools to monitor the School Improvement Plans for the schools, including the Accelerated Improvement Plan for North Tawton. We particularly focussed on the provision of reading and phonics across the three schools, and the implementation of the new phonics scheme “Read Write Inc” at South Tawton.

Neil Swait, the Trust School Improvement Lead, visited the schools in the Autumn and Spring terms to review the latest assessment information, quality of provision for early reading/phonics and the wider curriculum. Governors attended these visits to discuss their understanding of the school’s performance.

Lead governors also attended Safeguarding and GDPR audits across the schools. The SEND Lead governor had meetings with the three SENDCOs. In addition, there were meetings with Diocesan representatives at Chagford to discuss SIAMS new framework. The Trust also started to hold Lead governor meetings e.g., Resources, Ethos, SEND which our governors attended. There was a conference in the Autumn term, for all governors and trustees in the MAT to discuss and debate the changes to the Scheme of Delegation.

Governors continued to monitor the budgets for the three schools. We have challenged the quality of the provision of financial data from the Trust. Funding has remained a huge challenge for the schools. I attended regular meetings with Elizabeth Underwood and Susanne Kiff, the Chief Finance Officer, to discuss various finance issues including budgets, staffing, premises. Governors have also been involved with meetings discussing the Trust allocation of capital funding. Our schools, particularly North Tawton and South Tawton, require substantial capital expenditure, but substantial expenditure is also required across the rest of the Trust’s estate. As a result of various discussions, Three Hares acquired funding for new gates/fencing at North Tawton and South Tawton. Discussions are still ongoing for capital funding for improvements to the Nursery at North Tawton and moving the pre-school on site at South Tawton.

In the early part of the Spring term, Daryll Chapman, CEO of DMAT handed in his resignation but agreed to continue part-time until the new CEO was appointed. Chairs of governors were involved with the recruitment process and we look forward to Dan Morrow starting as the new CEO.

Obviously, in the Spring term everything changed with the advent of COVID and lockdown. Our schools all stayed open for children of keyworkers and vulnerable children. Work was also provided for children who were at home. Governance continued but in a slightly different way. Our meetings continued but became virtual via Teams. Governors concentrated on the wellbeing of pupils and staff, safeguarding and risk assessments. Governors also kept in regular contact with the schools to offer support. The Heads of School ensured school hampers were provided to all families entitled to free school meals during the Summer term. This work was then continued by the Central Services team and Trustees and governors including from Three Hares during the Summer holidays.

All Chairs of Governors were involved with meetings with the Trust to ensure all risk assessments were in place and schools were able to open to additional pupils in June.

During the Summer term, a Governance review was carried out by the Trust and we will know the results of this review in the new academic year.

A number of governors have stepped down in the year due to other commitments, but we have held a recruitment campaign and look forward to welcoming new governors in September.

This year has certainly been challenging due to COVID restrictions, but we continue to carry out our role as governors, supporting and growing the Three Hares.

Emma Neath

Chair of Governors

Three Hares