



Chair of Governors: Sara Gibbins

### **Results of Parent Governor Elections and other Governor Appointments**

You will be aware that over the second half of last term there was a nomination and election process for five parent governor vacancies on the Governing Body as the four-year terms of office of five parent governors were coming to an end. We are delighted that Laura Bier and Jonathan Black have been elected to continue as governors for the Junior school whilst we welcome three new Infant school parent governors, Laura Pincus, Karen Tickner and Alexandra Taylor-Yeates.

A similar nomination and election process occurred within the Infant school as a result of which we are pleased to announce that Phil Mulvihill will continue on our Governing Body. The Local Authority, meanwhile, has nominated a new Local Authority governor, Chris Johnstone and our current Chair, Sara Gibbins, will continue on our Governing Body as a community governor.

All these appointments are for four-year terms with effect from 1 April 2012.

We pride ourselves in supporting new governors as they join the Governing Body and we will be offering mentors and an induction programme for our new governors.

We would like to thank all those who put themselves forward for nomination as governors; being a governor is a significant commitment and we are grateful that you were willing to offer your time and skills to the Governing Body. Vacancies for governors arise from time to time so please do contact us if you are interested in becoming a governor in the future.

### **Contacting Governors**

The notice-boards will be updated soon to show the names and photos of all the governors at Brookland. Parent governors are often available in the playground and the photos will help you to identify them. All governors can be contacted by leaving a message with the school offices, either by e-mail or in writing. The Chair of Governors can also be contacted directly at: [chair@brooklandinf.barnetmail.net](mailto:chair@brooklandinf.barnetmail.net) or [chair@brooklandjnr.barnetmail.net](mailto:chair@brooklandjnr.barnetmail.net).

Please be aware that whilst you may contact the governors through email, governors will not enter into a discussion with you by e-mail and will look to contact you either by phone or in writing to respond to your comments. Please ensure you leave suitable contact details when you contact them.

Please also remember that specific comments or concerns about your child should be directed to their class teacher in the first instance and then the Head Teacher of the relevant school, both of whom maintain an "open door policy".

### **Contact with the school**

If you have not already done so, do please register for ParentMail. It will make communication with the school much easier for you. If you are having difficulties setting up ParentMail, the office staff will be very happy to assist.

### **School lunches**

Our contract with Pride catering is due for renewal. We are aware that some parents and children have been disappointed in the range of meals and service they have provided and we are using this as a good opportunity to make some big changes. Hopefully you will have noticed some of these changes:

- we have gone back to a three-choice menu offering a meat, fish and vegetarian meal as well as salad and bread;
- we have removed the glass screens that covered the serving hatch and were making it difficult for the children and staff to communicate;
- in the junior school we are trialling a “grab and go” option for the summer term when we know that the school dinner children often change to packed lunches so that they can have a cold meal in the warm weather and eat on the field with their friends on the days that is permitted
- we are also introducing more ways to encourage children to widen the choice they make and to find out what might be successful, with testers being offered every Wednesday – the children can try these in addition to their normal meal and if the children like the new food, it will then be added to the menu.

We will monitor the impact of these changes and review our options further later in the year.

### **School gates**

The security of the school, and in particular the school gates, has been considered by our sub-committees. You will have noticed that the height of the exit button has been increased for the two entrances connected to the Infant School in response to a risk that was identified.

We have considered whether the gates should be manned at the start and end of the day in response to a concern raised by a parent regarding congestion and ensuring that all children leave accompanied by their parent/carer. It was decided that manning the four school gates at the beginning and end of every day would not be feasible – both in terms of manpower and the practicality of checking every child leaving through the gates; parents take other parents’ children, many older Juniors meet parents outside the gates and some are independent travellers. If we were to man one gate only (say the Hill Top gate) we could find additional difficulties if parents believe we are monitoring all departures and a child left through an unmanned gate.

In the Infant School all children are released into the care of adults only. A more formal procedure is being considered for Year 3 children in the transition period, where children would be kept at the classroom for collection for a set number of weeks before changing to the wider Junior School procedure. For other Junior School children, if a parent has any specific concerns we offer for their child to be collected from within school.

With regard to congestion, we would encourage parents to arrive a little earlier if they are finding this a problem; this would not only ease congestion but enable children to socialise with their peers before the start of school and enable the school day to start promptly at 8.50am.

### **Academy status - continued watching brief**

We continue to monitor whether our Schools should become Academies. Along with all but one primary school in Barnet we believe that, at this time, converting to Academies would not be beneficial to our Schools but we will continue to consider this and will ensure a full consultation is conducted if we feel that conversion would be beneficial.

### **Secondary schools**

We continue to liaise with the Local Authority to identify and support all possible solutions for improving access by our parents to a secondary school of their choice for their children as we know this is something that is a considerable concern for many parents.

In response to this work, and as a result of the additional pressure from parent group Local Schools for Local Children, a special committee within the Council considered this issue and has now concluded that there is a “need to meet the demand for non-denominational and co-educational school places in East Finchley and Garden Suburb and Children’s Services had been instructed to develop potential solutions”. We continue to work with the Local Authority and the Local Schools for Local Children group to support the development of these solutions.

Christ’s College Finchley (all boys) and Copthall School (all girls) are each expanding by one form of entry (30 children) over the next few years and are also planning to introduce sibling arrangements so that sisters of boys at Christ’s College will be able to secure sibling places at Copthall and vice versa, which should help parents of boys at Christ’s College looking for places for their girls. The catchment for Copthall normally extends into the N3 area nearest the school and may be an option for parents of girls. The timing of these changes is being phased so the admission criteria of each school should be checked carefully by parents hoping to take advantage of these changes.

The Local Schools for Local Children Group have submitted an application to open a Free School within this area to the Government and they are waiting to hear whether their application will be taken to the next stage. Their proposal is for a non-denominational, co-educational community secondary school with a specialism in Maths and English and a focus on being an integral part of the local community.

### **Budgets and school development**

At this stage of the year much of our time is taken up with reviewing the last year and setting budgets and making plans for school development for the coming year. Development of the schools is a continual process; we are always looking for ways to improve.

### **LA demand for additional places**

You may have read in the press about the increased pressure on primary school places being faced by Local Authorities throughout the country but particularly London. In common with many, Barnet is looking to see how it can accommodate the additional children needing places in the coming years. Solutions have already been found in some areas but significant pressure is still being felt in this part of Barnet. Barnet has sent a consultant to survey each of the local maintained schools to see whether there is scope for permanently expanding any of them (for example making them three- or four-form in every year group rather than two- or three-form). They are also looking to see whether any would be suitable for accepting a “bulge class” – a single additional class (housed in available space in a school or in an extra demountable) that would expand a single year group (starting in reception) that would then move through the school (so one year group having four forms and the others having three forms).

The consultant concluded that our site was not suitable for either of these options and the Governors feel the same. However, despite this conclusion, the local authority needs to find a solution to its overriding duty to ensure that all children within the borough receive a school education, and accordingly, that may mean that Barnet will need to place additional children at our school. If this were to happen we would of course welcome these children and ensure that they and all our existing pupils received the best possible education.

The governors are liaising closely with Barnet towards a suitable solution for both our schools and the borough as a whole and we will of course keep you posted on all major developments.