



5 September 2016

Dear parents/carers

On behalf of Thomas Coram's governing body, we would like to welcome pupils, parents and carers to our school. We hope that Years 4, 5 and 6 are returning raring to go and full of energy for what will no doubt be another packed term – and extend a special welcome to the new Year 3s who are joining our school family for the first time.

Last year was another highly successful year for Thomas Coram. Going forward, governors will work with the senior leadership team to continue to build on the achievements. It is our priority to support teachers in their continual efforts to reach new goals, drive improvements forward and make a positive contribution to your children's education.

Our work is often behind the scenes, so we thought a short summary of who we are and what we have been doing would give you an insight.

Who are the Thomas Coram governors and what do we do?

Our governing body is made up of 16 people who come from our local community, church, parent and staff bodies. We meet as a full group seven times a year and our three committees - 'Finance and Resources,' 'Pupil and Curriculum' and 'Management and Admissions' - have further stand-alone meetings to look at specific areas in more depth.

The Department for Education asks us to be responsible for the strategic direction of Thomas Coram. Our main functions are to:

- set the aims and objectives for the school;
- set the policies and target for achieving these aims and objectives;
- monitor and evaluate the progress the school makes towards these;
- be a source of challenge and support to the headteacher.

What is our vision for Thomas Coram?

Our vision is to be a place where people flourish within an inclusive Christian community, achieving the very best educational standards and developing character and strength of personality.

We regularly review this vision and our values - the ways that we seek to do things at Thomas Coram. This is informed by feedback from the school staff, regular meetings with the senior leadership team, by listening to pupils (through focus groups, surveys and School Council representatives), parents and carers, the Diocese of St Albans and, importantly, through termly external assessment from Herts for Learning education service.

How do we set our strategic objectives?

At the beginning of each academic year we agree a school improvement plan with Mr Halls which sets objectives to work towards. Priorities include:

- developing effective leadership at all levels to build a culture of continuous improvement;
- improving further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment;
- developing a deeper knowledge and understanding of personal safety and well-being in pupils;
- raising further standards of pupil achievement;
- increasing the distinctiveness and effectiveness of our Christian character.

Great progress has already been made in each of these areas - and we keep building on these each year.



How do we hold the school to account?

We monitor what's going on at school in different ways. These include:

- regular reports from Mr Halls at Governing Body meetings;
- visiting the school during the day. We have a termly drop-in week where Governors join in lessons to see for ourselves how the school operates and get direct feedback from staff and pupils. Core subject link governors also sit down with staff subject leaders to discuss developments in maths, English, science and RE and also to discuss special educational needs;
- participating in feedback sessions from our Hertfordshire Improvement Partner from Herts for Learning;
- scrutinising school performance data, taking part in book scrutiny sessions to ensure our marking policy is being implemented consistently and by attending events such as school plays, sports days, Church services and parent consultations to gain a wider perspective on school life.

You can read more on the school website, such as how funding for sports provision and the pupil premium grant (additional funding from the government to support vulnerable pupils) for 2015/16 was used and its impact.

As we look forward to this term, it's worth taking a moment to remember the excellent set of SATS results that Year 6 achieved, in summer 2016, with support from staff and parents:

	Thomas Coram	National	Hertfordshire
Reading, writing and mathematics	73%	53%	59%
Reading	82%	66%	72%
Grammar, punctuation and spelling	91%	72%	76%
Mathematics	84%	70%	73%
Writing (teacher assessment, not a test)	84%	74%	79%

But while academic success is always satisfying, we believe as Governors that the wider aspects of school life are just as important. So we will continue emphasising the importance of providing a broad and balanced curriculum that ensures outstanding learning opportunities for all pupils - as well as extra-curricular activities such as music, drama, school trips and residential.

On that note, we should also say a big thank you to the Friends of Thomas Coram who do such a fantastic job: not only in raising over £15,000 last year to fund a number of projects (including landscaping one of school courtyards, resurfacing the tennis courts and many class activities), but also for bringing us together as a community at school fairs, the camping trip, the comedy night - and crowding round 'cake and cookies' on a Friday.

If you've been reading this and like the sound of taking on a role yourself that makes a difference to our school, why not think about becoming a parent governor? We have a vacancy on our team and would really welcome your input. Look out for the letter from Mr Halls later this week - or do talk to an existing Governor beforehand (contact us through the school office) if you want to know more.

Kind regards

Nick Heath
Chair of Governors

Luisa Clarke
Vice Chair of Governors