



September 2017

Dear parent/carers

## **Welcome letter from your school Governors**

We hope you enjoyed the summer break, and on behalf of all the Governors, we welcome you back to Thomas Coram. 2017-18 promises to be another action-packed year for the returning Years 4, 5 and 6, and an exciting start for the new Year 3s. We are all part of the school family, and it's good to be reunited!

Governors are looking forward to supporting Thomas Coram over the coming year. We will be working with Mr Halls, Mrs Cutler and the rest of the staff to continually improve education for all pupils, both academically and in all other aspects of school life.

It's worth taking a moment to reflect on a few 2016-17 highlights. We were all very proud of Year 6's SATs achievements (with results above the Hertfordshire and national average in maths, reading and grammar, punctuation and spelling) – but developing interests and talents beyond the core subjects remained an equal priority:

- Year 5 performed in Young Voices Concert at the O2 Arena.
- We held end of term music concerts for peripatetic music lesson and ukulele club pupils.
- We enjoyed whole school services at St Peter's Church.
- Thomas Coram became Berkhamsted School Swimming champions, with other inter-school competition success in cross country, speed-stacking, netball and football.
- Audiences were wowed by Year 6's Saturday Night Takeaway, Year 5's performance of Twist, Year 4's Panto Pandemonium and Year 3's Baubles! Christmas production.
- Pupils assumed responsibility as prefects, class monitors, School Councillors and peer mediators.
- We developed a Reading Buddy scheme, with older pupils passing on knowledge to younger Years.
- All classes enjoyed school trips: Year 3 to the Chiltern Open Air Museum, Year 4 on a residential to Norfolk, Year 5 to Hazard Alley and Year 6 on a residential to Devon.
- We welcomed a visit from the Science Boffins, organised a Roman Day and an Egyptian Day, celebrated World Book Day and achieved a new World Record for hopping.
- Our active parent-teacher association, the Friends of Thomas Coram, ran the ever-popular Christmas and Summer Fairs and a camping weekend (together with Victoria and Swing Gate).

We would like to say a big thank-you to the Friends for their time, energy and hard work: not only for raising £16,053 towards an outdoor classroom biodome and other projects, but also for creating so many opportunities to enjoy activities together.

Please do read our Governing Body Impact Statement 2016-17 which follows: it explains who we are, what we do, what we achieved together with staff over the last year and what our priorities are for 2017-18.

We have a vacancy for a Parent Governor, as you will see in Mrs Cutler's letter which is also being sent out today. If you would like to join our team, please do get in touch for more information by emailing email [admin@thomascoram.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@thomascoram.herts.sch.uk) or drop into the school office to find out more.

With best wishes for the new school year

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Heath'.

Nick Heath, Chair of Governors

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luisa Clarke'.

Luisa Clarke, Vice Chair of Governors

## Governing Body Impact Statement: 2016-17

### Who are we?

We are a dedicated team who support and oversee the development of our school. The Governing Body's three core functions are:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff;
- overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Our 16-strong group is made up of parents (3), staff (3), members of our local churches (9) and the local authority (1).

### Where are we taking the school?

Our vision is for Thomas Coram 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. Our school family is underpinned by our core values of respect, responsibility and friendship.

### What do we do?

We share the senior leadership team's (SLT) ambition to strive continuously for further improvements and have a positive, proactive working relationship with them. We monitor closely the school's progress towards achieving our shared goals. Thomas Coram governors are expected to attend:

- seven full governing body meetings a year;
- termly committee meetings (Finance & Resources, Pupil & Curriculum, Management & Admissions);
- at least two training courses each year;
- school visits at least once a term.

In addition, we appoint Link Governors to look after specific areas:

- each Year group;
- safeguarding;
- Special Educational Needs (SEN);
- each core curriculum subject: English, maths, science;
- religious education.

You can see a full breakdown of our terms of office, meeting attendance and register of interests at [www.thomascoram.herts.sch.uk/school-governors](http://www.thomascoram.herts.sch.uk/school-governors). For more information about the duties that we carry out, visit [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and search for 'Governance handbook'.

## What impact do we have?

Governors monitor a wide variety of sources to optimise the impact we have on school standards:

- analysing termly performance data produced by the school;
- analysing data which benchmarks Year 6 SATs results against national outcomes;
- receiving termly feedback from our independent local authority Hertfordshire Improvement Partner;
- examining specific areas in-depth during Link Governor meetings;
- tasking individual Governors with reports or audits (eg food standards, parent communication);
- making first-hand observations during school visits;
- speaking directly to pupils (eg leading focus groups, sharing school lunch, attending School Council meetings);
- assessing trends revealed by the annual parent and pupil surveys;
- attending SLT-led book scrutiny sessions to look at marking and pupil engagement;
- receiving regular updates from the SLT on the School Improvement Plan objectives.

Thomas Coram's School Improvement Plan (SIP) is created by the SLT in consultation with Governors and sets actions for the coming year. Governors align our termly Drop-in Weeks with specific SIP objectives so that we can monitor progress with our own eyes and witness the policies we set being put into practice:

- autumn focus: creating an inclusive learning environment (looking at classroom displays and resources and observing how they promote and support learning);
- spring focus: the provision of teaching and learning for different pupil groups (eg as pupil premium, SEN and English as an Additional Language), observing interventions and classroom support;
- summer focus: developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of personal safety and well-being.

More generally, our visits also check on:

- the health and safety of the building and grounds;
- the behaviour of the pupils (Governors report back on the positive and happy atmosphere of the school, with the children being polite, friendly and eager to help);
- safeguarding: making sure that children are safe and feel secure is ever a top priority.

Through asking challenging questions, analysing data, writing reports and our own observations, Governors see that continuous progress is being made throughout the school and that the SLT is working tirelessly to achieve the very best educational standards. Some of the achievements delivered by the SIP over 2016-17 included:

- establishing the new Executive Headteacher and SLT posts, progressing our collaboration with Victoria Infant School;
- creating a team of effective staff subject co-ordinators, developing a Subject Evaluation Form and Action Plan for each area of the curriculum;
- delivering stimulating lessons which engage pupils (creating continuous professional development opportunities for staff, engaging support from Herts for Learning English and maths advisers and equipping all classrooms with resources encouraging independent learning);
- developing the accuracy of teacher assessment through training and moderation with partner schools);
- making sure pupils are fully engaged in the assessment of their progress, giving them time to respond to marking in lessons;

- introducing a new PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) education programme;
- establishing a termly positive behaviour (anti-bullying) focus for the whole school;
- introducing a new More Able Pupils Policy to help identify more opportunities for challenge;
- increasing teaching expertise in PE and sport and increasing lunchtime and after-school opportunities for pupils through the appointment a specialist sports assistant (funded through the Sports Premium grant);
- training Year 5 volunteers to be Reading Buddies to work with younger pupils;
- trialling a new approach to spelling in Year 3 which saw children make rapid progress.

Governors were also very proud of Year 6's achievements in the National Curriculum tests or SATs (Statutory Assessment Tests) – and the staff who enabled them to reach their full potential. Our aim is now to maintain this very high standard. We recap the results below:

Pupils reaching at least the expected standard in 2017

	<b>Thomas Coram</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Hertfordshire</b>
Reading, writing and mathematics	<b>73%</b>	61%	65%
Reading	<b>96%</b>	71%	76%
Grammar, punctuation and spelling	<b>88%</b>	77%	79%
Mathematics	<b>92%</b>	75%	77%
Writing (teacher assessment, not a test)	<b>79%</b>	76%	79%

Pupils reaching the higher standard in 2017

	<b>Thomas Coram</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Hertfordshire</b>
Reading, writing and mathematics	<b>19%</b>	9%	12%
Reading	<b>50%</b>	24%	30%
Grammar, punctuation and spelling	<b>58%</b>	31%	34%
Mathematics	<b>50%</b>	22%	26%
Writing (teacher assessment, not a test)	<b>23%</b>	18%	24%

### What's next for 2017-18?

The main priorities for Thomas Coram over 2017-18 are to:

- raise achievement in writing in line with other assessed areas (including rolling out the new spelling programme piloted successfully with Year 3 across the whole school);
- diminish differences in achievement through increasing rates of progress for SEN and disadvantaged pupil groups (maximising the impact of the Pupil Premium Grant);
- embed the More Able Pupils Policy across the school, further increasing levels of higher attainment;
- improve the attendance of identified pupil groups.

In addition to this work within the school, we have also been pleased to announce in the last few months increased collaboration with Victoria for the benefit of our pupils across all the primary stages. This includes sharing staff training, teaching expertise and resources, and achieving financial efficiencies.

Mr Halls has now taken on the executive headship of both schools and will spend his time between the two, whilst Mrs Cutler becomes to Head of School at Thomas Coram, supported by Miss Williamson and Mr Phelan as Assistant Heads.

Governors from Thomas Coram and Victoria have formed a Joint Executive Committee to continue

discussions about taking further forward steps together. We will communicate details of proposals as they develop to parents, staff, pupils and the wider community on a regular basis.

### **How can you as parents or carers help our school?**

Governors are very aware that we are only a small part of our much bigger school family. Joining the Friends of Thomas Coram is a great way of getting involved and making a difference. You can email them on [friends@thomascoram.herts.sch.uk](mailto:friends@thomascoram.herts.sch.uk)

The school also needs volunteers for hearing readers, helping on school trips and other activities. Any time you have is appreciated. Please speak to your child's class teacher or contact the school's admin team by emailing [admin@thomascoram.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@thomascoram.herts.sch.uk) or dropping into the school office.