



# BRANCHING OUT

New Forest School Governors Newsletter



## Governing Board Upcoming Focus

The Governors have made the decision to increase their time in supporting the school to further improve. This will be done by working with staff in sub-committee groups to focus on specific topics.

They will come under the headings of:-

- Student Voice
- Safeguarding
- Curriculum
- Staff Wellbeing

## DofE Success!

The governors would like to congratulate all the students who have recently completed their Bronze DofE Expeditions.

In total, 12 students have completed their expedition component on one of three trips organised and led by Sarah Lester and Nita Billings (supported by a host of willing staff volunteers). Each expedition requires the group to plan and walk a two-day route across the New Forest which includes an overnight camp.



Luckily the weather has been superb for each expedition, in fact extra stops had to be planned to top up water and sun cream. All the students were treated to ice creams to celebrate the end of the expedition and help them cool off.

Now the Bronze Expeditions have been completed, attention turns to the older students who are working toward their Silver DofE award and will be undertaking a 3 day expedition in the coming weeks.

## Profile: Sarah Parsons

Sarah is our Chair of Governors



### Tell us about yourself:

I live with my hubby near Lymington and work at the University of Southampton. Prior to moving to Hampshire, we lived near Derby, having studied and worked in Birmingham and Nottingham. I am a Somerset girl originally and so my heart, and family, are very much in the South! I feel very lucky to be living near the New Forest because I love spending time in nature and here we get the best of both worlds: the trees and forest, and the sea.

I am passionate about donkeys and hedgehogs especially and do what I can to support them. There is nothing that compares with seeing the baby donkeys roaming in the Forest in the Spring and Summer! I am a big snooker fan and love going to gigs (especially rock music). I really enjoy winding down with a book or true crime podcast, and a bottle (or two) of real ale!

### Why did you want to become a governor for NFS?

I've been lucky enough to get to know Mark, Duncan, and some of the rest of the team over the past few years as part of the work we have been doing together on ACoRNS (see below!). This means we have a firm and trusting relationship where we can share ideas and provide feedback for each other in a respectful and constructive way. I see my role in the governing team as very much an extension of that relationship because it hopefully enables me to give something back to the school as well as continue to learn more about what you do. I am inspired and in awe of the work that everyone does at the school, and I feel very privileged to be a small part of that.

### How do you see your skills and knowledge from your professional career being used to support NFS?

I am passionate about the research I do at the University which is focused on supporting autistic children, young people, and their families to share

their stories and experiences to inform and improve educational provision. I also teach and supervise

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undergraduates, Masters students, and Doctoral researchers and so bring with me a lot of experience in thinking about ‘what works’, and using data to help us to understand that. At the heart of what I do is a commitment to working *with* practice, rather than simply telling practice what to do!

With Mark Fry, I co-founded the Autism Community Research Network @Southampton [ACoRNS] in 2016 alongside Dr Hanna Kovshoff in Psychology at the University, and Kathryn Ivil, Manager of the Aviary Nursery in Eastleigh. We recognised that we needed to work in partnership to really access and understand the perspectives of autistic children and young people, and use this knowledge to directly and positively impact on children and young people.

Over the coming months, I'm going to be working with Mark, Duncan and teams on a range of activities related to pupil voice, which builds on some of our ACoRNS work. This includes working with Becky and the Totton team and students to co-create a virtual tour of their school (similar to the one we did with Jean and team at Fawley); running creative workshops with Tracie and team at Dibden to support student involvement in a design project; and supporting staff at all sites to plan and implement a pupil voice audit in a way that is meaningful and inclusive. Really looking forward to it!





## MY FIRST VISIT: DAVID CROWLEY – ASSISTANT HEAD TEACHER AT NOADSWOOD SCHOOL

I've walked into all of your sites today, with a background myself of secondary school comprehensive education, and I've been blown away with what I have seen and experienced. I've had the privilege of visiting many schools other the years, but I've never been somewhere where I've come away **knowing** just how passionately your staff care for the wellbeing for the young people in their charge. It was so abundantly clear how ever member of staff I spoke to cared passionately for the outcomes of their young people and how **they are**, for so many of them, **the positive difference in their day**.

Not knowing what to expect, I've seen calmness throughout, support, and learning tailored to those who need it, in the way that they do. To see all of the different curriculum areas embedded within this support is a tribute to everyone who works there. I've seen and spoken to many students, all who were so proud to show something that they had produced today which meant something to them (from the passion of letting of some steam on a football pitch, to video production, wonderful smells of cooking through to a card for a student's dad). All the students I spoke to had something positive to say – this is **due to what you all do, day in and day out**.

Furthermore, I felt as if I was in a setting where the staff genuinely helped one another as much as for the students, and this type of supportive culture is what we all hope to achieve.

Please do pass my genuine thanks to everyone I saw, and know that this message is a heartfelt one – I was grateful to have visited you all today, and hope to do it again in the not too-distant future.

## SAFEGUARDING

Part of my governor's role is to support the Headteacher in completing an audit of the safeguarding measures and processes in place across all school sites.

Having recently met with Duncan to complete the Safeguarding Audit, it was great to be able to visit Fawley and see how safeguarding has been adopted in all that you do at the school.

The Audit looked at areas from safer recruitment, collection of information, reporting and recording and communications. From the audit; Duncan has been able to address identified areas and further improve on safeguarding across all school sites.

I have been fortunate recently to have visited all school sites and it is lovely to see how the environments have developed over the years and most recently are indicative of the measures put in place to ensure that the school safeguards the needs of the children and the adults supporting them.

Thank you and I look forward to visiting again soon.

Alex Gooderham



TEAMWORK  
RESILIENCE  
ENJOYMENT  
ENGAGEMENT  
SELF-CONFIDENCE

NEW  
FOREST  
SCHOOL  
VALUES

