

Governors' Newsletter – December 2014

Dear parents, carers and friends of La Fontaine Academy.

We're delighted to share with you our first *Governors' Newsletter*. It is an aim of our school's Local Governing Body to establish clear links between governors, staff, parents and children. Through our newsletters, we will be sharing with you who the governors are and what we do.

The Local Governing Body includes teachers, parent representatives (including Veronica and myself from our free school parents group) and members of the STEP Academy Trust. You will often see us during the school run, so please feel free to stop any of us in the playground with any questions you might have about the school. If we don't know the answer there and then, we'll know someone who does. You may also write to us, via our Chair Isabelle Dennigan. To know how to contact us, see www.lafontaineacademy.org/governance.

As this is our first newsletter, and as we are all celebrating the successes of our children, and our very first term as a school, we'd like to remind everyone of the history of La Fontaine Academy.

In the summer of 2012, a group of local parents and teachers came together with a dream. This dream was of bringing the opportunity of learning in two languages to children in South East London, in an inclusive, non-denominational, language-focused primary school.

We were all really passionate about giving families the opportunity to be part of a local school underpinned by our beliefs in inclusiveness and academic excellence. These beliefs were backed by our wish to enable children to access language learning in a way which they might not be able to in traditional schools.

After canvassing local parents and families (you may remember parent group members handing out flyers outside nearly every train station and supermarket in Bromley!), we held our first public meeting in October 2012 so people could hear about our vision for the school, and why we believed our free school project would provide unique opportunities for local children to become global citizens and benefit from a language-focused education.

With the support of over 350 local families signed our online petition, we submitted our bid to the Department for Education (DfE), to open a new school in Bromley.

We were invited by the DfE to interview and in May 2013 – amazing news! – our project was approved to open in September 2014!

'Always aiming higher, together'

After getting a green light from the DfE, the next 18 months were a whirlwind of activity, meetings, interviews, canvassing and bringing to life all we hoped our school would be. Sebastien Chapleau joined us as our 'Principal Designate' in October, and jumped straight in with designing our curriculum and leading the recruitment of our teachers.

As with any community project, there were both highs and lows, with CfBT stepping back from being our school sponsor in April 2014, to focus on building the performance of their already open schools. The decision to part ways with CfBT and partner with a new trust was not taken lightly, but the DfE had full faith in our free school, and supported us fully during this transition.

Fortunately, the STEP Academy Trust recognised the great progress we had made in bring our school to life and shared our belief in both inclusiveness and academic excellence and the real value to children's academic potential and life chances that arise from the learning of languages.

With STEP, we secured our permanent funding agreement and permission from the DfE and Ofsted to open our doors in September 2014.

Two years after those first meetings held in living rooms, and a bunch of local families and teachers bringing this dream to life La Fontaine Academy is open and exceeding all our hopes and expectations.

With the support of you, as parents and carers, and all the hard work of the original parent group, our Headteacher, teachers, support staff, PTA, the STEP Academy Trust, Bromley Council, the Department for Education and our local community, our dream is finally a reality.

As the parents and carers of our pupils, we can be proud to be the inaugural families to have joined La Fontaine Academy. We have created a new community. We have made history.

On behalf of the Local Governing Body, this is the perfect time to say thank you for sticking with us and making La Fontaine Academy a reality. This is the perfect school for our children.

Best wishes to all of you for Christmas and the New Year ahead. And see you all back in school in January!



Nathan Hardman, Governor, on behalf of the Local Governing Body of La Fontaine Academy