

*End of school year Governors' report letter to parents and staff July 2026*

Dear Staff and Parents,

15.07.26

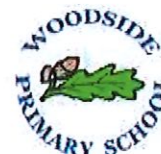
This has been another busy year for the schools. The governing body are all volunteers and meet both as a full governing board, dealing with teaching and learning and educational outcomes and as a Business Committee of non-staff governors dealing with premises and finance. We hold six full governing board meetings followed by a Business Committee meeting during the year. Governors also meet with leaders and subject leaders regularly throughout the year. This year has also seen Ofsted inspections at Soudley in January and Steam Mills in June which governors have had to prepare for and take part in meetings where they were questioned by the inspectors on safeguarding, the strategic leadership of the school, management and governance and ensuring value for money on financial decisions taken.

As a Governing Body we have been working hard to balance our budgets despite significantly higher costs across the board. As a federation of three partner schools working together, we have been able to share costs and resources, helping us to try and maintain our staffing levels, school buildings, SEND and family pastoral support, the extra opportunities the school provides through breakfast and after school clubs, school trips and residential visits. This all helps with improving the experiences of all the children.

As school budgets are based on an amount of money per pupil and the Forest has an ageing population and a falling birth rate, with a predicted big drop in the number of school age children over the next five years, all schools in the area are facing a potential drop in their income. This is already being felt by schools across the Forest, with many schools reducing classes and staffing for the coming year. As a Governing Body we will have to continue to carefully plan and monitor our budgets for the next few years.

The governors are constantly looking at other sources of funding for the schools. As I mentioned in last year's report at Steam Mills governors have been putting money aside in the school budget each year to fund the replacement of the Early Years Building, which was a portacabin that was bought second hand over twenty years ago and in constant need of repair, with a new, modern building. We held meetings with the local authority in the Spring 2025 who helped us in applying for grant funding from the government's Early Years Expansion Grant and Gloucestershire County Council 106 Development Fund to supplement our saved funding. Our applications were successful and the new spacious per-school building was completed in the Spring. It really is a wonderful new building for the children. When my youngest daughter was in the pre-school at Steam Mills it was a parent-run playgroup housed in a cold and damp old stone building which was originally the school's outdoor toilet block. When that was demolished, their home was in a fifth-hand portacabin, so I was absolutely delighted when we work was completed and we opened the new purpose-built building. I know the staff and children are enjoying their new surroundings. I would like to thank Miss Agg for all her hard work in completing the funding applications, liaising with the local authority over the funding and the building company and their staff during the erection of the new building.





We are extremely grateful for the efforts of our parent and friends' groups at each school, who have been very busy again this year, working so hard to organise fundraising events to raise funds to provide extra resources and activities for the children.

This year is the third full year of our programme of single subject leadership for our staff. At most schools in the area, teachers have to co-ordinate and be responsible for several subject areas in their school and be prepared to discuss their subject in detail during an Ofsted inspection. In small schools this can be often four or five subjects on top of the teacher's class teaching responsibility.

We ask staff to be responsible for one subject area across the three schools. The aim being to allow staff to specialise in one area, eg. Reading, Maths, Science, Geography etc. improving their individual subject knowledge, monitor standards in their subject area, and through working with staff at all the schools, share good practice, and impact teaching and learning across the three schools. The positive impact this has had on the quality of teaching and the children's learning was commented on positively by the inspection teams during both Ofsted inspections this year.

We are very fortunate to support a strong staff with expert leadership and subject knowledge, who enjoy working together and sharing their knowledge and expertise. For example, our staff regularly train other teachers on maths courses, and have teachers from other schools come in to observe their lessons as examples of good practice.

We have also welcomed student teachers into our schools again this year. Our mentoring lead has led this and it enables us to establish contact with local universities and access new ideas. Some of our experienced teachers were originally student teachers at our schools.

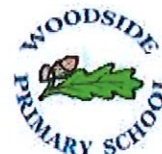
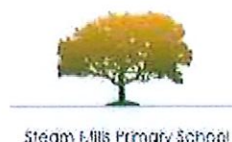
We have continued joint federation activities for the children this year. The Governing Body set up a fund with equal contributions from each school to fund the transport for these activities, as we felt it was important for the children to experience working with different children in different environments, something they will encounter when leaving our small village schools and going on to secondary school. I have attended federation activities and it has been great to see so many smiling faces, and how easily the children have adapted to working in different groups, in different environments and making new friends. The feedback we have received from the children has been very positive. The Governing Body agreed that the schools will continue to fund transport for the activities next year.

We would like to thank Mrs Davis and all the staff at the three schools for their hard work and commitment during the year. They always go above and beyond to give the children the best start to their education.

As you are aware Mrs. Davis is retiring at the end of the school year. I wish her all the best wishes in her retirement. Mrs. Davis joined Woodside as Headteacher in 2010 and has been Executive Headteacher since 2020, first for Woodside and Steam Mills, and then Soudley when it joined the Federation. During that time Mrs. Davis has worked hard to ensure that the children receive high quality of education in a safe and caring environment. In Mrs. Davis we have been lucky to have had one of the most experienced and well-respected headteachers amongst her peers in the county and



Forest Federation  
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she has helped build a successful Federation which is looked upon as an example in successful practice by the Local Authority. I was once told that the job of a headteacher was to get all of the moans and none of the thanks. I haven't got any moans, but would like to thank Mrs. Davis for her hard work and dedication to the schools and her help and support to the children, staff and all the governors over all her years as our Headteacher. It has been a pleasure to have worked with Mrs. Davis over the past years.

We would like to give our best wishes to Mrs. Mason when she takes over as Executive Headteacher in September. I would like to thank her for all the excellent work she has done as the senior teacher at Soudley during her time with the Federation. I know we will be in very good hands next year.

We would also like to say a big thank you to our Deputy Headteacher at Steam Mills, Mrs. Thomas who is leaving us to become a Headteacher. I have known Mrs. Thomas since she started her teaching career at Steam Mills twelve years ago. She has always been a hardworking and dedicated member of the staff and an excellent teacher. She has been a member of the Federation's leadership team with Mrs. Davis and Mrs. Fawkes and has been responsible for the curriculum development and leadership across the schools as well as the day-to-day management at Steam Mills. We wish her all the best in the next stage of her career.

We would also like to thank all the staff in the Federation for all their hard work and dedication during their time with us and would like to give a warm welcome to all our new staff joining us in September.

We would also like thank all the parents who do so much to support their children and the schools during the year.

I would like to thank all the governors for giving up so much of their free time to help the children and the schools.

Finally, we would like to offer our best wishes for the future to all our Year 6 children who are leaving us this year and going on to secondary school after the summer holidays.

Regards,

Dave Wildin

Chair, The Forest Federation of Soudley, Steam Mills and Woodside Primary Schools.