

Contents

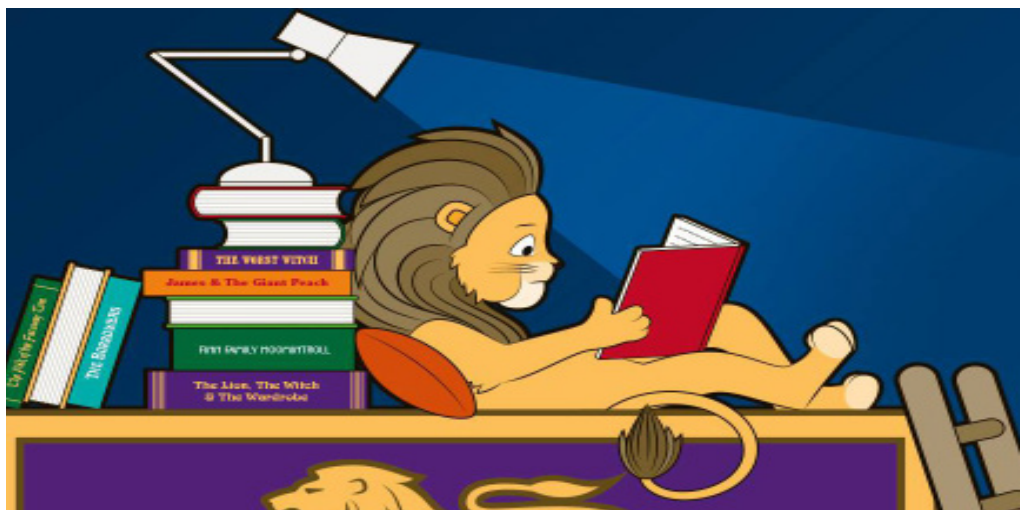
• Chairs Message	1
• Introduction	1
• Purpose	1
• Remit	1
• Members	2
• Key Objectives	3
• FAQ's	3
• Acheivements	4
• To do	4
• Car pooling	4
• Parent & Community Communication Structure	5
• How & Where can Parents get involved	5

July 2015

Issue 1

ParentLink

A Termly Harrow Avanti Schools PSAG newsletter



Chairs Message

Dear Parents

First of all thank you for giving us this wonderful opportunity to serve you as your PSAG representatives and the ability to work towards achieving excellence in education.

We have been actively aligning ourselves with the Heads of both schools and behind the scenes a lot of hard work is being done to deliver on the many proposals and initiatives brought forward.

Foremost, we would aim to create a vibrant '**Parent Community**' that through a network of responsible parent community representatives will become a channel of communication. This network is crucial for us to engage with you as parents in a more meaningful way and bring forth active participation from you to contribute to the success of the school.

Yours truly

Hari Patel (Chair) &
Shriti Pandya (Vice Chair)

Introduction

The PSAG is a group, formed of parents and staff from Krishna Avanti Primary School alongside those from both phases of Avanti House School. Their role is to act as an advisory interface between staff/parents and the Regional Governing Body (RGB) and its committees.

Key priorities, ideas and concerns of importance to both parent and staff groups will be explored by the group and communicated to the RGB for discussion and where appropriate, actioned by the RGB.

Purpose

As part of its school governance arrangements, Avanti Schools Trust (AST) facilitates a non-executive Parent Staff Advisory Group (PSAG) for Avanti House School (AHS) and Krishna Avanti Primary School (KAPS). PSAG will support the Regional Governing Body (RGB) to help ensure that it gives due consideration to parental and staff perspectives in the way it governs the schools. The governing body recognises

that PSAG will be well placed to understand parental and staff views and aspirations for the two schools. Such knowledge and 'intelligence' places the PSAG in a strong position to advise the governing body on how matters under consideration might affect the parents and staff. The wider purpose of the Group is to assist the RGB and the schools to fulfil our collective ambition of delivering the best possible education to achieve excellence for all our learners irrespective of their differing backgrounds and abilities and firmly rooted in the Avanti School's ethos.

Remit

The PSAG is a non-executive advisory body of the schools that works in tandem with the RGB. It may represent the views of the parents and families of pupils and students of the schools as well as those of the teaching and support staff of both schools. PSAG will report directly to the RGB through the Group's Chairman. All minutes from meetings will be presented to the RGB prior to its meetings.

Members

Hari Patel - Chair



I have a strong understanding and experience of how a good school runs. As a PSAG member, I aim to engage, involve and communicate with parents, teachers and staff, to give a voice to their aspirations and to help translate that into meaningful action for the Governing Body. As a parent, I would like to see the Avanti schools grow and mature into a fine educational establishment that provides an excellent all round education aligned with the school's values and ethos. I hope to make a fruitful contribution to the PSAG as your representative. I look forward to your kind support in this opportunity to serve.

Shriti Pandya - Vice Chair



I have been in the teaching profession for 11 years and have experience of working in all three key stages within the primary curriculum, EYFS, KS1 and KS2. My current role is deputy head teacher at Krishna Avanti School and my areas of responsibility include teaching and learning across the school, Inclusion and KS1 progress leader. I am really excited to be part of PSAG as I know that the expertise within our parent community can have a great and positive impact on supporting our schools to grow!

Aroon Rana



I am a Chartered Surveyor and a parent of two, with over six years' experience as a school governor. I have a good understanding and experience of how schools operate, and believe that good communication and teamwork between children, parents and teachers are the key factors in the future success of PSAG and Avanti Trust schools. Parents wish for their children to thrive in school, teachers wish for their subjects to prosper and in turn I would like to see Avanti Schools succeed. Therefore, as a team member I will endeavour to ensure these aspirations are met through the PSAG.

Dhanvanti Raghvani



I have two children at Avanti House (Primary). I have been a maths teacher in a variety of secondary for the past ten years. My view of the education sector and my approach to teaching changed when I became a parent. My views and concerns developed with a different perspective. I have begun to understand the balance required between all the stakeholders in a school to make a school community to thrive. I will strive to ensure that the voices of all stakeholders are heard in the PSAG.

Harsha Siyani



I am a mother of 2 young boys; I understand the types of issues faced by parents. Being a part of FOKAS has allowed me to get to know the parents, teachers and the school very well. I believe in the combined capability of education and faith to improve children's life's chances, through giving them opportunities to discover their potential. Strategies that look good on paper do not always translate well in the classroom and so I believe good communication between the school, parents/carers and pupils is essential and that parents play an important role in the school community.

Justine Reilly



I have been working in administrative roles within the education sector for the past 8 years and am PA to the Principal of Avanti House School. I have worked with children from ages 0-16 years and thoroughly enjoy seeing them flourish. I previously worked for an organisation where I had the opportunity to work with the majority of Harrow and Brent secondary schools, arranging work experience placements and young enterprise activities for students. I currently play a very active part in communicating with all school stakeholders and feel great honour being part of the PSAG, presenting the perspectives of both staff and parents to the regional governing body in order to work towards continuing school improvements.

Sheetal Rana



With 11 years of experience in education at a top performing Independent Hindu School, where both my children were students, I understand that for a school to flourish it is very important to have strong communication links and partnership between children, parents, teachers and the Governing Body. Collectively we all have a responsibility, to contribute positively to take the school to the highest level. Being a parent and having had first-hand experience at dealing with various aspects of school issues and parental concerns, I would like to share my skills and experience as a PSAG member and serve the school in meeting its objectives and aspirations.

Timir Shah



I am a qualified accountant by profession. Being part of PSAG will give me an opportunity to engage with parents/ staff and bring relevant concerns to the governing body. By communicating with the parties concerned on how to improve the school's effectiveness, quality, and standard of learning by obtaining feedback from all the parties by various modes such as emails, talks, newsletter etc. I will act as a friend between the governing body, parents and staff by recommending school policies affecting parents and the staff. We will make PSAG work for you with your support.

Vinay Patel



I have worked in education over the last 8 years, and joined the Avanti family of schools as a founding staff member for the trust's 4-19 all through school. I join the PSAG with previous experience of working in school governance. My role at Avanti House involves being a member of the Senior Leadership team and overseeing of the Technologies faculty. My subject specialism stems from the Creative Arts, Design and Technologies. I look forward to working with and representing the views of the staff body to continue to support our schools achieve their holistic vision.



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Key Objectives

- To inform and advise the Governing Body, and its committees (as necessary) regarding suggestions made for developing further what is working well for school improvement as well as issues of concern raised by parents, carers and staff
- To assist the work of the RGB by feeding in the perspectives of parents, carers and staff, including the views of hard to reach parents, into the decision-making process
- To advise the RGB on the effectiveness of its communication with parents and staff
- To act as a consultative body in formulating and interpreting school policies that may affect the parents and staff
- To act as a channel to develop positive partnership with the wider local communities
- To act as a critical friend to the governing body and contribute to strategic planning and prioritisation of objectives which can further improve the schools' effectiveness and standards for learners
- To discuss priorities for consideration raised by the parent and staff community
- To offer practical advice and support to the governing body to form closer alliances with parents, staff, other faith communities, and local businesses to improve the quality and breadth of the educational provision within our schools.
- To interface individual parent members with key stages/ departments/SEN etc. in a supportive and intelligence-gathering capacity to inform discussion, debate and prioritisation

FAQ's

What is the PSAG?

Parent Staff Advisory Group (PSAG) is a non-executive parent and staff body for Avanti House School (AH) and Krishna Avanti Primary School (KAPS). Its role is to support the Regional Governing Body (RGB) to help ensure that it gives due consideration to parental and staff perspectives in the way it governs the schools.

What is the purpose of the PSAG?

The wider purpose of the PSAG is to assist the RGB and the schools to fulfil their collective ambition of delivering the best possible education to achieve excellence for all our learners irrespective of their differing backgrounds and abilities as firmly rooted in the Avanti School's ethos.

If I have a serious concern, with regards to an issue at school, how can the PSAG help me?

It all depends on the nature of the concern. If it's about a member of staff, policies or procedures then you need to address this directly with the school. For example:

- If it's about teaching and learning and your child's progress then you need to speak directly with the class teacher.
- If you want to make a formal complaint then you need to follow the school's complaints procedures.

I have heard from many parents about a particular problem that has been on going for some time, it is now getting to the boiling point...will the PSAG resolve this quickly if I inform them?

Again it depends on the issue, PSAG cannot get involved with the direct running of the school and it is not a vehicle for a formal complaint – there are policies and procedures on the websites for this. However we will listen to the concerns and signpost you. In the first instance we would humbly request you to please send an email to us on PSAG.Harrow@avanti.org.uk

I am a full time parent and have some free time to contribute, will the PSAG guide me where I can make a contribution and offer some voluntary help?

Yes PSAG are already looking at initiatives where parents can get involved with the school and volunteer their time and or services and we will gladly meet with you to discuss your interest in volunteering.

I thought the PSAG was created to support the rights of parents, and they would stand by the parents to challenge the school / management?

This is not its purpose. There are mechanisms for challenge – including the aforementioned Complaints Policy and Procedures. PSAG was created to support the school to fulfil the school's long term vision, for example:

- Supporting Avanti House with transport issues when they move sites
- Supporting Krishna Avanti School to promote considerate parking
- Supporting children's activities, initiatives, needs etc..

I would like to speak to a PSAG member, how can I do this?

Contact details are on the school's website. Please feel free to contact us on PSAG. Harrow@avanti.org.uk

If I write a suggestion or comment will this be treated confidentially?

Yes we will treat all communication with the PSAG in the strictest confidence. Again please end an email to

PSAG.Harrow@avanti.org.uk

I have some ideas about education; that I think will make a difference should I talk to the PSAG?

Yes if you feel that it will have a positive impact on teaching and learning, we will look forward to hearing from you please contact us on PSAG.Harrow@avanti.org.uk

I would like to know what is happening and what activities are being implemented by this group, where can I get an update?

PSAG will introduce a newsletter informing parents and staff of what the group is focussing on and what support we may need from parents who wish to get more involved. We will also post our updates on the school website.

Do each of the members have roles to perform?

Yes, each member will eventually have specific roles of responsibility within the group. The areas of responsibility will also be posted on the school website.

Who are the PSAG responsible to?

PSAG are responsible to the Regional Governing Body and will report to them directly.

Achievements

The team has been busy and proactive. To date we have carried out/achieved the following:

- Initial meeting with members of the Regional Governing Body to understand policy, role of the PSAG, expectations, requirements etc.
- Set up a PSAG webpage on both schools' websites; giving full introduction of each PSAG member, explanation of the role of the PSAG, its purpose, remit, objectives etc.
- Met with the heads of the schools to understand their respective needs, issues, goals, objectives etc.
- We have had two PSAG team meetings where we have discussed key roles, aims, objectives and action points as summarised below.
- **Successfully launched the Car Share initiative at the Avanti Summer Fair on Sunday 12th July 2015**
- **Introduced this first PSAG Newsletter as part of one of our main/key communication tools.**

To Do

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
To create a network of parents known as 'PARENT COMMUNITY' to support in different aspects of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a newsletter • Put in place parent reps to bring to PSAG's attention what is working and what is not and provide possible solutions. • Through networking encourage parents to take a more active part in the school by bringing their skills and expertise to support and enhance learning.
To coordinate a gathering of parents with a focus on car-pooling providing a possible solution to travelling to and from Avanti House.	The PSAG Car Pooling initiative was successfully launched at the Avanti Summer Fair on Sunday 12th July. The interest, response and support showed by the parents was overwhelming. Now with the kind help of a year 2 primary school parent we are in the final stages of developing a dedicated Car Share website, where parents will have the opportunity to register their details and identify and link with other neighboring parents to arrange transport. Further detailed information will be provided via email and newsletter.
To create positive links with both schools' fund raising committees (FOAH and FOKAS) and work with them to create a strong joint communication structure and support network.	Organise a joint meet and greet event with parents and teachers of respective schools.
To support KAPS parents and residents with a clear focus of safe parking- The Perfect Parking Campaign.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To informally meet with parents to discuss the parking issues. • To meet members of the resident's association, local police and council to consider different possibilities. • To work closely with KAPS HT.
To provide additional support to AH when enhancing the curriculum through educational visits.	To familiarise ourselves with the curriculum to introduce educational visits, such as inviting professional speakers, organisations, trainers etc. to deliver extracurricular education and learning to the children



Car Pooling

We are pleased to announce that the PSAG Car Sharing initiative was successfully launched at the Avanti House Summer Fair on Sunday 12th July. The interest, response and support showed by the parents was overwhelming. With the kind help, of a year 2 primary school parent, we are in the final stages of developing a dedicated Car Share website, where parents will have the opportunity to register their details and identify and link with other neighbouring parents to arrange transport. Watch out for further detailed information via email and newsletter.

Parent Community and Communication Structure

**Parent involvement isn't a luxury -- it's an integral component of student achievement and advancement of the school. Many years' of research studies on the effect of meaningful parent involvement programs in schools have found that when parents are involved:-

- Students achieve more, regardless of socioeconomic status, cultural background, or the parents' education level.
- Students exhibit more positive attitudes and behaviour.

- Children from all backgrounds tend to do better when parents and professionals collaborate to bridge the gap between home and the learning institution.
- Schools that work well with parents have better teacher morale and higher ratings of teachers by parents.
- School programs that involve parents outperform identical programs without parent and family involvement.

**Research findings courtesy of the National PTA

How and where can parents get involved

First and foremost, we want to establish a robust communication channel and network between teachers, parents and students. We believe this will be best achieved by appointing two parent class representative Volunteers per class who will share out tasks according to their personal interests. We have already discussed this with parents and are encouraged by the initial support from parents.

Parent class representatives are important links for information and representation purposes, as well as key contact points for all. The Parent Class Representative will liaise with their classroom teacher, parents and students through encouraging them to be involved in the school events and activities and to help facilitate communication with PSAG.

By working together Parent class representatives will create a solid basis for vibrancy in the class. The communication

with parents and organisation of activities will mean that parents will get to know one another and this climate of trust will have a positive effect on the students and our respective Schools.

One of the best starting points for getting involved as a parent is to attend the open house/meet and greet event, which will be held at the beginning of the next academic year after the summer holidays. This will be a great opportunity to meet the PSAG group members to discuss about volunteer involvement and general matters.

If you have something to offer, or if you just want to help out in whatever way you can please do send us an email on PSAG. Harrow@avanti.org.uk to discuss your interests and ideas and we will look to arrange something with you personally or direct you to a department head or administrator who can answer your questions and make suggestions.

Here are just some of the ways a parent volunteer can help:

- **Breakfast club supervisors – urgently required**
- **Lunchtime supervisors- urgently required**
- **Car parking Marshals- urgently required**

- Act as a classroom helper
- Mentor or tutor students; Ideally we welcome parents from varied professions and trades to contribute some time by holding workshops, giving short talks or presentations on career and technical oriented and knowledge sharing topics for the children
- Help children with special needs
- Volunteer in a school computer lab
- Help to chaperone field trips, track meets, and other events that take place away from the school
- Help to plan and chaperone in-school events (dances, proms, or graduation ceremonies)
- Organize or assist with a specific club or interest group

(if you have an interest in an activity that isn't currently available to students, offer to help get a group started — for example, a chess club, yoga club, etc.

- Assist coaches and gym teachers with sports and fitness programs or work in the school concession stand at sporting events
- Work as a library assistant or offer to help with story time or reading assistance in the school library
- Make costumes or build sets for theatrical and musical productions
- Work with the school band or orchestra or coach music students individually
- Help out with visual arts, crafts, and design courses and projects
- Spend some time with a specific club or interest group
- Supervise or judge experiments at a science fair

Finally:

Are you an avid reader? Are your old books piling up and taking up space but you don't have the heart to throw your old books away? Why not donate them to the School Library! Contact us on PSAG.Harrow@avanti.org.uk and we will guide you on how and where to donate them.