

KGGS Governors visit form. Please complete and return to the clerk to governors

Link Governor	Jo Green		
Faculty / Member of staff Visited	Carine Soudanne, Head of Faculty, Modern Foreign Languages	Date	23 rd June 2021
Purpose of Visit	MFL Link Governor visit		

This was my first visit to the school since January 2020, at which time we were very concerned about GCSE mark schemes – little was anyone to know what was coming next!

I made contact with Carine about a month ago to see if she would like to go ahead with a link governor visit before the end of the year, and we arranged to meet after the Teacher Assessed Grades had been completed.

I asked how the staff are, and how the team think the girls are coping. Carine really firmly believes that you acquire a very particular set of skills as a linguist, as the way you acquire a new language is very different from the ways in which you acquire knowledge in other subjects, and one of these skills is resilience. Carine feels that her team are a resilient group, and whilst the past 16 months have been more challenging than anyone could have imagined, she is very proud of the way her team have adjusted, and noted that her NQT has been absolutely outstanding. Staff are obviously incredibly tired, they are missing having their own classrooms, and they are missing having their normal team meetings and interactions, which is made more difficult with staggered timetables. Carine noted that since a final change to timings in Term 2, all staff now have an hour for lunch again which has made it much easier for her to catch up with people. Carine meets with her two seconds weekly, and the full teaching team (10 including 7 part time) are using Teams for regular catch ups if these cannot happen in school. As a team, they have recognised that things are not perfect, but they have pulled together to support each other, and made things work as best they can. It has however been harder for Carine to maintain the same level of communication with other HOFs and this has been isolating at times.

MFL subjects were amongst the first to trial online lessons during the first school closure last academic year, and Carine commends the staff and girls for embracing this and adjusting quickly. Everyone is very much focused on September bringing some more normality, and above all else, hoping that bubbles will be a thing of the past because the current arrangements cannot be sustainable in the long term. One of the biggest frustrations for staff in not having their own rooms is that they cannot offer an open door for half an hour at lunchtime for any student seeking clarification; historically staff have done this and the girls made good use of this.

Carine and I spoke about how much catch up time is needed, and the challenges are different for different year groups. The Y12 students were very worried about exams, having not sat exams last year in Y11. They have now been taught the full AS syllabus and are sitting full AS papers for internal exams. Despite the girls' reluctance, the department felt that they must help the girls to recover some of that resilience and re-learn their exam techniques. The Y12 listening tests were returned to Carine during my visit, with a couple of anecdotes about things that might not have gone as well as you would wish during an exam, but the important point is that the girls carried on regardless and were not distracted; they are rebuilding that confidence that they need for external examinations.

Some of the Y10 girls are very worried about exams, some less so. Speaking exams are their main concern, but it is important for the girls to have frequent assessments to fall back on in case we do not have a normal exam session next summer, and also to build their confidence in the hope that we do have exams as normal in 2022. The new year 7s have really impressed Carine with their adaptability and focus. Year 8 have been affected more than any other year

group in MFL by the school being closed, and the team have worked together to adjust schemes of work rapidly for Y8, with a focus on quality rather than quantity to really reinforce the grammar that girls would be expected to have learned by the end of Y8. Y9 work schemes are also being adjusted in German as there has been a decline in numbers opting for GCSE German over the last two or three years. Schemes of work were adjusted for Y9 in French about five years ago, and since that time, numbers of students taking French GCSE have continued to increase and remain very healthy. Additional support sessions are still very difficult to arrange in the way that the department has been able to in the past, but hopefully September will see the removal of the necessary restrictions currently in place.

Despite the challenges that have made this year so difficult for everyone, Carine sees some positive changes. The decision to move parents' evenings online is welcomed by the staff, and Carine believes this is positive for the girls as well, offering everyone the opportunity to have a discussion in private rather than in a crowded school hall. Each faculty head was assigned to an SLT link when the school closed. Carine has found this particularly useful, noting that communication has flowed both up and down within school quickly and effectively, and that there has been a great deal of transparency in decision making processes. The frequent teaching and learning updates for parents are another positive and this will be built on further.

Following on from our governor training evening and conversations at Standards Committee, I wanted to touch on Ofsted with Carine, more from a staff welfare point of view than anything else. Whilst it has to be said that an Ofsted inspection early next term would not be the most welcome event for very exhausted teaching staff, from a departmental preparation perspective and as a Head of Faculty, Carine is not disproportionately concerned. She is confident in her staff, in the curriculum and in the schemes of work.

It was really lovely to come into school and have the opportunity to have an open and honest discussion face to face (albeit socially distanced and in face masks). I know as governors we have felt frustrated that there has been so little we have been able to practically do during the pandemic, and that staff have to carry so much at every level in the school. Insufficient as it may be, I was grateful for the opportunity to listen, and to say thank you for going above and beyond for the benefit of the girls.

Signed _____Jo Green_____

Date _____25/06/2021_____