

### A rising tide lifts all boats.

You may already know that school governance is about much more than taking a temperature check on school performance. Monitoring and evaluation of school finances, processes, progress and outcomes is our bread and butter, but governors lead from the front – we set the school's vision, strategic agenda and ethos and hold the head teacher and staff to account for delivering these.

You will have seen from our strategic plan videos that inclusion is front and centre of our school culture and will know from the governor principles which underpin the school's behaviour policy that our principles, values and practices are based on equity, diversity, and collaboration. We wear our hearts on our sleeves and I'm proud to have told our latest lead Ofsted inspector that we are unapologetically inclusive.

Some parents ask why we take this approach. Fundamentally, it is because we have the utmost positive regard for every member of our school and are committed to every pupil's wellbeing and success. It's hard to argue with that. We believe that all pupils matter equally and that everyone should be able to learn and work free from judgement or discrimination. That's the law.

But at Fynamore, it is more than that. Our community is sustained by us all, and we work together to address our collective needs and to achieve more than we do on our own. Through an inclusive lens, we believe we can reach better outcomes and better ways of transforming the life chances of our young people.

The evidence strongly supports the notion that inclusive education benefits all learners; a rising tide lifts all boats. Neurodiversity, for example, describes variability of minds, where different brain connections create a diversity of ways in which human beings think, learn and relate to others. That there is a range of behaviours is to be expected, and we value all ways of neurocognitive functioning as equal. For all pupils, their ability to engage with learning, and therefore their academic success, are strongly associated.

By promoting academic success, social development, empathy, and equity, inclusive schools contribute to healthier, more cohesive learning environments and prepare students for a diverse and interconnected world. When diverse learners engage together, they often have higher levels of achievement because they learn to adapt and support one another. There are sustainability drivers too, and the evidence for early intervention in an underfunded system is compelling.

With more of our children grappling with 'spikey' neurocognitive profiles (where we all have different strengths and challenges) than ever before, addressing challenges in environments made for the average child makes learning more accessible for everyone. Besides, there is no such thing as an average child! And few of our family and friend networks are immune from societies' burgeoning social, emotional and mental health burden, with outcomes that can also depend hugely on social inclusion. When schools embrace inclusion, they provide opportunities for students to learn from one another's differences, cultivating empathy, tolerance, and understanding. The leadership team at Fynamore is motivated by the possibilities of this outsized impact on the world.

Blog author: Stella Fowler. I am the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion governor at Fynamore and have many years' governance experience. I Chair the Wiltshire Governance Network and sit on the school improvement (Wiltshire Learning Alliance) and the school finance (Schools Forum) boards of Wiltshire Council. I am also a Director of Policy and Research in higher education. Talk to me about equity, diversity, inclusion, neurodiversity and university.