



Chair of Governors' Term 3 update – February 2017

I often feel that Term 3 is the poor relation in the school year, fighting for space as the Christmas festivities are over for another year, the dark days of January and February are with us, and there is the challenge of winter sickness. However, all credit due to St Stephen's School children, the staff and PTA as we continue to hear about wonderful sporting successes, the Quiz night and the entrepreneurial launch of the Stationery Store. Well done to everyone involved!

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The governing body met on 30 January when they considered a report from the Pupil Support committee who met in January, and a Finance and Resources committee report on the current financial position of school. Both the Standards Committee and the Finance and Resources Committees will be meeting in early March, prior to the next full governing body meeting. The Pupil Support committee has been mainly focusing on ensuring that policies are up to date, reviewing the Admissions policy for 2018, the SIAMS inspection due in May and Safe-guarding training.

The current financial position of school indicates that with continued close management we should be able to end the financial year more or less on target. However, this will be the first time in recent years that we will be unable to carry forward any funds into the new school year. Finance remains a huge challenge for us. We do not yet know what revenue we will receive in the new academic year starting in April. Thanks are due to Andy Bowman, Louise Flynn and the Finance and Resources committee for their hard work in ensuring that we stay on track despite the challenges and uncertainties. We are still working on establishing sponsorship links with outside organisations who may be able to support us. We are also aware of the existence of various trusts and charitable bodies who may be able to help. However, we need dedicated volunteers who are able to undertake this application work.

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Two governors complete their 4 year term of office in February. However, I am delighted to say that Louise Flynn, Staff governor, has agreed to serve a further 4 year term, as has Karl Stringer, Foundation governor. We are very grateful for their continuing support to the governing body. In addition, Karl has agreed to take on the new role of Deputy Chair of Governors.

The role of Clerk to the governing body remains unfilled, even though it has been advertised through the usual channels. Please do consider who might be a suitable candidate, including people who are not currently linked to St Stephen's School. It is both an interesting and vital role that sits right at the heart of the governing body.

The governors have recently individually attended courses on 'RE, Spiritual development and British values', Head Teacher well-being, School exclusion and the Chairs' network event.

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As our own Admissions Authority, each year we are required to review our admissions criteria. The governing body recently reviewed the recommendation of the Pupil Support committee and agreed that there was no need to make any further changes. Therefore the admissions criteria for September 2018 will remain as for 2017, and this information will be posted on the BaNES website in due course. There will therefore be no need to consult with our key stakeholders this year.

School is busy preparing for our next Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS), which is due to occur in May this year. The work is being led by Andy Bowman, Louise Flynn and the Revd Philip Hawthorn. Recently two people from the Bath and Wells diocese, including the Deputy Director of Education, visited school to conduct a pre-inspection health check. This was also attended by several governors. The feedback was very positive in confirming many of the good things that we often take for granted at St Stephen's and they also provided some useful guidance on areas where we could make beneficial additions. We are lucky to have such a supportive and positive link with the Diocese.

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As previously mentioned, a key area of focus for the governing body this year continues to be the future of our school with respect to becoming an academy and joining a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). We regularly engage with both the Bath and Wells Diocesan MAT who would like to establish a Bath Hub, as well as with the formation of a potential Bath Primary MAT. The key factors for us in making a choice include the ethos and values of the MAT; the other likely partner schools in the MAT, some of whom we are already working with; school improvement initiatives and methodology; the future financial model; and governance. As previously promised, our due diligence has been more or less completed in January and we will be considering the options as a governing body later in February. There will be a consultation period with parents and third parties in due course, prior to commencing any academy conversion process.

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Thank you once again to the children, staff, parents and my fellow governors for a great start to 2017. We wish you a happy, healthy and safe mid-term break.

Best wishes,

Kate

Kate Seeley, Chair of Governors

February 2017

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