



## **Chair of Governors' End of Year Newsletter 2016-17**

As we reach the end of another school year it is good to reflect on all the achievements, challenges and joys of being part of our lovely school, sitting at the heart of the Lansdown community along with St Stephen's Church. It is also a good opportunity to thank all those who contribute to the success of school and create a great learning environment for our children.

This year has encompassed several key milestones in our school's development. In February we made the important decision to become an academy and join the Bath and Wells Multi-Academy Trust (BWMAT). Our application is still being processed as there was a two month delay during the general election period. We now anticipate achieving academy status within the Bath Hub of the BWMAT towards the end of Term 2/early Term 3, and we are looking forwards to working and collaborating with new colleagues. Currently it looks as though there will be around 12 schools in the Bath Hub.

Another milestone was our school achieving an Outstanding assessment following the five yearly Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS). This success really reflected St Stephen's School at its best with staff and children working closely together under the strong leadership of Andy Bowman.

At the start of this school year The After School Care Club was launched and it has steadily grown in numbers as children have been so enthusiastic about it and have in many cases encouraged friends to join them! We believe that the Club has added a real benefit for parents and huge thanks are due to Sarah Klein who helped launch the Club, to the staff who provide a caring and fun environment, and to our Head Teacher for providing on-going support and leadership. It has been such a joy on these long Summer evenings to see the children at play outside and making the very most of our lovely environment, including the outdoor stage which was erected at the start of the school year, thanks to the PTA.

This year our school achieved a Platinum OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) award under the leadership of Sally Searby. This places us in the top 25 schools in the country for outdoor play.

The key areas of focus for the governing body are to ensure that the school has a robust development plan that challenges our children and staff to achieve high standards; that the implementation of this is continuously monitored and is achieved; and that revenue and capital funding is spent effectively. The three committees of the governing body (Pupil Support; Finance and Resources; and Standards) are aligned to ensure this overview and focus.

Recently a small group of governors conducted a Health and Safety Inspection of the school and grounds and were very reassured to see the standards achieved and the progress made over the past year, including the re-designed Spiritual Garden. Thanks are due to Nigel Cox, our Site Manager who works hard to ensure the smooth running and maintenance of our facilities.

During the school year governors have attended 8 detailed book inspections covering Maths, English, RE and Homework. There have also been three Learning Walks in classrooms and play areas and governors have met with small groups of children across the age range to get their feedback on being a Church school and on Collective worship. In addition, governors have met their curriculum lead teachers for each subject at least twice, to discuss plans at the start of the year and to review achievements at the end of the year. The governor inputs from these exercises are then reviewed by the Senior Leadership team to ensure that suggested improvements are properly considered and implemented as appropriate.

The governing body has also kept itself trained and developed by attending courses provided by BaNES and the Bath and Wells Diocese; and by attending briefing sessions on education developments and policy changes. Ensuring that

the school's policies and practices are revised and updated is another key role for the governing body, in checking that our policies are appropriate and meet statutory requirements.

The governors continue to use various sources of available data to assess school's progress and to inform future areas of focus. These data sources include SATs results, financial bench-marking, Ofsted inspections, SIAMS inspections, Investors in People inspections, the Parent Survey, the Pupil Survey, the Safeguarding survey and the Healthy Schools' survey.

We have been very fortunate this year in having no changes on our governing body. However, Rupert Stubbs, Parent Governor, will be stepping down after 8 years. He has made a huge contribution to the governing body for which we really thank him. His role as Chair of the Standards Committee will be taken on by Sarah Chave. We will not be replacing Rupert immediately as we are reviewing the structure of the governing body as we progress to the Bath and Wells MAT.

As a school we want to achieve the very best for all our children and for them to have the best learning environment possible. Andy Bowman will be commenting on the latest SATs results. These are based on the new national curriculum and provide wonderful evidence of the effectiveness and hard work of our teachers and children, as well as external comparisons. In addition to academic success, St Stephen's School is also recognised for some very notable sporting successes as well.

As we approach the end of the school year we are aware of our Year 6 children, and maybe some others at different stages in their school careers, moving on to new schools and learning environments. We hope that St Stephen's School has enabled them to benefit from our vision for them in having the skills and self-confidence required to thrive in their future. Specifically we hope that they have been nurtured, challenged and inspired to be:

- Excited about learning, with a positive self-story
- Responsible and respectful
- Emotionally, physically and spiritually aware
- An open-minded and creative thinker and learner, who can take risks and learn from experiences
- A literate and numerate person who is ready for secondary school and the wider world
- Someone who thrives with change, who can plan for the future and who is ready for the unknown
- Someone who takes opportunities to be all they can be

The Governors and Senior Leadership team have already started the process of reviewing the achievements of 2016-17 and planning for 2017-18. Early in Term 1 we will be finalising the new school development plan with Andy Bowman and he will be sharing this with you. The major areas of focus for the governing body will be the monitoring of the development plan, finances and continuing our journey towards academisation. Finance continues to be a major challenge as revenues decrease year on year and costs increase. We are always grateful to the PTA, who continue to be the heart and soul of the school family, raising funds, whilst at the same time bringing us together to enjoy excellent social events. We are also thankful for any grants or sponsorship that we receive via The Friends, as these really help to enhance the learning and play environment for our children.

In the new school year we look forwards to welcoming around 60 new Reception children, as well as those who may be joining us at other stages in their schooling.

Finally, all that remains is to once again thank Andy Bowman and his staff, who are so professional and a pleasure to work with, as well as being receptive to the many challenges that the Board places on them.

Thank you also for your support. I wish you and your families and all the staff a restful and joyful Summer break.

Best wishes,

*Kate*

Kate Seeley, Chair of Governors

July 2017

[Kate\\_Seeley@st-stephens.bathnes.sch.uk](mailto:Kate_Seeley@st-stephens.bathnes.sch.uk)