



## **Chair of Governors' Term 5 update – May 2017**

As Term 5 draws to an end it is nice to reflect on all the good things that have happened over the past few weeks. It has been another busy term with SATS for Years 2 and 6, the opening of the Spiritual Garden, the SIAMS inspection, sporting successes, and the Annual Parochial Church meeting. All of these activities appear to happen quite seamlessly, but of course there is a lot of activity behind the scenes, with many contributors to whom we are extremely grateful.

When I last wrote to you we did not anticipate a General Election and that therefore our academy application would be put on hold until this is over. The Regional Schools Commissioner's office is not processing any applications for the time being. Hopefully we will soon be back on track again as we are really looking forwards to becoming part of the Bath and Wells Multi-Academy Trust. Prior to the election announcement, the CEO of the Bath and Wells Multi-Academy Trust, Philip Bowditch, visited school and was impressed by all he saw. He regards St Stephen's School as a strong member of the prospective Bath hub. The Chief Operating Officer, Jason Brown, has also visited school to start the transition process. The good news is that several of our neighbouring schools have also voted in favour of joining BWMAT. However, we are assured that we are at the head of the queue!

A key focus for the governing body this term has been preparing for and participating in SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools). A small group of governors met with the Inspector and were delighted by the feedback he provided in terms of how well the staff and governors work closely together and just how robust our school is as an organisation. In addition he was impressed by all he saw and heard in his meetings during the day. We look forwards to receiving the final report, which Andy Bowman will be sharing with you in due course.

The admissions process for September entry is almost complete and we are anticipating that we will have a full complement of 60 children joining in the Reception classes. This is important to us as pupil numbers ultimately determine funding levels.

In April we provided our annual update to the St Stephen's Church Parochial Council on how our school is progressing on a number of fronts. We value our very close connection with the church and the support provided to us by our Trustees, who are the Revd Philip and church wardens, Mike King, Judy Palmer and Mary Greenwood.

Despite increasing pressures the financial budget for 2016-17 was closed with a small balance to be carried forward. However, this was the smallest amount ever, relative to recent years, and was achieved through very close attention to detail and good management. With further reductions in funding the 2017-18 the budget is a huge challenge. We only manage to sustain a lovely environment for our children and a good level of curriculum materials through the generosity of parents and a few valued sponsors.

I would like to say a particular thank you to Karl Stringer, Deputy Chair of Governors, who with a small team of parent volunteers has initiated a number of activities over the past few months. They have re-established the Friends of St Stephen's School with the aim of creating sponsorship links with companies, as well as seeking personal donations, which attract gift aid. Against a target of £50,000 for the new library they have already raised £5000. The children are using 12 ipads in class that have been paid for by the

Friends' activities, with another four ipads coming next term. A parent is also kindly providing the design for the library for free. Please let Karl have any further leads or ideas for this great project. The Friends have also assisted the PTA in setting up easyfundraising. This is a really easy way for you to support our school when you shop on line, with a large range of retailers providing a donation when you simply press a button!

During Term 6 the governors will again be participating in Maths and English book inspections across school, as well as an Environmental Learning Walk and a meeting with pupils to hear their views. In addition we will be conducting a Health and Safety inspection together with the Head Teacher and Site Manager.

As a governing body we also feel that it is important to evaluate our own performance against a set of national criteria for governing bodies. We will be doing this during Term 6.

Over the coming weeks Andy Bowman and myself will be attending scheduled briefing events held by both BaNES and the Bath and Wells Diocese. As well as providing educational updates these events are a useful way of keeping in touch with and sharing views with Head Teacher and Chair colleagues.

Sadly we will be losing a Parent governor at the end of Term 6 when Rupert Stubbs stands down at the end of his term of office. Rupert will be a huge loss to the board of governors, especially as Chair of the Standards Committee, and we thank him for his tremendous contribution over many years. I will be in touch further regarding his replacement as a Parent Governor. Sarah Chave has kindly volunteered to take on the role of Chair of the Standards Committee. On another positive note, Peter Baxter, Foundation governor, has agreed to sign up for a further four year term when his current term ends over the Summer.

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. Having no Clerk in place places more demands on the governing body, who give freely of their time to support school in a number of ways. In the meantime we are very grateful to Sarah Klein for giving up her time to continue to minute the Governing body meetings.

We look forwards to Term 6 which is often one of the most pleasurable terms, when we hope that the sun will shine upon us for Sports Days, the Musical and of course the Leavers' service.

Thank you once again to Andy Bowman and staff, pupils, parents and my fellow governors for another busy and successful term.

On behalf of the governing body, may I wish you a happy, healthy and safe mid-term break.

Best wishes,

*Kate*

Kate Seeley, Chair of Governors

May 2017

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