



Chair of Governors' Term 1 update – October 2016

First of all, on behalf of the governing body, I would like to offer a belated but warm welcome to the parents and carers of children who have joined school this term. We hope that your children have settled in well and that they are discovering the joys of being part of the St Stephen's family, as well as the St Stephen's Church community. Please do check the church notice board as well as the updates in the weekly newsletter from school regarding events for families.

As Chair of Governors I aim to provide an update each term on the activities of the governing body. 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.

I am delighted to report that governor meeting attendance over the past year has been outstanding, with 94% attendance at full governing meetings and 91% for committee meetings. This is a huge indication of how committed our governing body is and how lucky our school is to have such a dedicated group of talented governors.

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We have been delighted this term to welcome Sarah Chave to our governing body. Sarah is a Foundation Governor, a parishioner at St Mary's, Charlcombe and she brings a wealth of educational management experience. Sarah has joined the Standards Committee and is the Link Governor for RE.

The start of Term 1 is always a busy one and for the governors our primary focus has been working with Andy Bowman in finalising the School Development plan, as well as developing our own action plan for the governing body. The School Development Plan was signed off by the governing body at our meeting on 10 October. Andy will be sharing this with you. The starting point for the plan is the Senior Leadership's Team self-evaluation of school's performance, together with the 5 year vision, and any Diocesan or DfE initiatives and statutory changes.

The governing body's own action plan was also agreed at the October meeting. The starting point for this was a meeting comprising Committee Chairs, the Head and Deputy, the Revd Philip and myself early in September. We considered various inputs to the plan including the DfE, Diocese, statutory annual requirements of school governing bodies, Parent survey, Pupil survey and the board's own self-evaluation of our performance.

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One of the key ways that governors monitor the implementation of the School Development Plan is in partnering with school's curriculum leads to ensure that there is a robust plan in place for that subject across the whole school. The curriculum Link Governors have already started working with their Teacher Curriculum leads to review their plans for the year.

In Term 2 governors will be taking part in detailed book inspections covering Maths, English, and RE. There will also be an Environmental Learning Walk focused on evidence of the embedding of The Golden Three in classrooms and play areas. 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.

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Over the past few weeks Andy Bowman and myself have attended the strategic briefings provided by both Bath and Wells Diocese School Improvement Team and BaNES. These meetings cover key educational updates and initiatives; they are also an opportunity to share best practice; and are a great way to meet with other Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors.

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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 Senior Leadership Team and the Steering Group of the Governing Body have attended meetings of both groups over the past few weeks. 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. Once our due diligence is complete we will be considering the options as a governing body, possibly later in Term 2/early next year. There will then be a consultation period with parents and third parties, prior to commencing our Academy conversion process. In the meantime, we plan to include an Academy page on the school's website, with a Q/A section which we will update as additional questions arise.

Finance continues to be a major challenge as revenues decrease year on year and costs increase. We are always grateful to the PTA, and also for any grants or sponsorship that we receive, as this really helps to enhance the learning and play environment for our children. Please do consider whether your own business contacts would be prepared to help us in this regard.

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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 mid-term break.

Best wishes,

Kate

Kate Seeley, Chair of Governors

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