



## **Chair of Governors' Term 4 update – March 2018**

As Term comes to a close I think we will all be glad to say goodbye to the Winter weather which has caused quite some disruption at times over the past few weeks. However a few missed school days is worth it for the sake of ensuring the safety of our whole school community, many of whom have challenging journeys to and from school. I am grateful to Andy Bowman for his leadership in these sometimes difficult decisions.

### **St Stephen's Church School is now an academy**

This term has again been a very important one for the governing body with regard to the future of our school. As you will be aware, in January we held consultation meetings for parents and stakeholders and following this the governing body took a final vote to proceed with the signing of the Commercial Transfer document, moving our school out of the jurisdiction of the Local Authority and into the Bath and Wells Multi-Academy Trust. We also consulted with the staff on their transfer to the Trust. We became an academy and part of the Trust on 1 March. There are more local schools following suit and by 1 April there will be eleven schools in the Bath Hub of the Trust. The Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors have been working together and meeting bi-weekly over the past few months with the Chief Operating Officer and his colleagues to ensure continuity of services and to handle all aspects of the conversion process. In parallel the Business Managers from each school have also met bi-weekly to focus on all the system changes and accounting procedures. Special recognition and thanks go to Andy Bowman and Viv Alderson for all their hard work behind the scenes to ensure a smooth transition. We feel very confident of our decision to join the Trust and look forwards to establishing new ways of working and collaboration with our fellow schools across the wider Trust. There is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that as a group of schools we fully leverage the benefits of joining the Trust and align our policies and procedures to those of the Trust.

### **The governing body**

The governing body has also aligned itself to the Trust's requirements and now constitutes 14 governors, comprising the Head Teacher, a Staff governor, two Parent governors, two Trust appointed governors (re-assigned from our existing governors) and eight Foundation governors, including the Revd Philip Hawthorn who is ex-officio. The governors have all completed new application forms, as well as updated detailed skills profiles, as part of the conversion process. In due course I will also be signing two documents on behalf of the governing body, including a Terms of Reference document and Scheme of Delegation document, which set out the respective levels of authority and responsibilities between school and the Trust. In due course I will be posting all relevant documents to the school's website Policy page.

### **Monitoring the School Development Plan**

During this term governors have joined with members of the Senior Leadership team to conduct exercise book reviews for English and Maths throughout school. These occasions are valued opportunities for the governors to observe the Senior Leadership team, who focus on standards of marking, quality and presentation of work, pupil feedback and consistency within year groups. The Senior Leadership Team then provides each class teacher with feedback on what is going well and where there are development opportunities. This is an important part of the governors' work in monitoring the implementation and progress of the School's Development Plan.

### **Visit from Bath and Wells Multi-Academy Trust**

A few weeks ago one of the Trustees of Bath and Wells Trust spent a day at school meeting with Andy Bowman, staff, children and myself. Following this we received a very comprehensive and complimentary report on school in all its aspects. We expect to have regular visits from the Trust in the future and we regard these visits as very useful input to how we are progressing and where we can improve even further. We are also looking forwards to receiving further details of training programmes for both staff and governors.

### **Paid opportunity – Clerk to the Governing body**

The role of Clerk to the governing body still remains unfilled, even though it has been advertised through all 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 creates more demands on the governing body, who give freely of their time to support school in so many ways.

### **Admissions**

As our own Admissions Authority, the governors recently met to review and decide on the applications for the September in-take. The ranked list has now been returned to BaNES who will continue to coordinate the offers and acceptances on our behalf, even though we have joined the Trust. Our school's ranking includes in order any children under LA care, children with special educational needs, siblings and then geographic distance. Our new governor, Katherine Slater, has kindly taken on the role of Chair of the Admissions Panel, which also considers applications each month during the school year.

The governing body met in Term 3, but unfortunately due to the weather this week we had to cancel both our meeting and our supper together. We will be dealing with any outstanding matters via e.mail exchange instead!

Thank you once again to pupils, staff, parents, carers and my fellow governors for another busy and successful term. I think you will agree that this term has been a key milestone in our school's history. However, the most important thing is that our children have not been impacted at all and have continued to experience and enjoy all that St Stephen's Church School offers them, thanks to our dedicated teachers and staff. As I write this message I am looking forwards to the end of term service and seeing children, parents, carers, grandparents and staff all joining together ahead of Easter celebrations, under Philip and Debbie's wonderful leadership.

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

Best wishes,

*Kate*

Kate Seeley, Chair of Governors

March 2018

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