

Batheaston Governors' Annual Report 2016/7

Chair's introduction

The Governing Body would like to share the Governors' contribution to school development and our activities with the school community in a new annual report. This is our first one.

This year has been a very busy one for the school, and this report explains some of the key issues we have dealt with, as well as some details about the governing body more generally.

We hope you find it informative and interesting. As it is our first one, we have also included some background information, but we have tried to keep it short and to the point!

About the Governing Body

What do Governors do?

Governors are volunteers, and receive no payment for their time or expenses. Collectively, they contribute to the work of the governing body to ensure high standards of achievement for all children in the school by:

- holding the headteacher and other senior leaders to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent
- being a "critical friend" to the school, supporting its development and improvement with an eye to the long-term.

For further information on the Governor role, see: <http://www.nga.org.uk/Be-a-Governor/Be-a-Governor.aspx>

Who are the Batheaston governors?

From next year we will have a photoboard with all governors names and pictures in the school office. The website will also be updated next year with more information about the governors.

At the moment, we are extremely fortunate to have an active and vibrant governing body. This compares to the national context, in which schools have great difficulty recruiting governors.

We have a governing body of fifteen. Of this fifteen, twelve have children at the school, although only two are explicitly "parent governors". Parent governors are elected to ensure that the parent community is represented.

- Chair and vice chair
- Two elected parent governors
- Two Foundation governors, appointed by the Diocese, as we are a CofE school
- Four co-opted governors, appointed by the governing body for a good range of skills.
- FOBs representative
- An associate governor (safeguarding specialist)
- A local authority governor
- Headteacher
- Staff governor (elected by staff)

Farewells as Batheaston governors this year

During this year, we have said goodbye to a number of very hardworking governors who have made significant and lasting contributions to school. Several have stayed on well beyond reasonable expectations until we have found suitable replacements.

- **Peter Giles**, foundation governor, a very longstanding critical friend of the school, with wide-ranging contributions, but a particular interest in supporting staff development.
- **Mike Gray**, co-opted governor, the “Mike” of “Mike’s Meadow”, who project-managed the new buildings and meadow design, longstanding chair of our finance committee, contributing to buildings and premises reviews.
- **Joe Devine**, parent of former pupil, and longstanding Chair of Governors, keeping the ball rolling and with a keen eye to the long-term development of school.
- **Jamie Luck**, parent, who has especially contributed to updating safeguarding policies and procedures, and focused on improving outcomes and support for vulnerable learners.
- **Gus Neil**, parent, who has kept a sharp eye on finances and always clear-eyed and trenchant when reviewing policies and practices.
- **Tom Richmond**, staff governor, who has made a significant contribution to the school’s transparency and clarity about tracking pupil progress and outcomes.

The national and local contexts for primary education & Batheaston

Nationally the key issues facing primary schools are:

- Public spending per pupil increased during the 1990s and 2000s, but between 2015–16 and 2019–20 will have fallen by 6.5% in real terms.
- A new national formula for schools funding from 2018/9. This change will have more significant effects on city schools in areas with high deprivation. No school should face cuts of more than 3% or gains of more than 5.6% before 2020.
<https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/8937>
- The introduction of a new national curriculum in 2015, with a completely different emphasis on what children should learn in a range of subjects. This has also required new measurements of children’s learning outcomes.

Locally the key issues facing primary schools are:

- Withdrawal of B&NES local authority support services for schools (HR, payroll, finance, school improvement).
- Reduction in support to additional services, e.g. provided by charities, that offer vital support to families and children, to which school can refer.
- Increasing costs of services provided through the local authority (e.g. charges for school meals through commercial services).

How is Batheaston responding to these challenges?

Finances

- The financial management of the school is becoming increasingly difficult as funding is not increasing at the same rate as the schools’ costs. The school therefore is increasingly reliant upon the fund-raising contributions it receives from FOBS (the Friends of Batheaston School) holding many fund-raising events.
- Since its inception, the fundraising work of FOBS and generous parent support has generated over £30,000 all of which has gone to improving school life of our pupils. As we saw in Sarah’s newsletter this week, the money raised from Meadowfest this year has been vital to supplement the local authority support for building improvements (see also below).
- Notwithstanding this, the school is currently set to break even this financial year.

Learning outcomes

- Sarah has reported on Batheaston's excellent results from SATs, which are well above the average nationally, for the second year of the new curriculum. This is a really great achievement for the children and the teaching staff, of which they should be justly proud.
- Governors are required to monitor pupil progress (how much children's learning has improved each year) as well as attainment (what they have learned), and we also monitor how school is meeting the needs of different groups of children.
- Governors also monitor any additional spending the school receives, and its outcomes. This includes, e.g. specialist sports premium (see school newsletter), as well as school's work with other partners on creative learning, e.g. this year's School Without Walls project for Hazel class.
- In their role of maintaining the ethos of the school, governors believe that the new national curriculum adopted in the last couple of years needs to be balanced against meeting the needs of the 'whole child' and children's wider development and learning. This strategic focus is reflected in Sarah and the leadership team's plans for next year.

Safeguarding

- A key role of governors is to support our senior management to consider how our school can be a place where children thrive both academically and pastorally.
- This includes thinking about how the school safeguards its children, and in works with external agencies like social care and local charities that offer extra support and nurture.
- We also work with the school staff to consider how we access the best external projects and resources for children who benefit from Education Health Care Plans and Pupil Premium.

MAT developments

- We have received 'conditional consent' to join the Bath and Wells Multi-Academy Trust. We are now waiting for approval from the Department for Education.
- Work will continue over the summer/autumn to complete the necessary 'due diligence' requirements between school and the MAT, around finances, school results and buildings. We currently expect to join the MAT in spring next year.
- In the autumn, teaching staff will already be applying the MAT's measurements of pupil progress and learning outcomes, and administrative staff will be learning the MAT's HR and payroll systems, to help with a smooth transition to the MAT half-way through the academic year.

Buildings and premises

- The school has commissioned a Fire Risk Assessment of both the new and old school buildings and in view of recent events you will be re-assured to note that there are no major issues identified in the report. The survey was instructed by the school through B&NES Corporate H&S team. It examined all fire escape routes and passive measures to control fire spread. There were some issues identified around signage and damaged or missing door seals. These are being addressed by the school. We do not have any external cladding that poses a high fire risk.
- The old-school classrooms have been inspected by B&NES building team with regard to the excessive condensation, damp and poor ventilation. The old chimney places will be opened up to provide natural ventilation in these classrooms, assisted with some mechanical extracts. In addition they are repairing the old Victorian metal windows to make them weather-tight and able to be opened correctly. All of this work will be undertaken over the summer. On completion B&NES will assess the effect this has on internal condensation during the Autumn term and if it is felt necessary they will install secondary glazing to the worst affected glazing.