

Dear Parents,

Apologies, we have been slow with governor news this year. Somehow the months have flown by, with life in school gradually starting to return to normal, but the usual updates were overlooked.

For all those families who have joined us recently, welcome to Brabourne and thank you for choosing the school. We hope your children have settled in quickly and are enjoying all aspects of school life.

As governors, we play no part in the operational life of the school. Decisions about how the school runs, how to teach the curriculum and anything to do with individual pupils is led by Mr. Stapley and the school staff.

Our role is three fold:

- Vision & strategy – We work with the school staff and the whole school community (children, parents and beyond) to understand what it is that makes the school special, how we preserve that and how we can make it even better. When you get questionnaires through, the replies help us take everybody’s opinion into account. Most governors are also in and out of school regularly, and at the school gate, so if you ever have ideas or thoughts you’d like to share – find a governor (listed below). All of these ideas feed into our school vision and improvement plans. As a Church of England school, part of our role is also to uphold the Christian ethos of the school and all governors have a responsibility to do this although Foundation governors guarantee CofE representation and expertise on the board.
- Finance – Governors have ultimate responsibility for the school budget. We monitor how much money the school receives and how it is spent. We’re not responsible for day to day decisions but we do need to know that the money is being spent in line with the school plans and is strictly controlled. We will normally have a governor with a finance background, and ideally an accountancy qualification, to ensure we can do this effectively.
- Holding the school and leadership team to account – whilst we play no part in the day to day role of the school, we do need to be sure that the school is running well and that the plans that have been set are being delivered. In order to do this, we work closely with the school staff, and Mr. Stapley in particular, to both support and challenge. We check plans, ask questions and visit the school so that we can see for ourselves what is happening.

Obviously, for the last couple of years, governance has been very different. We’ve not been allowed into school for large parts of it and many of the plans changed radically in 2020. For much of the time the school staff have had to deal with changing instructions from the Department for Education, often on a daily basis, and our role has been purely supportive. The staff have been amazingly resilient through all of this time – from adapting to sending lessons online whilst looking after their own home-schooling children to looking after key worker children in school despite their own health concerns to interpreting the latest 50 page guideline document for immediate implementation, every one of them has gone above and beyond and we are so grateful. We’re now finally able to get back into ‘normal’ governance (and increasingly ‘normal’ schooling) again. Governors can visit the school and we will shortly be having our first ‘vision day’ since 2019 – a (previously) annual day involving all staff and governors where we review our plans and look forward to the year(s) ahead.

So, let us know what you think of the school, what is great, what could be improved, any suggestions and we will do our best to incorporate all of those ideas into the plans for the years ahead. Parental questionnaires will be coming out shortly and you should be able to track down one or more of the following governors easily enough (all except me do the school run or are in school regularly!). Our current governing board is as follows:

Lucie Edmed – Local Authority governor and school grandparent. Vice Chair of governors and Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee.

Rev. Chris Denyer – Foundation governor, school parent and parish priest. Chair of the Ethics and Culture Committee.

Ruthie Gilbert – Foundation governor and school grandparent. Member of the Ethics and Culture Committee.

Becks Massie – Parent governor, school parent and grandparent (!) and member of the Ethics and Culture Committee.

Selina Eyles – Parent governor, school parent and member of the Finance Committee.

Lena Valentine – Parent governor, school parent and member of the Ethics and Culture Committee, individual governor responsibility for Health and Safety.

Natasha Hilton – Parent governor, school parent and member of the Teaching and Learning Committee.

Andrew Stapley – Headteacher, member of the Teaching and Learning and Ethics and Culture Committee.

Katie Vasu – Staff Governor (and ex-school parent), member of the Teaching and Learning Committee.

Hester Fenwick – Co-opted Governor (and ex-school parent), Chair of governors, member of the Teaching and Learning and Finance Committee. Individual responsibility for governor training and development and for SEND (temporarily).

We'd also like to thank Roger Shaw who has just stepped down as our Finance Chair and specialist finance governor after six years in the role. He's offered a huge amount of expertise to the school and will be much missed. We're in the process of recruiting a successor.

The other key member of our governing board is the Clerk – or the Governance Professional as they are now known. This is the only paid role on the board and their responsibility is to prepare for meetings, to co-ordinate setting the agenda, to take the minutes of the board meetings and to act in an advisory capacity – even if that just means knowing who to ask for more information. Governors have to deal with a huge amount of policy documentation and guideline changes and the clerk will normally be the person staying abreast of such changes. We have just recruited a new clerk – Jayne Sturch – who will be attending her first meeting as clerk this term.

If you've made it this far, thanks for reading! If you can't find a governor in person, I'm always happy to receive emails or phone calls with feedback or suggestions so don't hesitate to get in contact.

Cheers,

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