



# GOVERNOR BULLETIN

## ISSUE 8 DECEMBER 2020

<b>Governors</b>	<b>Roles</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Terms of Office</b>
Peter Parkin-Child	Chair History link	Co-opted	24/09/2019 - 23/09/2023
Deborah Walker	Vice-Chair Literacy (writing) link	Foundation	01/05/2019 - 30/04/2023
Jessica McFarlane	Safeguarding, Anti - bullying & PREVENT link	Co-opted	25/09/2018 – 24/09/2022
Cilla Hollman	EYFS, Geography link	Co-opted	09/07/2019 – 08/07/2023
Roger Wilkinson	Health & Safety link	Local Authority	25/09/2017 – 24/09/2021
Rev. David Mundy	RE, Pastoral link	Ex-officio foundation	01/10/2018 -
Michelle Massey	Pupil Premium, SEND link	Parent	30/01/2018 – 29/01/2022
Jonathan Lingham	Numeracy link	Parent	15/11/2018 – 14/11/2022
Jennifer Godwin	Literacy (reading) link	Parent	15/11/2018 – 14/11/2022
Victoria Freiss		Parent	11/11/2019 – 10/11/2023
Anita Birchall		Co-opted	22/10/2020 – 21/10/2024
Esther Bland	Headteacher	Staff	01/09/2018 -
Kellie Wilson	Deputy Headteacher	Co-opted	26/09/2017 – 25/09/2021
Claire Daniels	Teacher	Staff	01/12/2020 – 30/11/2024

The aim of this Governor Bulletin is to give you some insight into what our role as a governor is within the school, as well as updating you on the issues we get involved with. But, most importantly, I want these bulletins to reinforce that we, as a Governing Body, are here to work with all those who have a vested interest in the success of Dukes – and so please feel free to stop and chat to us\* when you see us around and about.

\* observing social distancing rules, of course

Well, what a first term of the academic year it has been! I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome our new members of the Dukes family – I hope your children (and you) have settled in well and have been able to get a feel of what a special place our school is. Although we haven't been able to implement the full range of activities that we usually offer, we have been able to keep some firm favourites (such as Forest School) operating during these exceptional times; all of which give you a flavour of what is to come when we emerge out of the other side of this pandemic.

As for those of us with children who returned to school in September, we appreciate that all the new rules and policies which have been implemented have taken some getting used to. However, it is important to remember that such provisions are always put in place with the best interests of our children in mind; and that the ultimate aim of all staff and governors at Dukes is to keep our children safe and happy!

### ***So, what do Governors do?***

The Governing Body is made up of a mixture of volunteers - parents, staff, members of the community, church, and local authority representatives. We meet as a Full Governing Body (FGB) six times a year and these meetings usually take place after key school data becomes available. Our aim is to work closely with the Headteacher to raise standards and make sure the school provides a good quality education. We do not manage the day to day running of the school - we help shape its focus and direction. We ensure accountability to parents, staff, and others for the school's overall performance, support the Head and staff, as well as offer constructive challenge.

### ***New Governors***

I am pleased to welcome **Anita Birchall** to the Governing Body as a co-opted governor. Anita brings over 30 years' experience of working in the public and not for profit sector, is a former Registered Mental Health Nurse and has extensive experience of safeguarding and family support. I look forward to working with Anita and benefitting from her specialist insight.

We also say hello to **Miss Daniels** who joins us as our staff governor. Miss Daniels currently teaches Year 5/6 and is the Subject Lead for Mathematics.

### ***Recent Meetings / Strategic Direction***

Since lockdown began, and given the ever-changing restrictions, we have continued to hold virtual governors' meetings – with two having taken place since the beginning of term. The main focus of these meetings has been to discuss the school's continuing response to the COVID-19 situation; however, we have also discussed a number of strategic issues such as resource management, pupil assessment, policy ratification, and curriculum updates.

COVID-19 continues to present challenges to the school and, as a Governing Body, we continue to work with the Senior Leadership team to ensure we have the right policies and processes in place to both minimise the risk and maximise the education of our children. As I stated in the recent letter from Mrs Bland, the school staff continue to receive the full support (and appreciation) of the Governing Body. The amount of time and dedication they have shown over these past few months is incredible, and as previously mentioned, they are constantly reviewing and updating provisions to ensure that our children are impacted as minimally as possible. Whilst I am pleased to say that the majority of parents/carers have recognised and appreciated this, it is disappointing to hear of instances where staff have received negative or rude comments via social media or in person. I appreciate that bubble

closures and educational impacts of this virus are frustrating and concerning for us all; however, it is important to remember that school staff did not ask for this situation, nor are they immune from the impacts in their personal lives too; and so, we should continue to show support and kindness to all.

One of the key strategic focuses for this coming year is to address any gaps in learning that pupils may have – be that from time spent out of the classroom in the previous school year or from time spent self-isolating in this school year. This has involved us revisiting the curriculum to ensure that all pupils have a strong grasp of the fundamental knowledge required for their key stage, as well as undertaking a series of baseline assessments in reading, writing and maths.

This data has provided senior leaders, subject leaders, and teachers with a firm base from which to start planning and addressing any gaps in learning, whilst also building on strengths. Formative assessments are continuously carried out in lessons, and further summative assessments will be undertaken on a termly basis to ensure that pupils are on track for the end of this academic year.

We also discussed the school's progress in applying for the 'catch up' premium of £80 per pupil, alongside planning for how this will be spent. The decision was reached that it will mainly be spent on additional staffing, as it is common knowledge that the best learning resource is classroom staff. Having more staff will allow teachers and TAs to carry out more focused learning for individuals and groups. Outcomes will be measured academically in terms of progress and attainment, as well as also being measured in terms of children's readiness to learn and engagement. This supports our focus to address any gaps in learning, whilst also building on pupils' strengths.

Alongside this funding stream, the school is also seeking to purchase and implement a new phonetic reading scheme for Reception to Year 3 pupils. This will provide a cohesive learning programme for the children and will ensure that phonics knowledge moves with them as they progress through the school. We have also implemented a new Personal, Social, Health and Education (PSHE) & Relationships/Sex Education (SRE) scheme called JIGSAW which seeks to improve children's confidence and address anxieties that may have manifested over the last few months.

Finally, we were pleased to learn that our pupil numbers continue to increase; and that our remote learning provision has been quoted by some as the reason for joining. It is a testament to the hard work of the staff and the pupils that so many families are choosing to place their children at Dukes.

### ***School Improvement Plan***

Given the disruption to the last school year, and despite progress being made in several areas, we have decided to roll over last year's plan, with updates relevant to our current position. We will therefore continue to focus on the following objectives:

- To respond to the educational impact of COVID-19, closing gaps in learning and promoting positive outcomes in all areas. This includes the number of girls actively engaged in maths and thus achieving greater depth maths across the school; and the number of boys achieving greater depth in writing
- To respond to the social, emotional, and physical impact of COVID-19; promoting a healthy body, mind and soul of our pupils, staff, and families.
- To fully Embed Our (2019) Curriculum
- To close the attainment gap for our most disadvantaged pupils; particularly increasing the number of Pupil Premium children achieving Greater Depth
- To develop reading in the school; particularly, in relation to our phonics education and provision to ensure children develop the strongest foundations for their reading

## ***Buildings / Investments***

As mentioned in my last bulletin, there continues to be a series of improvements being made to the school in order to enhance both the learning and physical spaces that our pupils benefit from.

The extension of the school hall is an ongoing project that we hope to have completed by the end of the academic year. Whilst a new PE store has been built, which will allow the old room to be used to store dining tables and chairs, a complete rewire of the hall is needed in order to allow us to free up more space by moving the current circuit box. This funding request has to go to Cabinet and we will keep you posted with our progress.

We are also planning on purchasing a number of additional iPads that will be made available to those children who have no/limited access to IT provision at home. These valuable tools will enhance the learning provision for these children and highlights the inclusivity that runs through the ethos of Dukes.

## ***Merry Christmas***

So, that just leaves me to wish you all very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Thank you for all your support over the last few months and here's hoping a return to normality in 2021.

Stay safe.

Peter Parkin-Child  
Chair of Governors