



GOVERNOR BULLETIN

ISSUE 5 DECEMBER 2019

Governors	Roles	Type	Terms of Office
Peter Parkin-Child	Chair	Parent	24/09/2019 - 23/09/2023
Deborah Finney	Vice-Chair Writing link governor	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 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	Church link	Ex-officio foundation	01/10/2018 -
Michelle Massey	Pupil Premium & SEND link	Parent	30/01/2018 – 29/01/2022
Esther Bland	Headteacher	Staff	01/09/2018 -
Kellie Wilson	Deputy Headteacher	Co-opted	26/09/2017 – 25/09/2021
Jill Ford		Staff	18/09/2018 – 17/09/2022
Jennifer Godwin	Reading link governor	Parent	15/11/2018 – 14/11/2022
Jonathan Lingham	Numeracy link governor	Parent	15/11/2018 – 14/11/2022
Victoria Freiss		Parent	11/11/2019 – 10/11/2023

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.

So that was Term 1 of the 2019/20 school year – and I’m pleased to say that the improvements to Dukes just keep on coming! Mrs Bland and all the staff at Dukes have been working hard on embedding the new curriculum (more on that later); we’ve welcomed a new parent governor to the Governing Body (more on that later too); and we’ve got some exciting improvements underway to both the school’s physical and virtual environments (definitely more on that later). We have also held two Governing Body meetings since our last meeting before the summer break, and so I’ll fill you in on those as well.

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 become 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.

Our New Curriculum

At our meeting in September, Mrs Bland spent the session taking Governors through the new curriculum that came into effect this school year. We have chosen an attributes-driven focus, which means that six key attributes will run throughout the subject matter that is being taught:

Resilience	Morality / Social Justice	Critical Thinking
Healthy Body and Mind	Confidence / Communication	Joy / Hope

There is also a focus on **Magic Moments** which will seek to enrich the curriculum and its content through inspiring and stimulating our children’s love of learning. Examples of this will be specific school trips which will provide the children with the opportunity to make memories that they can take with them into adulthood (whilst also reinforcing the associated curriculum theme).

It was great to see how passionate Mrs Bland was about the new curriculum, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff at Dukes for their hard work and effort into bringing this to life. We can’t wait to hear how our children will engage and benefit from this exciting development.

Full details of the curriculum can be found on the school website if you want to know more.

School Funding / Pupil Numbers

As a Governing Body, it is our role to ensure the school is run as effectively as it can be using available resources; and a large focus of this is challenging how the school budget is managed. It is a testament to Mrs Bland and her Senior Leadership Team that we are now in much a stronger financial position than we were a couple of years ago. We have seen investment in both staff and premises, meaning we now have Teaching Assistants in every class and new equipment being introduced on a regular basis. It has also been great to see parents getting involved too, which further embeds the strength of the Dukes family ethos.

A large proportion of school funding comes from pupil numbers, and we were delighted to hear about the level of interest that was received from our recent Open Day. Last year, we had five families come to visit whereas this year, we were visited by 42 families – a brilliant testament to the reputation the school is building up!

However, complacency is the forerunner of mediocrity; and school funding continues to be a challenge which we must rise to. It is therefore vital that we (parents/carers/staff/children) continue to spread the word about how great our school is so that our pupil numbers continue to stay strong!

IT /Building Investments

Coming off the back of our encouraging financial position, I am pleased to report that Governors approved spending on two IT initiatives at our last meeting in November:

1. The purchase of 12 new SmartScreens to be placed in all our classrooms. At the time of writing this bulletin, the installation of these screens was being rolled out; and they will add real value to the learning of our children. Also taking these on a leasing basis represents a cost-efficient way to ensure they remain technologically current and in good repair.
2. The upgrading of our IT infrastructure. Following the award of a grant from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to have super-fast fibre broadband installed at the school (at no cost to Dukes), the time has come for a much-needed overhaul of our internal IT systems. We have therefore approved spending on the replacement and improvement of our networking, cabling etc. This will enable better wi-fi connectivity across the school as well as future-proofing our IT infrastructure for the next few years.

I am also pleased to advise the toilets near the library have been refurbished under matched funding, and the lower Key Stage 2 playground slope has been repaired. We are still waiting for work to commence on a new accessible toilet and we continue to chase up work on improving and extending the school hall. It is disappointing that progress is slow on this matter, but rest assured, this is high on the agenda of both Governors and school leaders. Watch this space!

School Improvement Plan

We continue to be mindful of Ofsted and remain focussed on addressing the outcomes of our most recent Ofsted report. It is also important that we continue to focus on areas of improvement, and so the following target areas form the basis of our School Improvement Plan for the 2019/20 school year:

- To increase the number of girls actively engaged in maths and thus achieving greater depth maths across the school
- To increase the number of boys actively involved in writing and thus achieving expected and greater depth in writing across the school
- To increase the number of pupil premium children achieving greater depth in core subjects across the school

Hello, Goodbye and Best Wishes

We are pleased to welcome **Victoria Freiss** to the Governing Body as a parent governor. Victoria has two children at Dukes and brings nearly 10 years of teaching experience to the table. I look forward to working with Victoria and benefitting from her specialist insight with regards to Early Years and Special Educational Needs.

We said goodbye to **Mrs Jean Wykes** who has worked as a Midday Assistant at Dukes for an incredible 39 years. Jean was given a great send-off by the school by holding a special assembly, and it was great that so many pupils (both past and present) contributed their photos and stories. On behalf of the Governing Body, I would like to thank Jean for all she has done for Dukes; and we wish her all the best in her retirement.

TA Walking Challenge

Continuing the theme of our amazing staff at Dukes, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our team of TAs that undertook a 100 mile walking challenge to raise money for a school defibrillator. They raised just short of £1,000 which is an amazing achievement – a huge well done and thank you from the Governors for your efforts!!

It was also great to hear that one of our parents generously offered to make up the difference, whilst another will be helping to secure a discount on the device. It is gestures that like these, with parents working with the school to help with improvements / funding, that makes Dukes a special place to send our children!

I would encourage all parents to get involved where they can - be this offering their time to help with reading or mental maths, or looking into workplace match funding opportunities that could benefit the school (like Mr Marsh did with Santander).

And on that cheerful note, it just leaves me to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Best regards

Peter Parkin-Child
Chair of Governors