



# Birdham CE Primary School

## Annual Governors' Newsletter

Summer 2016

### Introduction

**Have you ever wondered who the School Governors are, or for that matter what they do? The question of what people know about us has been on my mind since I took over as Chair of the Governing Body last November. I decided that an annual newsletter might be a way of answering those and maybe some other questions that you might have; so here we are then, the first *exciting* edition of the Annual Governors' Newsletter.**

### What do we do?

Our role as governors is set out in legislation by the government, and is to:

- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Hold the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- Oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well spent.

I considered long and hard whether or not to even put all that legislative jargon in this newsletter, because frankly it is all rather dull, but I eventually decided it was worth it if only because it provides some background. More importantly than that though, I wanted to try to explain *what* we actually do. We are there to ensure that in 5 or 10 years time, our school is still thriving and is stronger than it is today. We do this by making strategic decisions in many areas, whether it be with staffing or pupil numbers or infrastructure to name just a few, to ensure our future is bright and flourishing.

We have a committee structure, which is set up to delve into different areas of the school and to ask challenging questions. This ensures that the headteacher and his team are striving for the best possible educational outcome for all the children, whilst using the limited money to the best of their ability.

One frequently held misconception is that we are involved with the day-to-day running of the school. This is not our role; we as the Governing Body recruit and employ the teaching and support staff to do that for us. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges for new governors to come to terms with is that our remit is not to meddle in the daily operation of the school.

### Who are we?

**David Owen ~ Chair**  
**Rev Jim Mould ~ Vice Chair**  
**Mark McCadden ~ Headteacher**  
**Michael Chater OBE**  
**Andrea Farrell**  
**Louise Knight**  
**Keith Langmead**  
**Sally Lillywhite**  
**Dr Susan Monks**  
**Charlotte Reed**  
**Kerry Simmons**  
**Rev Jonathan Swindells**

If this list has whetted your stalking tendencies, there is more information about all of us on the school website!

## How much does it cost to run our School?

I felt that a few short sentences about the school budget might be of interest to some of you. Our total budget for 2016-17 is now finalised at £662,750 (for comparison last year 2015-16 was £663,353 and 2014-15 was £687,710). It is evident that there has been a continual decrease over that time span. Purely as an indicator, our largest area of spend, at roughly 75% of that budget is on employee wages for our 24 staff. To ensure that we are broadly inline with comparable schools for various areas of our expenditure, our Bursar annually undertakes a benchmarking exercise. This provides us with the evidence that we are not over or underspending in any particular areas.

## Staff Recruitment

I'm sure that you are all aware that this year there has been a much higher than usual staff turnover. Three of those leaving the school have a combined length of service of a staggering 66 years, and even the fourth had served us for a not inconsiderable 10 years. All four have reached retirement and expressed a desire to enjoy life with the benefit of more time. The length of service of those valuable members of staff goes a long way towards indicating the level of contentment within the staff at school. Nevertheless, whilst recruitment has been very high on the agenda for many months now, I think that we have recruited some key new people to the

team. For each new recruit, one governor and Mr McCadden have shortlisted applicants, conducted interviews and subsequently selected the successful candidate. For transparency, Mr Langmead led the process for our new Bursar, Mr Chater led the process for our new Secretary, and I led the process for our new Clerk to the Governors.

## What on earth is OTrack?

For those few of you who are still reading, my final article is a short piece about the new performance tracking system, OTrack which the school bought into last year. For many many years, up until the end of 2014-15 academic year, all schools in the country, both primary and secondary, used the same system of levels for tracking children's attainment and consequently progress. It worked well and was generally easily understood by all.

Nevertheless, for many reasons, The Government scrapped the levels system and instructed each school to devise their own system. After much head-scratching (cranium not teacher!), and indeed much consultation with other local schools we decided to purchase OTrack and very pleased we are with it (several external advisers have also been very impressed with its versatility). It facilitates the ability to analyse the attainment of lots of subgroups of children within the school and inform us of their progress, which is tremendously useful, both at school and governor level. Indeed, a number of other local schools have been so impressed by its versatility, that they too have now purchased the same system.

**I hope you have enjoyed reading this newsletter and have found it informative. If you have any comments, or wish to discuss anything relating to school governance, please contact myself or any governor. Finally I hope you all enjoy the school summer holidays.**

*David Owen* Chair

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