



Headteacher: Mrs Stephanie Reeves
Garstang Community Primary School
Oak Road
Garstang
PR3 1HT

head@garstang.lancs.sch.uk

01995 603622

Garstang Community Primary School
"Growing Together"

January 2023

Chair of Governors Annual Letter

A very happy new year to you from the governors at Garstang Community Primary School, and all good wishes for 2023 to you and your families.

It has been the custom of previous Chairs of Governors to write an annual letter to parents at the start of each calendar year, and so, as I start in this role, I shall be continuing that tradition. Governors are a vital part of the smooth running of a school, and yet much of their work is hidden and often parents are unaware of their activities or even who they are. I hope that this letter will give you a flavour of our endeavours on behalf of the school over the past 12 months. If this piques your interest, there is much more information on the school website and minutes of our meetings are available from the school office on request.

Our current governing body consists of members with a range of experience and skills, including two former chairs. This year, there have been some changes in membership and roles. In November, Mrs Lindsay Gates and Mr Roger Wilkinson reached the end of their respective terms of office as co-opted governors; we are very grateful that they chose to invest their time and talents in this way to support our school. We have already embarked upon the process of finding members of our local community to replace them, and we are hopeful that we will be able to confirm those appointments at the Full Governors meeting in March.

In September 2022, Mrs Alison Alexander stepped down as Chair of Governors, though she remains a governor. Alison's role was especially demanding during Covid as she supported Mrs Reeves with the constant decision-making and responses to changing guidance and circumstances. We are so pleased that we are keeping her experience and expertise. In November 2022, I was elected as Chair, and Mr Mike Easton was elected to my former role of Vice-Chair. Mike is an experienced building surveyor, who has previously worked for Lancashire County Council in their Property & Estates department; his skills and mine are very much complementary.

Any governing body has 3 key functions:

1. Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.

2. Hold the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils.

3. Oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well spent.

Each year, governors here produce a document which we call the VAF, as our way of recording specific aims and activities in each of these 3 areas. Completed VAFs from previous years are available at <https://garstangcommunityprimary.co.uk/governors/vision-accountability-and-finance-document/>

Last academic year (2021-22), in addition to fulfilling statutory requirements, we:

- Assisted strategic planning and recruitment of staff, ensuring that staffing levels are sustainable and meet the needs of the school;
- Stayed up to date with the Ofsted framework, including undertaking training, in readiness for inspection;
- Thoroughly scrutinised internal and statutory assessment data to ensure resources were appropriately directed, including oversight of the use of government funding through the National Tutoring Programme;
- Supported the School Improvement Priorities by setting aside funds in the budget and nominating specific governors to liaise with leading staff and report on progress throughout the year;
- Set the budget under increasing financial pressures, undertaking regular benchmarking and reviews to ensure that declining balances were well managed and best value obtained at every opportunity.

Governors also supported several school events, volunteered in school, assisted with practical tasks, and attended numerous training courses – in the ever-evolving landscape of education, even experienced governors are constantly learning about their role.

All of our governors make frequent visits to school and we would welcome your ideas. We have been interested to read the feedback from the recent parental survey and will be discussing it further in meetings this term. I am in school regularly (at a minimum, most Tuesday and Wednesday mornings) and am familiar to most of the children in school. Please do get in touch if you would like to discuss anything with me – either through the school office or by emailing chair@garstang.lancs.sch.uk.

Finally, I would like to record my thanks to all those who work so hard on behalf of the pupils at Garstang Community Primary School. Mrs Reeves and her team are relentlessly focussed on doing the best that they can for each child, and they show such commitment to our school. Thank you also to you as parents and carers for the way in which you support the school and its aims. It is my hope that as we all work together this year, we will see each and every one of our pupils flourish and thrive.

Alex Fearnhead

Current governors:

Mrs Alex Fearnhead – Chair
Mr Mike Easton – Vice-Chair
Mrs Alison Alexander
Mr Mark Bartlett
Dr Shahedal Bari
Dr Luke Holmes
Mrs Suzi Newiss
Mrs Stephanie Reeves
Mrs Paula Wells
Dr Petra Werler