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Garstang Community Primary School
"Growing Together"

January 2024

Annual Letter from the Chair of Governors

A very Happy New Year to you from the governors at Garstang Community Primary School. I hope that 2024 has started well for you and your families.

It has become customary at this time of year for the Chair of our Governing Body to write to parents. Many of you will be very familiar with the role and responsibilities of the governors in a school, but some of you may not know who we are or what we do. I hope that this will give you a flavour. If your curiosity is aroused by reading this, there is a lot more information on the school website, and minutes of Full Governing Body meetings are available from the office on request.

We have had a couple of changes of membership over the past 12 months. Alison Alexander, who served as a governor for 12 years, stepped down in September 2023. She was my predecessor as chair, and had also chaired the Finance and Resources committee for several years. We especially miss her accountancy skills, and are on the lookout for someone with that specific professional background to fill one of our current vacancies. In March, Megan Wilcox joined the Governing Body; she brings a wealth of experience having previously worked in Early Years education and having served as a governor in the south of England.

This still leaves us with a couple of vacancies. There will shortly be elections for two new parent governors. Being a governor does require a significant investment of time, however it is a very rewarding way to give back to the school; Mrs Reeves and I would be pleased to talk to anyone who thinks they could contribute in this way.

2023 was a significant year in the life of our school, as we welcomed the Ofsted inspectors in March. This visit was long overdue, and something that staff and governors had been preparing for for many years. The two-day visit was thorough, fair and helpful, as we seek to drive further improvement for the benefit of all of our children. The Ofsted framework has changed several times since the inspection in 2009, and so we had expected that the overall judgement would be "Good". The Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body were able to receive detailed feedback from the inspectors which emphasised that across all areas, this was a good "Good", and pinpointed many areas of strength. This was a well-deserved affirmation of the hard work and professionalism of all our staff.

Any governing body has 3 core 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.

At GCPS, we have created a document called the VAF which helps us maintain our focus on these functions and keep track of our actions throughout the year. The completed VAF for the academic year 2022-23 can be found at [VAF 22-23](#). Last year, in addition to fulfilling statutory requirements, we:

- Obtained funding for a new roof which was largely completed over the summer holidays (and we continue to pursue some outstanding details from this project);
- In response to a full safeguarding audit, arranged for the installation of the playground fencing;
- Assisted in strategic planning and recruitment of staff, ensuring that staffing levels are financially sustainable and best meet the needs of the children;
- Invested in supporting the wellbeing of pupils and staff;
- Made use of our own community links to enhance wider opportunities that the school can offer to its pupils;
- 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;

All of our governors make frequent visits to school, not only to attend meetings, but also supporting events, volunteering in class and helping with practical tasks. We feel that we know our school very well.

Finally, I would like to record my thanks to all those who work so hard to do the best that they can for each child in our school. I know that that aim is consistently upheld by Mrs Reeves and her team. Thank you also to you as parents and carers for your support and partnership in this. Please do get in touch if you have any thoughts about how we can do this together even better; or, if your circumstances allow, consider standing for election to our Governing Body.

Kind regards,

Alex Fearnhead chair@garstang.lancs.sch.uk

Current Governors

Mrs Alex Fearnhead – Chair

Mr Mike Easton – Vice-Chair

Mr Mark Bartlett

Dr Shahedal Bari

Dr Luke Holmes

Mrs Suzi Newiss

Mrs Stephanie Reeves

Mrs Paula Wells

Dr Petra Werler

Mrs Megan Wilcox