



Brinkworth Earl Danby's Governing Board Update September 2022

Dear Parents & Carers,

I do hope you have had a great summer break; we are delighted to see the children back in school and settling into their new classes.

We are taking this opportunity to provide you with an update on the Governor activities from **last year** and our plans for **2022/ 2023**.

I have led the governing body for nearly four years now and with an imminent increase in work commitments, it is time to step down. Jo Maitland has been Vice Chair for the last year and was a critical person in the appointment of our new Headteacher. I am delighted to confirm she has agreed to be Chair of Governors from September 2022.

In order to support Mrs Maitland and Mrs Walch in their new roles I will stay on as an Associate Governor for continuity. I would like to thank governors past and present, our school staff and you as parents and carers for your support over the years. It has been an honour.

Looking back at 2021-2022

This report is focused on Governor activities rather than a complete summary of the school's achievements.

We are always looking at ways of increasing efficiency. The board of governors is made up of volunteers who undertake this role in their 'spare time'. As such our goal is to use our time carefully, focusing on what will make the most difference whilst also meeting our statutory responsibilities as set out by the Department of Education.

As a result we decided to reduce to two committees from our usual three. Health, Safety and Welfare (H,S&W) was redistributed into the remaining two committees. The terms of reference were updated and this new format allowed resource to be better utilised and H,S&W matters to be discussed alongside linked items.

Our governor foci for the year were: - **Link Governor Excellence**, continuing the improvements of the previous year; **Data**, to improve the information and understanding of data available to governors; **Financial Understanding**, having conducted a skills audit and with several new governors, we looked to increase the general financial knowledge outside of the FPP committee.

We were pleased with the output of our **Link Governor** work, supporting curriculum leads and the curriculum excellence of the school. Throughout the year we saw **data** from our Cornerstones system which helped us understand benchmarking post-covid and scrutinise where resource was being deployed. The **superb end-of-year test results throughout the school** were testament to the well planned support developed and delivered by the teaching team. **Financial understanding** was improved by termly updates from the FPP chair and also some very clear briefings from our School Business Manager, Mrs Metcalfe.



Brinkworth Earl Danby's Governing Board Update September 2022

Our key projects at the start of the year were: investigating **wrap around care** at the school; **speed limits** around school sites; **COVID recovery plan**; **premises improvement**; and **sucession planning** in the governing board.

We also wanted to hear more from children, parents and staff about how they felt about the school. **Questionnaires** were sent out and insight taken from the results. The output was communicated back to these groups and helped shape our thinking.

Mrs Hilliard's resignation kick started an enormously time consuming project to recruit a new Headteacher. Three governors took responsibility for defining the job specification, the person specification and creating the school information pack in order to advertise the role. An assessment centre then had to be written with two days of testing and interviewing, using a set of diverse challenges to get to know our candidates really well. The assessment centre had to be run twice due to covid illness. I would particularly like to thank Anne-Marie Tuck and Jo Maitland for giving up so much time to develop all this material and for being part of the group making the ultimate decision. I would also like to thank the whole school team for their role in creating material and ensuring the days ran very smoothly and to the other governors who supported with their time on the assessment centre days to act as chaperones and second opinions. We also received superb support from Bristol Diocese, the Local Authority and our village clergy.

This project spanned 4 months of intense activity, and this naturally impacted on our ability to progress some of our other projects. **Wrap around care** was investigated and I am pleased to say has gone out to tender. There is no guarantee that a solution will be found, but we are a good deal closer than we were 12 months ago. Mrs Maitland and Mrs Metcalfe have been instrumental in getting this far.

We are underway with a travel survey which must be completed before proposing **20mph zones** outside our sites. It is a long winded and frustrating project, however we must follow process which Mr McGrady is duly doing. We are grateful for your parental engagement with this survey to support us.

Mrs Metcalfe, the school team and Mr Lambert have been very busy organising **FTTP** (Fibre To The Premises) to enable VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) in readiness for copper landlines becoming obsolete. There will be huge benefits of FTTP running to both sites. Mrs Metcalfe and Mrs Maitland were successful in achieving a £16k grant from the Diocese in order to complete our switch to **LED lights**, something which is environmentally beneficial and sensible considering our energy bill challenges going forward.

With Mrs Maitland taking over as Chair of Governors we have completed a major piece of **sucession planning**. We also welcomed Mrs Fiona Hegarty to our board as a Co-opted Governor. She brings a huge amount of school governance experience which will be a big benefit to us. We will be running another **parent governor election** in the autumn and we continue to look for Co-opted governors. If you wish to **volunteer**, or know someone who could support our school, do please put them in touch with us.



Brinkworth Earl Danby's Governing Board Update September 2022

In addition Mrs Hilliard and I have been working with other trustees of the **Danby Foundation** which owns the old school house adjacent to Mrs Cross's classroom at the lower school site. We are investing to fully modernise this house allowing it to be put onto the rental market. Part of the income from this will come back to the school under the terms of the charity.

Looking forward to 2022-2023

We are delighted that Mrs Alana Walch accepted our offer of the Headteacher role. We have been working closely with her and the Senior Leadership Team since June to support her induction. We are very much looking forward to the next chapter for Brinkworth Earl Danby's.

A governor evaluation evening was undertaken in June where we identified the main strands of challenge for the coming year/s and what our short, medium and long term priorities were.

Our school priorities for 2022/23 are: 1) **Children** – which is centred around having an excellent School Development Plan and Curriculum plus driving the culture of high aspiration; 2) **The Team** – especially important during this change of leadership; and 3) **Communication** – internally and externally

We are positioning our governor input to be working hand in hand with the school team to achieve these goals. Operating as '**one team**' is crucial for the next 12 months, whilst not forgetting the board's key role of holding the Headteacher to account. We will share more on these topics as the year develops.

Looking specifically at the governing board, we are again challenging ourselves to operate with **greater insight and efficiency**. We are adopting a new format of meetings which sees all governors involved in every part of governance. Whilst we will need to work hard to land this new concept, the benefits are numerous. Governor knowledge will increase more quickly, we will have more people involved in working on solutions and hearing information, skill sets will be better used and we release time for our clerk to undertake more to support our chair.

It will be a very busy year with new leadership, new challenges from the Department of Education and Local Authority, new team members on the school staff and within the governing body, and on top of this a potential visit from Ofsted at some point in the next 18 months.

Our focus since June has been to get on the front foot with planning and organisation so we hit the ground running in September.

We would very much encourage you to engage with the governing board. You can either speak to a governor, many of whom are parents as well, or email on Governors@brinkworthearldanbys.wilts.sch.uk with feedback, suggestions or ideas. Also use these communication routes if you are interested in becoming part of our board, or if you know of someone else who can support our school and our children in this way. Thank you.

Ella Morgan

Outgoing Chair of Governors