



Governor News

End of School Year 2022/23 Report – September 2023

Our Mission Statement:

To provide a secure, happy and stimulating learning environment in which EVERYONE is valued, spiritual growth is nurtured and potential maximised.

Our Vision: Believe to Achieve!

‘Roots will grow down into God’s love and keep us strong’ EPH3:17

We believe as a community that each child can reach their vocational potential.

We believe each child is of unique worth made in the image of God.

We believe in each child being the best that they can be and finding their place in the world.

We believe in:-
a child's potential
being part of a community
being the best you can be

Dear Parents and Carers,

It is a real pleasure to write to you and provide you with a summary of School Governance in the last academic year.

Strategic Priorities 2022/23. Last year, we had three strategic priorities and I have reviewed progress against those:

- **Providing outstanding provision for the CHILDREN.** Underpinned by an excellent School Development Plan.
- **Support to and development of the TEAM.** Critical during this change of leadership of both Headteacher and Chair of Governors.
- **Strengthen COMMUNICATION.** Incorporates internal and external stakeholders and audiences.

Priority 1 - Providing outstanding provision for the CHILDREN. Top of our School Development Plan was to review and optimise our safeguarding culture and processes because keeping the children safe is at the heart of, and underpins, all that the school does. Together the new Safeguarding Governor and new Headteacher, Mrs Walch, combined with valuable parent/carer feedback, conducted a routine audit. We are pleased to report that the school’s safeguarding remains strong. New safeguarding noticeboards are up on both sites, which use pupil-friendly language and photographs to explain to children of all ages who they can go to if they want support; anti-bullying week was a great opportunity to explore with all pupils who their trusted people are; a new behaviour and anti-bullying policy has been implemented; and the Safeguarding Governor has visited all classrooms to find out how safe all the pupils feel in school.

100% of the parents and carers who responded to the school’s survey also stated that their children feel safe and happy in school. 96% stated that their child knows who to speak to if they feel unhappy or upset at school and so the school will continue with the noticeboards and classroom discussions to help those who are unsure identify their trusted adults, which provides support as the children move into new classes in September. We have monitored how the school

has worked together with the Local Authority multi-agency support when specific circumstances have warranted it, and the Local Authority have given us feedback that they are satisfied with how the school follows the statutory processes. Thank you for the parent/carer feedback that you have given through the survey and directly to the school and Governors this year. This helps the school learn and improve systems. There were a couple of respondents to the anonymous parent/carer survey who stated they feel there are areas for improvement in how quickly and effectively the school reacted to their concerns. If that is you, please do consider providing specific feedback so that the school can learn and develop. There are many ways to provide the school with feedback. If you wish to remain anonymous, you can come via the Governors.

Another focus area in the School Development Plan was delivering consistent high-quality teaching across the school, and a focus on outstanding quality of education in Reception. Over a year ago, the proposal of improving phonics provision was presented to and supported by the Full Governing Body (FGB). This year the impact has been reviewed through results and link governor meetings. Very positive external feedback from the Ramsbury Hub and the fantastic school results confirm Governor observations that this is well embedded.

For all year groups, school trips have really brought history, geography, science, music and art to life, and we want to express our thanks to BEDSA whose fundraising support enables Mrs Walch and her team to provide these trips at lower cost.

Also in the School Development Plan was Curriculum Development. Just prior to the COVID pandemic, in 2019, the Department for Education specified that every primary school needed to have a curriculum tailored to the school's specific setting and community needs. As part of her arrival work, Mrs Walch and the staff took time to review the existing school curriculum and consider how it could be further shaped for our school ethos and context. Subject Leaders spent much of the summer term developing and renewing the Curriculum (based on the National Curriculum) with the support of a skilled external educational consultant. Link Governors have met throughout the year with their respective Subject Leader, supporting the curriculum development through our monitoring activity. As Governors we have been impressed with the pace of progress and attention to detail which is evident in all of the school's curriculum development work. Governors will be supporting the school in monitoring the implementation of the new curriculum, and I know that Mrs Walch will be providing an opportunity for parents to learn about the curriculum in due course. We want to express a big thank you to Mrs Walch and her whole team for the huge amount of work that has gone into developing this exciting new development for the school, in addition to their normal workload.

Priority 2 - Support to and development of the TEAM.

Mrs Walch and the Senior Leadership Team worked closely throughout the year with the School Improvement Advisor and the Local Authority Area Improvement Lead, our Hobbes Alliance partner schools, the Local Authority CPD courses for staff, and an educational coach. These resources helped to support all team members through leadership change and to build and strengthen the school's team, with the focus being on keeping the pupils at the heart of all decision-making and striving for the School's Vision to be *'the best that they can be'*. As Governors, we value the external support from the Local Authority very much, as it provides us with additional, independent evidence of the impact of the school's work on pupils' progress and helps us triangulate and authenticate our own Governor monitoring activity. We had positive feedback on our governance in terms of our commitment, organisation, efficiency and our grasp of school effectiveness. We also received some very useful guidance in improving how we remain strategic in our focus, and in challenging effectively.

We are really grateful to Mrs Walch and her team for being able to keep the school open for all pupils throughout the strike days through the academic year, which we know has been valued by pupils, parents and carers. I wanted to formally recognise the flexibility and commitment of

classroom and support staff members which has enabled this to happen. Thank you to all the staff and volunteers who have helped this happen.

You may recall from my last letter that in September 2022 we began a year-long trial to adapt how we work as Governors. We incorporated our previous committee structure into our FGB meetings, so that at alternating meetings we have an Education Development & Safeguarding or a Finance/People/Premises focus. We evaluated this change at our June meeting and have agreed that it is proving a success. It is helping us be more informed, more efficient and better able to deliver monitoring, oversight and understanding across the whole of the school's operation. We have identified some refinements that can help us work better still, which will form the core of our Governor Development activity next year. We will share this with you shortly as we start the new school year. In this, we are striving to meet the School's Vision to be *'the best that we can be'* as school Governors.

Priority 3 - Strengthen COMMUNICATION. The school's third strategic priority in the 2022/23 year has been to strengthen communication with all school stakeholders and communities. The school recognised from your parent/carer feedback in summer 2022 that this was needed, and also wanted to build the links with our village community organisations. This is really important for helping deliver the vision "*..being part of a community*", and it continued to be an area of focus through the year.

As governors we have observed some big steps forward. Mrs Walch's bi-weekly newsletter now provides a one-stop-shop for the most up to date calendar dates, school plans, news of pupil successes and a focus on our school value for each term. Hosted on the website, it allows all to use it as a reference point. We hope you have been finding these useful, and we highly recommend them to you. We have also received positive feedback on the online parenting session and newsletters.

The pilot of the SeeSaw app in Beech Class for Reception pupils and parents has been a real success, with parents and carers giving very positive feedback about how much more informed they feel about their child's progress in school.

However, we have also monitored the output from the parent/carer feedback surveys in March/April 2023, and July 2023. This, along with school and governance self-reflections, have indicated that parent communications do not always work for all people, and can still become more effective and timelier. There have been a couple of instances in which school has not been able to communicate news to you first, as school would always wish to do. In our monitoring activity, we note that this is reflected in the recent School Self Evaluation process. As a result, communication will remain as a Strategic Priority into the next school year in recognition that there is still work to do. Thank-you for your feedback which helps us to monitor and the school to improve – please keep explaining what you would appreciate in terms of communication.

There were a small number of survey responses which asked that, in future, there are no school communications posted by parent Governors onto the informal parent Whatsapp groups for each class. That was useful feedback, and we apologise to any parents or carers who felt negatively impacted by the set of circumstances in which this occurred. We have reviewed the specific circumstances in a FGB meeting in response to this parent feedback. Our intention was to reassure, but some parents and carers would prefer that these messages stay in formal school email communications. We have amended our Code of Conduct to recognise that preference. It can be found on the Governance page of the website for your information. For those who raised concerns, the FGB minutes are publicly available, and so if you would like to see them, please email governors@brinkworthearldanbys.wilts.sch.uk.

Governor Expenses

It is expected that we report annually to you regarding expenses claimed by governors in the course of their voluntary work. In this academic year, no (£0) expenses have been claimed by governors.

Thank you to our school and local community

I would like to recognise the really important contribution of BEDSA to our school life, and on behalf of us all send a huge thank-you to Emily Smith, BEDSA Chair, and the BEDSA team for all their hard work and support through the 2022/23 academic year. As well as important financial support for school trips, resources and infrastructure change, BEDSA have also brightened and enriched the pupils' experiences with activities such as the school discos, non-uniform days, sponsored bounce and decorated egg competition and refreshments at the brilliant Sports Day. Thank-you BEDSA!

We also want to extend our gratitude to BEDSA for £2000 spent on library books and core texts; Malmesbury Carnival for the £1000 donation for the school libraries; the Dyson Foundation for donating £1000 to be spent on Design & Technology equipment; and the Diocese of Bristol who have donated a substantial sum towards the LED lighting replacement for the school. This work has been completed across both sites, and is contributing to reduced energy usage, which in turn allows us to spend more money on the pupils' education.

And a heartfelt thank-you to the countless parents, carers and members of our community who have given your time generously in so many ways, whether helping with school trips, with reading, with BEDSA, or in other roles. The pupils and school benefit and thrive from your time and energy. We are all very grateful. Thank you also to the wonderful volunteers who have once again given their time to teach the Lower Site children maypole dancing for the Brinkworth Church Fete. We know this has given those pupils involved wonderful childhood memories.

Thank you to departing Staff and Governors

In September 2022 our outgoing Chair of Governors, Ella Morgan, became an Associate Governor and we remain indebted to her for all her dedication, commitment and leadership through her term as Chair, particularly during the pandemic. Thank you, Ella.

Also in September 2022, Nicki Sinclair stepped down as an Associate Governor after 19 years of governance support to our school. It is a huge gift of time and energy that she has given generations of children, and we are extremely grateful. Thank you, Nicki.

In December 2022, Andy Willy's term as a Co-opted Governor came to an end. We are hugely thankful to Andy for all the time, thought and contribution he has offered to the school and governing body. Thank you, Andy.

At the end of Term 4 in 2023, we said farewell to School Business Manager, Mrs Metcalfe, who moved onto new and exciting career challenges. Thank you, Lauren for your work in support of the school. We also said a grateful farewell to Teaching Assistant Mrs Withers, who has been a key team member in the classroom staff. Thank you, Tanya for all of your service to pupils and school.

In Term 5 of 2023, we said farewell to Mrs Lough, who has retired after long service in the Administrative Team. She had a lovely farewell celebration from staff, and is much missed. Thank you Su, we wish you much joy in your retirement. We also said a grateful farewell to Mrs Hutt who has been a key support to the school as MDSA. Thank you, Ruth, for all of your hard work and care.

As the school year closed, we said farewell to Beech Class teacher Miss Chappell, who has moved onto a new and exciting career opportunity. Thank you, Tanya, for your commitment and hard work in support of Beech Class. We also said a huge thank you to Anne-Marie Tuck, one of our longest standing governors, as she moved from being a Full Governor to an Associate Governor. Anne-Marie has served as a Parent Governor since 2019 and then a Foundation Governor from 2021, and we have all benefitted from her energy, insights and selfless commitment. Thank you, Anne-Marie.

Welcomes

At the start of the school year in 2022 we were excited to welcome our new Headteacher Mrs Walch, Mrs Dossett as a teacher in Rowan Class, and Miss Lilley and Mr Haydon as Oak and Rowan Class Teaching Assistants. We also welcomed Miss Seton who is working in Willow Class as our long-term supply teacher. It has been wonderful to get to know you all this last year!

During the year we were delighted to welcome Fiona Hegarty, Trish Blacker, Matt Parfitt and Jack Watkins to the Governing Body. We are very grateful for each of them volunteering to join us. Fiona is a Co-opted Governor, and Trish, Matt and Jack are Parent Governors. Their biographies can be found on our Governor page on the website.

We were equally delighted to welcome Ms Helen Wallace as the new School Business Manager and Mrs Wendy Jones to Upper Site in the role of Teaching Assistant, both at the start of Term 5. Welcome again to you both!

A heartfelt welcome to Mrs Karen Turner who joined the school team as Administrator in Term 6, working at Upper Site. Karen, you are really very welcome, and it is great to be working alongside you.

Thank you to all the school staff!

A huge and heartfelt thank-you goes to all the wonderful school staff who have worked tirelessly throughout the academic year to support, enthuse and develop our pupils, working towards their unique potential, and helping them all be the very best that they can be, providing them with fantastic teaching and interventions, amazing meals, wonderful administrative support, warm and caring lunchtime supervision and transport supervision and so much more! Thank you! You all make the school a warm, welcoming, safe and professional environment, and we are all hugely grateful to you for your dedication. We hope you enjoyed a well-deserved and relaxing summer break.

Looking forwards to the new school year

Looking forward into this new academic year, school and governors together are delighted and excited to celebrate the forthcoming launch of Wrap Around Care on site, called *Little Foxes @ BEDS*. As you are aware, the provision is just awaiting Ofsted registration to be completed before it can move from Little Foxes premises to the school site. Once this is received, *LF@BEDS* will provide term-time care for pupils from 0730 to 1800 on site, five days a week. All the details are on the Little Foxes @ BEDS booking site, which you can see on [Wrap Around Care tab](#) on the school's website. Please do take a look! This has been a substantial project, and my personal thanks go to the staff and governors who have given their time to realise the vision agreed 18 months ago.

As governors we are also pleased that from September 2023, the school is delivering 6½ hours of schooling daily for every pupil across the school, whether at Upper or Lower site. This becomes a statutory requirement from September 2024 and it is very positive that the school is providing this a year early. The new school day timings are on the [website tab here](#).

It is a privilege to have served as your Chair of Governors this year, and I am looking forward to continuing working with Mrs Walch, all of her staff, and our Board of Governors through this new academic year. I will write to you all again later in October, letting you know our Strategic and School Development priorities for the new year.

Until then, Mrs Walch and all the governors and I wish the very best to you and your families for the start of this new academic year, and welcome to all the new children and families who have joined the school. Finally, the Governing Body would like to thank all parents and carers for your engagement with the school and your support to your children's learning. We hope the years your children are at Brinkworth Earl Danby's CE Primary School will be years you can look back on as happy and fulfilling ones.

God Bless.

Jo Maitland

For full details of who is on the Governing Body, please see the Governors area of the school website. Don't forget, if you have any comments or feedback for governors, please catch us in the playground or email your comments to governors@brinkworthearldanbys.wilts.sch.uk.

If you, or someone you know, are interested in serving on the Governing Body, please do get in touch to find out more. We currently have vacancies for Foundation and Co-opted Governors on our board, and we really welcome diversity on our board.