



Governor News

End of School Year 2023/24 Report – July 2024

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,

As I write what will be my last letter as Chair of your Board of Governors, I want to reflect on the last year, thank each and every one of you for your support, ring the changes on some personnel issues, and set a backdrop for our intentions for the 2024/5 academic year.

As a school, strong safeguarding remains the non-negotiable baseline that underpins all of our work. Quality education cannot happen in an unsafe environment. As Governors, we have continued to strengthen our processes around safeguarding, maintaining a dedicated governor to monitor safeguarding processes, putting safeguarding at the top of every meeting agenda, and working closely with the local authority to identify and resolve any emerging issues. As Governors, we focus firstly and strongly on the school delivering the core of the school's mission. This is: that the school maintains a **secure, happy and stimulating learning environment in school, in which everyone is valued**. It is great that not only has the Local Authority confirmed that our processes are strong, the school has also been able to launch projects in response to parent feedback. In just 2023/4 alone, the school ran a first campaign to support children in understanding and articulating what keeps them safe, and who they can trust, and then a second one to help our children understand what safe behaviour looks like, particularly in the outside spaces. As always, these initiatives are team efforts, and I would like to extend the Governors' thanks both to the staff who helped implement them, but also to you as parents and carers, for raising your observations and concerns, and giving us your trust, which allows the school to reflect and adjust.

The School Development Plan is the anchor of any Board of Governors. The school's three strategic priorities for this year have been Quality of Education, Personal Development and Communication. These are therefore the basis of so much of what as Governors we monitor. This year, we strove to find a respectful and compassionate balance between scrutiny of the strategic priorities and challenging school leaders, while also supporting staff wellbeing, and managing already highly stretched staff workloads. In this year's context, we chose to place our primary focus on the top priority - the Quality of Education.

Again, the 2023/4 academic year was one of more progress. The school's new curriculum was launched in September, which was the delivery of a huge piece of improvement work. Early indicators show that it has been a success, and it has continued to be refined through this year.

The curriculum is itself published on the school website, and I commend it to you. In terms of personal development, despite financial constraints, the school ran projects such as a Geography encounter day and World Music Day, linked to the new curriculum. These were wonderful activities, which as any parent knows, can enrich and enliven pupils' school experience, and it is once again testament to our fantastic teachers and TAs that these were such a success. We very much look forwards to more of the same as the curriculum embeds further in the next year. One way we can measure quality of education is in the results from nationally mandated tests in Y6 and Reception. Across all of the KS2 SATs subjects, our Y6 pupils achieved higher percentages of required standards than Wiltshire comparators, and all subjects were also higher than or equal to National comparators for required standards. A huge well done to all the Y6 pupils, Miss Seton, Mrs Venny and all the other teachers who have worked with their cohort, for their hard work and successes. A standout result is that our Y6 pupils also achieved 10% higher than the comparators at Greater Depth Reading – a real testament to the school's focus on reading over the last few years. In the Reception year, Beech Class pupils have achieved results a full 16% higher than the National comparator which is amazing – well done to all the Beech Class pupils, and thank you to Miss Mewis and Mrs Howes!

But thanks must not stop there: thank you also to BEDSA and all of you who have contributed either through BEDSA or in other ways. Contributions such as the school trips that brought history, geography, science, music and art to life, and the wonderful new books for the Upper Site library are cherished and appreciated by all at the school – pupils, staff and governors.

In communication, our third strategic priority, there too I feel the school has made progress through the Headteacher's regular school newsletter and our special Reception Year Seesaw, which is also now being extended to Y1. The newsletter has been exceptionally important in this year of turbulence in leadership staffing, and we are grateful to all school leaders for maintaining the 2-weekly rhythm which gives you consistency of communication in all the important administrative matters as parents and carers. I continue to commend it to all as your primary point of access for key information, whether you access it through the emails or the website archive. Getting feedback from parents is vital in understanding where the school can improve. We will be sending out a new parent/carer survey in the Autumn, and I encourage all of you to use it to help us do things better. But if there is a burning issue, please don't wait. Let us know what you think, always and often.

As a board, 2023/4 was another year of reflection. We instituted a new structure to strengthen our processes in 2022/3, and this year saw us stress test ourselves as a group to see what still needs to be done. As a result, although our overall structure is remaining the same, we are going to slightly alter our Link Governor focus, so that we can more effectively monitor not just the curriculum, but the school more holistically. Our 'Link Governor' focus on subjects was right for this past year when the embedding of the new curriculum needed oversight, but each year is different. As our confidence in the new curriculum grows, we now want to focus more specifically on monitoring the outcomes from it. As an aside, it is a requirement that we report annually regarding expenses claimed by governors in the course of their voluntary work: in the 2023/4 academic year, such expenses totalled £0.

Alas, in any year – and any letter – there are some sad farewells to make. I have already mentioned the support the school gets from BEDSA, they endlessly brightened and enriched school life through school discos, non-uniform days, decorated egg competition and refreshments at the brilliant Sports Day. As Governors, we cannot thank BEDSA enough, which is why it is so sad that Emily Smith is stepping down as Chair. Her support has been amazing, and I hope that BEDSA will continue with a new Chair in the new school year. If you are able to volunteer to support, please do.

There must also be farewells among the staff. The staff team makes a school, and we are very grateful for the commitment and hard work of every staff member. In December 2023, we said farewell to Elm Class teacher, Mrs Dossett. From the kitchen team, we have said farewell this year to Sue Maskell, Ann Bull and Michelle Deane. We must also bid farewell to Willow Class teacher

Mr Foster, and to Rowan Class TA, Mr Haydon. All have given so much to the school, and all will be missed both personally and professionally.

However, we have also welcomed new members to the team, who continue the legacy of hard work and dedication that allows our school and pupils to thrive. This year we are delighted to have welcomed Oak Class teacher Marie Box, Elm Class teacher Fay Reeves, and TA/MDSAs Sophie Durrans and Gemma Gingell. We are looking to extend new offers to fill the available teaching and kitchen staff slots.

It doesn't stop there! Among governors, we say a huge thank you and goodbye to Ella Morgan, Anne-Marie Tuck, Charlotte Sjoberg, Jack Watkins and Trish Blacker. These roles are so important for the school, but they are voluntary, and no one can stay forever. We have welcomed Leo Lester – and we are advertising for new parent Governors to join us in the new term. Please do reach out to discover more and apply!

But let me now look forward to next year. I am really pleased to announce that come September, Mrs Walch and Mrs Cross will both be back in their normal roles. As we look forward to September, I want to pay tribute to the remarkable job the whole staff team has done. We are extremely grateful for the perseverance, boundless energy and teamwork of everyone in school who has shared the load throughout this year.

After 2 years in post as Chair, it is time for me to hand on the baton to the next leader of the Governing board, and to support the school as one of the main Governor team instead. I am excited that as Governors we are already looking to the future and working to take advantage of restored teaching and leading capacity. There will be updates to the Strategic and School Development priorities, the School Development Plan, and the Governor Development Plan. There is always so much to do, as new opportunities and challenges are never far away.

In the meantime, I – along with Mrs Walch and all the Governors – want to wish you the very best summer, to extend my thanks to all of you for your support and guidance, and to once again thank all the staff at Brinkworth Earl Danby's. I can't wait to welcome next year's new pupils and families, and to see so many of you return for another successful year.

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@brinkwortheardanbys.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 new Governors on our board, and we really welcome diversity on our board.