



St Michael's CE Primary School

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Cultivating Respect, Persevering, and Learning with Courage

11th December 2019

Dear Parents, Carers, Staff, Volunteers and Members of the Community,

The Full Governing Board met on 5th December 2019 where we approved the minutes of the Full Governing Board meeting on 26th September 2019, these will be available in the next few days to view in the school office.

Phil Sutton was welcomed as the Foundation Governor

Phil originally trained as a medical engineer and worked for twenty years in children's and newborn intensive care units developing a range of implantable heart monitors and life support systems. Following ordination, he returned to the NHS to serve as a lead for hospital chaplaincy and bereavement services in Bath, Bristol and Oxford. Phil retains a close involvement in medical ethics and specialist bereavement support for parents who have lost a child. Phil and his wife Jane work with the Dogs for Good charity training assistance dogs for adults and children. Phil is currently also a governor at St Blaise C.E Primary School.

Kathryn Mendus was welcomed as the Foundation Governor

Kathryn moved to Steventon almost 30 years ago. She qualified as a solicitor in 1983 and retrained as a counsellor from 2009. Kathryn continued to work at her first placement at Oxford University Counselling Service after qualifying. At OUSCS she was able to develop her thinking around the links between education and life experience, and physical and mental health and well-being. She developed a continuing interest in the uses of creativity and reflection in education and welfare. She has trained additionally with a number of more specialist organisations, such as OXPIP (where she studied parent/carer and child relationships) and MEET in Oxford (where she studied ways of working with trauma), to further develop her experience and practice. She now practices as a psychotherapeutic counsellor working in Steventon, and Oxford where she continues to work with students.

Kevin Moyes was appointed as the Co-opted Governor

Kevin has been a governor for over 7-years, he is currently the Chair of an Interim Executive Board at Blewbury Endowed Church of England Primary School where the Local Authority appointed him. Prior to this, he was Chair of Governors at St Blaise C.E Primary School and Marsh Baldon Church of England Primary School. Kevin has been the Chair of 3 Interim Executive Boards in all cases where he has supported in the delivery of rapid improvement for the school. Kevin is a reserve member of the Oxfordshire Schools' Forum and the Oxfordshire Governors' Association. He became a governor because he had a very poor primary school education and he wanted to ensure that other children did not have the same experience, because he knows first-hand the challenges this creates. Kevin has a passion for small Church of England Primary schools because he believes that they offer a positive and unique experience to children.

We also said goodbye Chris Davies who has sadly recently stepped down as a governor. Governors would like to thank him for his contribution to the school.

The Key areas discussed at our meeting included:

- **Staff welfare and ongoing support**
- **Agreeing the membership of the governor committees and lead governor roles**
- **Discussion** of the Headteacher report including absence; governors raised concerns about absence figures given the significant impact absence has on a child's outcomes
- **Approval of key policies** such as Children Protection (Safeguarding) and **Behaviour**
- **Governor monitoring plans** including on behaviour safeguarding.
- **School finance** – At the moment we are managing the budget to ensure the needs of our pupils are met. We will however, have some challenges in the 2020/21 budget due to the lower number of pupils compared to the original budget set. The levels of nursery occupancy will be influential. However, we are currently working with the Headteacher and Local Authority to identify additional income and funding streams and to review our costs to ensure we have robust contingency plans in place.

Governors undertook an in-school learning walk on 6th December and will be conducting further monitoring visits before the Christmas break including on Safeguarding and behaviour. We have also scheduled a Safeguarding Audit for January with the local authority, which will help to ensure that all best practice elements are in place.

Governors recognise that the school is going through a challenging time and that concerns remain with some members of the community. The Governors would like to re-assure you that we are doing everything possible to ensure that issues are resolved as quickly as possible, the local authority, and the Diocese who are continuing to support with this.

Governors approved the Parents Code of Conduct (attached), which has been recommended by OCC this sets out the expectations we have of our parents; we would in turn like to remind you what you can expect from our staff, governors and volunteers:

- *Put the welfare, development and progress of all pupils first*
- *Demonstrate respect for diversity and take steps to promote equality*
- *Work as part of a unified School/Staff Body*
- *Take responsibility for maintaining the quality of teaching and demonstrating high standards of personal and professional conduct*
- *Maintain public trust and confidence in the School*
- *Maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work*

We are fully aware that some parents, staff and community members remain concerned about the current situation in relation to the Headteacher's absence; we are very fortunate to have Mr Mottram with us until at least the end of this year and we are already seeing a positive impact of his work. We are also ensuring that we have robust contingency plans in place. However, given the complexities, we are unable to give you any more information at this point, but as soon as we have clarity on this, we will of course let you know.

To give you re-assurance and in the spirit of full transparency, the current priority areas for the school agreed by the governors are:

- Behaviour and Safeguarding – implementation of new behaviour policy and ensuring consistently good behaviour across the school
- SEN provision
- Close monitoring of the school budget and contingency planning
- Attendance – increasing overall attendance and tackling persistent lateness and absence
- Staffing – including recruiting a class 2 teacher
- Consistently good quality of Teaching and Learning across the school.

We have received feedback that some members of the community are still unclear about the role of the governors and so we would like to clarify this:

A governor is a volunteer who gives their time to oversee the long-term development of the school.

The three main areas a governor is involved in are:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

In contrast, the Headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day operation – ‘The face of the school’
- Professional responsibility for the quality of educational opportunities (including putting the governing board’s plans into action)
- Using the available budget wisely

Going forward we will send you a communication after each of Full Governing Board meeting which happen six times per year – we will also hold a meeting with the whole community in January 2020 where we will update you on progress and answer any questions you may have. We are also working to update the governor section of the school website to ensure it contains useful governance information for the community.

In the New Year, we will also be asking parents to complete an online questionnaire and staff to complete a wellbeing and engagement questionnaire to ensure governors can understand the views of the community and consider these as we progress our school on its journey.

Governors would like to thank the staff and volunteers at the school who have all worked extremely hard during this challenging period to ensure that the impact on our pupils is minimised as far as possible. We hope that they enjoy a well-deserved break when the Christmas Holidays finally come.

We know that it takes a community to raise a child and so your ongoing support and constructive open dialogue with the school is critical to ensuring success for our school, to enable our pupils to receive a good education and to leave our school as well rounded individuals ready to face the challenges ahead. As governors, every decision and action we take is driven by the fundamental question “**what is best for the children?** We are also guided by our school values (which apply to all) of **Respect, Perseverance and Courage.**

As a reminder if you have concerns than you should:

- First raise these with your Child’s teacher
- If needed, raise with the Headteacher
- If you are still not satisfied your issue has been resolved, or you believe that the school has not followed the relevant policy or procedure then you can raise a complaint as per the new [Complaints Policy available](#) on the school website.

If you have any questions about governance, areas then please do contact Kevin Moyes – Co-Opted Governor – kprm1982@hotmail.com

Best wishes,

Full Governing Board