



**ST. OSWALD'S**  
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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**Chair's Report**  
**To**  
**Parents & Staff**  
**(Summer Term 2022-23)**

**Dr. A. J. Wilkinson**

**July 2023**

# **ST. OSWALD'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## ***Three Core Functions of Governance:***

- 1. Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction*
- 2. Hold executive leaders to account for educational performance and performance management of staff*
- 3. Oversee financial performance and ensure money is well spent*

The governing body encompasses a variety of work / life backgrounds and we are appointed as governors through various routes. At the present time we have nine governors, and we meet regularly as a board in order to act as a critical friend in both supporting and challenging the teaching staff on any aspect of school life. In addition to the reports we receive from the teaching staff, we are always very happy to hear about the experiences of parents and pupils, and can be contacted via the school office. In order to help us to be effective as governors, we ensure our meetings centre around the three key areas of governance listed above.

This term we have had three meetings of the governing body as detailed below. It should be noted that there are always overarching themes of scrutinising the finances and curriculum, as well as discussing safeguarding at each meeting.

- 3 May 2023 – this was a postponed Spring term meeting and was held virtually via the Teams platform. During this meeting the key task is to approve the school budget for the coming year, in light of the school's financial situation and the 3 year forecast. Of particular note, there was also a discussion of the School Improvement Plan, which sets out the key priorities for action in a robust manner.
- 17 May 2023 – this was our first scheduled Summer term meeting and was held face-to-face at school, with a hybrid remote option. A major theme in this meeting was curriculum monitoring and several teachers presented their plans to us regarding their own area of subject leadership (individual teachers have a particular subject for which they lead the curriculum planning across the whole school). This allowed the opportunity to see a selection of pupils' work and understand how delivery of the curriculum matched the intent.

We also discussed a number of Governor reports. Deacon Paul Blinston reported various activities he had been involved in with the school, representing a reinvigoration

of the church / school partnership following a difficult period of time largely due to the Covid pandemic. Two Governors also reported having visited school to monitor the delivery of the SATS, fulfilling our obligation to ensure that the school is meeting its statutory duties.

- 19 July 2023 – this meeting was held virtually and we covered the key areas of governance as noted above. There was a discussion of the children’s progress scores, based on a full presentation of attainment and progress data across the whole school throughout the year. This enables the Governors to ensure that the school leadership is identifying areas for particular attention over the forthcoming school year. We also looked at how money is spent from the pupil premium and sports funding streams, and how this benefits children at the school. These discussions are always led by looking at specific metrics to ensure that money is being spent wisely and that there are measurable outcomes. In terms of Governor visits, Chris Beaney presented a written report looking in detail at KS1 reading provision, ensuring Governor oversight of this important area of curriculum delivery, as well as providing Governors with an understanding of the methods used and its impact on consistency of curriculum delivery and pupils’ attainment and progress.

There was also the procedural issue of electing the Chair and Vice Chair for the forthcoming academic year, with the current Governors holding these roles continuing for the 2023-24 school year. This is revisited on an annual basis.

All Governor meetings are supported by a Clerk from the Local Authority clerks service, and the meeting minutes are held in the school office.

### **Governing Body Membership Changes**

We have had no changes in membership during the summer term, but we are mindful of the fact that we currently have two parent governor vacancies, and wish to fill these by election during the Autumn term of 2023-24. We decided to postpone our initial plan to fill these vacancies in the Spring term owing to a number of changes in short succession, and also feel that it would be good to include incoming reception parents in the process, both as potential candidates as well as engaging in electing parents to fulfil the role.

I would encourage anyone who might be interested to please consider putting their name forwards for election. It can seem a daunting prospect, but we are really keen to broaden our

membership and involve parents from any and every background who might be able to bring their thoughts, talents and experience to this important work. I would also like to share some examples of the work governors do in order to show the variety, and we will always try to accommodate people's individual backgrounds and make use of any relevant experience they might have.

- Attending Governors' meetings – there are seven meetings per year, and currently these are a mixture of face-to-face and virtual meetings. Our face-to-face meetings also always have a virtual element for people who are unable to attend in person. These meetings are always on a Wednesday at 4.30pm, spread throughout the year. In these meetings we always discuss the three core activities as listed above, but as I have tried to show in this term's report, the format of that is quite varied. There will be some written reports, some verbal reports, sometimes some data to look at and question, budget papers detailing the school finances, and also the opportunity to ask the school leadership team any pertinent questions. As well as understanding policies and the school curriculum, it is vital that governors scrutinise the financial management of the school, and being a governor gives huge insight into the difficult decisions that need to be made about where money is spent. We are a very open, friendly governing body, and respect everyone's right to ask questions about any aspect of school life relevant to the agenda for that meeting. There is a certain amount of reading to be done in advance, and meetings usually last between c.60-90 minutes.
- Visiting school – these can be as frequent as needed, but most governors will visit 2-3 times per year. There will usually be a focus for this, based on the particular governance area allocated to that governor (this allocation is discussed on recruitment to the board). For example, it might be to discuss in detail the safeguarding policies with one of the safeguarding leads, or it might be to visit a number of classrooms to see how a particular subject is being taught, or it could be to look at an aspect of the school as an employer or business (such as health & safety or finances). After a visit, there will usually be a written or verbal report given to the rest of the governing body.
- Recruitment panels – governors are involved in recruitment panels for certain professional roles in school. When needed, we request volunteers for a small number of governors to take part, as able. It involves participating in the interviewing of candidates, as well as being part of the decision-making process in selecting who is successful, and is a real opportunity to help ensure the governing body fulfils its

oversight role and contribute to keeping the school ethos and quality of teaching as a key part of governance activity.

- Complaints panels – an important part of governance work is to occasionally form a complaints panel from a small number of governors. This is assembled voluntarily from available governors, and involves dealing directly with complainants and investigating how the school leadership has dealt with the complaint made. Although very infrequent, this can be an area of governance work that gives a lot of insight into how the school is working, and how the school policies are operating in practice.
- Being part of the school community – a particular focus over the past 2 years is to be more open about governance, and see it as part of the wider school community rather than a separate entity that only operates behind closed doors. Chairs' reports detailing governors' work are now produced termly and allow an insight into how that work supports and challenges the school leadership. However, parent governors are not "parent representatives", and there should be no expectation that, in taking the role, you are obliged to bring representations from other parents to the meetings. A parent governor is a full governor who simply fulfils the requirement of also being a parent at the school, and any representations to the governing body should be directed to the school office, for the attention of the Chair.

There is plenty of support and advice from other governors about becoming a governor, and when new in the role there is training both from our online provider and from the local authority. We have a very welcoming group of governors, and we will all be very supportive to new members. We would dearly like to see as many people as possible volunteer to stand for election, so that our parent body can have a choice of a variety of high quality candidates. I would be very happy to meet anyone who has any questions about the role during the first couple of weeks back in the Autumn term, if it would help you to come to a decision about whether to stand for election or not. Please contact the school office and we can arrange this, or alternatively there are some good resources to look at:-

- Book: *"How to survive as a governor in a Catholic School"* by Judith Russi, Redemptorist Publications
- Book: *"The Perfect (OFSTED) School Governor"* by Tim Bartlett, Independent Thinking Press
- URL: <https://www.nga.org.uk/about/become-a-governor-trustee/>

## **Final Thoughts**

As always I would like to thank Mrs. Hassan and all of the staff at the school for their hard work and dedication, and all of our parents for their support. During this year we have had a complete return to all the activities that fell away during the Covid period, and which have been gradually returning over the past 2 years. It has been really good to see everything back in its place, and have parents regularly in school again for the various assemblies, trips and activities that have been running. I hope we can stimulate some interest in our parent governor election in the Autumn term, and continue to move forwards with our governance work. On behalf of the governing body, I would like to give everyone my best wishes for the summer holidays.

Dr. A. J. Wilkinson