

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am sure you are all looking forward to the summer holidays and hopefully you all get a chance to take some time off and relax.

As you will be aware, it has been a difficult year for the school, first working around the building project, and then the tragic news of Gary's death on the building site. Throughout this, staff have sheltered the children from these difficulties, continuing school life as normal and nurturing our children, and bringing to life an inspiring and balanced curriculum. As both a Governor and a Parent, I am very grateful to them for this. I also know they have appreciated the support you have given them.

Vision: At the beginning of this year we reached out to parents, staff, and children to help us articulate a strapline for the school, to help us find the right set of words and descriptions to capture what happens here at Swainswick. We knew that amongst our community there was already a strong shared vision of what makes Swainswick special, so we turned to our community to help us articulate it. This was intentionally not an attempt to change our distinctive culture - more to capture it in words so we can continue to strengthen and safeguard it.

Both Mr. Swarbrooke and I were moved by the touching & thoughtful feedback we received, and how closely our community is aligned around a shared vision of what makes Swainswick unique. Over the last few terms we have discussed these responses and ultimately found that we could not capture the depth of these responses in only a few words and have instead used them to help create this vision statement for Swainswick - I hope this resonates with you:

Our vision for Swainswick is a school where all children are known and valued as unique individuals, where differences are respected and celebrated.

With community and childhood at the heart, our school intentionally nurtures kindness towards one another and believes that children thrive only when their wellbeing is held at the core of their journey.

We believe in our children, and through imagination, high expectations and challenge, we inspire them to reach their fullest potential, and develop an intrinsic happiness in who they are.

"The world is big, and we are small, but we can do anything, anything at all!"
Hazel Class child, age 7

On the next page, Governors have given some highlights from the last year - we hope you find these interesting and that it gives you some insight into the work of the Governing Body - however if you have any questions or would like further information, please do just come and talk to me.

On behalf of the Governing Body, I would like to thank you for all you do to support the school, and create the Swainswick community.

Thank you,
Shannon (Chair of Governors)

Parent Survey:

With the summer holidays just in sight please can I ask you to complete the parent survey whilst this year is still fresh in your mind? It is really important to us as a Governing Body, and to the school to understand the views of our parents/carers. We discuss all your feedback (anonymised) as a Governing Body and use it to help understand what we are doing well as a school, and any areas which might need our focus or we could improve.

Academy Update:

Swainswick has now been approved by the Regional Schools Commissioner for conversion to an academy within the Bath & Wells Multi-Academy Trust.

The intention is that the school will convert on the 1st November 2019. As I detailed in my letter at the beginning of the year, the change from a maintained school to a MAT should not change your child's experience at Swainswick, the majority of the change will be in the systems that the school uses, and in who provides support to the school - this will become the MAT instead of the Local Authority.

The formal consultation period will run for 6 weeks from September, and I will be in touch at the beginning of term to outline this process and the key consultation dates, however in the meantime please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

This year, Sam Carr became a Co-Opted Governor in December, and Helen Roberts will be joining us as a Foundation Governor from September. I will remain as Chair of Governors, but am moving from the role of a Parent Governor to a Co-Opted Governor.

Shannon Carr-Shand
Parent Governor

I feel privileged to serve the school community as Chair of Governors, and to have the opportunity to see the school up close. I am constantly impressed with the dedication and passion of the school staff - who all go above and beyond to support each and every individual child.

Every conversation we have as Governors starts and ends with the central question - what is in the best interests of the child, and how do we know? This is the framework of our role as a critical friend to the school.

This year we have spent a lot of time exploring academy conversion and I feel confident that whilst the change process might be a little bumpy, the support and benefits of shared learning that being part of the BWMAT will bring, will help Swainswick continue to thrive.

I am proud of the work we have done to ensure we can continue to deliver supportive TA provision across the school despite the constraints of education financing, and how we can protect the broad and balanced curriculum within this.

Having been Chair of Governors for three years, I also have the benefit of being able to see how different approaches can have a real impact across the school. For example seeing the impact of the now embedded White Rose approach in maths, or how really targeted interventions can help a child to gain confidence in a tricky area.

It is a pleasure and I think says a lot about the school that I can be in the office discussing any of the big issues (school finances, academy conversion, academic progress) and with a knock at the door - these discussions are set aside for a few minutes whilst a child proudly shows Mr. Swarbrooke their work, and receives a Headteacher's Award. This is not a superficial point - I think it shows in action that the children and their progress are at the centre of the school.

Rev Dave Parr
Foundation Governor

As vicar of Swainswick, I am a foundation governor, and am just completing my first year in post. My dual role has allowed me the privilege of leading many school services, taking assemblies/collective worship and bringing a Christian focus to certain aspects of school life.

I am the link governor for RE and Collective Worship. I have used the last months to begin to get to know students, parents and governors, and I am keen to further support the school's work in these link areas.

It was a particular joy to liaise with Mrs Fitzpatrick and invite in my father, who was a child evacuee during WWII, to speak to Oak Class about his experiences prior to their evacuee experience at the Swindon Railway Village. During the lesson, his first-hand knowledge and stories helped bring history alive for the children, connecting their learning with real people and events. One particular story about growing potatoes from potato peelings even inspired Oak Class to try this experiment themselves!

Claire Davies
Parent Governor

I am enjoying my role as a parent governor. The past two years I have been the safeguarding governor. This has involved holding the school to account by having a meeting each term with the safeguarding leads. During these meetings we have discussed the safeguarding policy and how the school adheres to this.

I have also been involved in the standards committee, and have a role as Maths link governor. It has been great to see strategies being put in place to improve standards in Maths.

I'm particularly pleased that children's happiness and wellbeing is always at the centre of all meetings and discussions.

Sam Carr
Co-Opted Governor

This year, in my first year as early years link governor, I have been working with Grant and Sarah to improve and develop the school's mechanisms for engaging with and listening to parents.

We held an introductory meeting with our new intake parents, where we sought to engage with them and listen to their anxieties, fears, and concerns around the transition to primary school.

We hope to follow this up with further work with the new parents, helping them to feel heard, listened to, and supported as they, as families, make this educational transition.

Imogen Windsor
Parent Governor

I've been a Swainswick parent for 8 years and a parent governor for 18 months. I'm proud of the school and it's ethos, and I think as parents we're fortunate to have such dedicated staff educating our children in such a positive, nurturing way.

Over recent years the school has been through big changes - some quite challenging - but the school has emerged stronger than ever. There are more changes ahead with the imminent Academisation - a decision not taken lightly by governors. We discussed the process at great length, exploring the options and the different MATs (Multi Academy Trusts) we could join. We heard presentations from representatives of Bath & Wells Diocese and Bath & Wells MAT, and were able to ask probing questions about how the transition would work, and what we could expect in the future.

Our main priority as governors is to preserve our identity as a small school - something we are all fiercely proud of. We wanted to know what would change, what would remain the same, whether it was in our school's interests to join, and the reality of our position if we didn't.

The unanimous decision amongst governors was that joining the Bath & Wells MAT was a positive step, and I'm looking forward to seeing how the school's future will unfold.

Robert Shackell
LA Governor

I am the link governor for Health & Safety - this includes conducting H&S walks across the year, to bring an external perspective to the school site, and ensure we keep the school safe for children, staff and visitors.

I have been a Governor at Swainswick for many years, so I bring continuity and a long-term perspective to decision making - there is a cyclical nature to many of the challenges and decisions a school faces, and the background to past approaches can be useful.

As a member of the local Parish Council, I am also a link between the community and the school.

Rich Watts
Co-Opted Governor

Although I have children at Swainswick I am a co-opted governor rather than a parent governor. This means my role is to bring particular skills that can support the effective governance and success of the school.

My skills lie in strategy and planning, so I've been keen to support the continued growth of Swainswick and ensure it has a clear idea of what it wants to achieve in the next 3 years and how best to go there.

This has included ensuring we are putting our resource - both people and budget - into our priorities, and being a critical friend throughout the Academisation process. I am also always keen to ensure that the school remains a good and supportive place for the staff to work.

Nicky Lewis
Parent Governor

I have been a parent governor for the past 4 years. I am passionate about the holistic development of children and have helped to expand the extra curricular provision within the school introducing a number of lunch time and after school clubs.

I am also the link governor for key areas within the school including PE/Sport, wellbeing, PSHE, global citizenship and school council. These are in line with my own interests and experience having worked in education, sport and wellness for over 30 years.

As link governor for the areas highlighted above I have observed several lessons this year and have met with key staff to discuss how I might support them in these areas.

Anna Grayson
Foundation Governor (until March 2019)

Anna Grayson was a Foundation Governor at the school for many years, until her death this March.

She was passionate about children's education, and brilliantly balanced the dual role of a Governor, acting as a critical friend and asking difficult questions, and tirelessly championing the school. She had a particular interest in literacy, and also volunteered in the school supporting children reading - she always glowed when talking about their achievements. Though she had many years experience in education, and was previously Head at Bathampton, she wore her knowledge lightly.

Personally I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked with her, and learnt a lot from her passion and dedication - she is missed.