

Dear Parents

One of our commitments as Governors is to improve communication with parents and we aim to send you a newsletter after every full governors' meeting. We held a full governing body meeting on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July 'on-line' with a very lengthy agenda.

### **Covid 19 and re-opening the school now and in September**

Mrs Batson informed governors of the school's response to Covid 19, providing news about those Year groups that have been allowed back into school and how staff have continued to provide support for you as they (with your help) encourage children in Years 2-5 to engage with the resources, such as Tapestry and Class Dojo, being provided to maintain their education at this difficult time.

Plans are well underway for a full re-opening of the school to all classes in September and Mrs Batson will provide much more information on this over the next week. We are all looking forward so much to welcoming all our pupils back. Of course, we say farewell to our Year 6 – under normal circumstances pupils, parents, staff and governors would get together to celebrate Mass with Fr Teddy in Wappenbury followed by an evening of celebration. Sadly, like so many events, this has had to be cancelled this year; we wish all our leavers the best of luck and success in their new schools from September.

### **Staffing and Governors changes in personnel**

In our May newsletter we put on record our appreciation of the work of our wonderful front of house manager – Sheila Davenport, who retired at the end of June. We are delighted to have recruited a very experienced and capable new Business Manager, Vicky Palmer, who started work in July; we're sure she will be a huge asset at the 'front of house'.

Mrs Batson will update you on other staffing changes but as Governors we want to pay tribute to two other members of staff who are leaving us after many years of tremendous service to Our Lady's. Catherine Nicholls steps down as Year1/2 teacher after 14 years and Yvonne Hornby as the Year1/2 Teaching Assistant after 24 years. We know how much the current and previous generations of parents and children have benefited from their expertise and dedication. We wish them both every happiness and success in their future.

We have already welcomed Amy Husband and Chris Bartup as our new parent governors and we are delighted that Tracey Hester has accepted the challenge of joining the GB as a new Foundation Governor. Many of you are aware that Simon Everitt has resigned as Chair of the GB and as a Foundation Governor. In his letter of resignation Simon wrote:

*After great consideration and thought I am writing to you to formally offer my resignation as Chair and Foundation Governor of Our Lady's School Princethorpe, I was hoping for this to be from the end of this academic school year; however with the Covid 19 Pandemic situation surrounding us all and with my caring responsibility for my son increased due to social isolation rules I felt it necessary to offer my resignation with immediate effect.*

*Being involved with the school, staff, pupils and parents, and governors has been a great privilege, and honour, and helping move the school forward has over the years given me great satisfaction.*

*I wish to sincerely thank all of the Governing body, past and present and staff, who have enabled and allowed me to be a part of the very special community of Our Lady's and I take nothing but fond memories of being a part of the magic and the enriching of children's lives.*

The GB wish to put on record our appreciation of the time, commitment and energy that Simon gave to Our Lady's initially as a parent and then as a governor and latterly as Chair of the GB. In particular his leadership of the GB when we faced the task of replacing Kate Madia as Headteacher in 2019 was very challenging as Kate was required to start her new role as Head teacher in Birmingham from Easter requiring us not only to find a new full-time Head but also temporary cover for the summer term. Simon oversaw this transition and can take great pride in his achievements as Chair of the GB.

In addition, we were sorry to hear the news that Claire Biggadike has also had to tender her resignation from the governing body as she and her family are soon to move to Cheshire. Claire has also been a parent and Foundation governor at Our Lady's for many years and she has brought great experience to her role as Governor drawing on her detailed knowledge from her work at North Leamington school. We wish Claire and her family every happiness in their new home.

Michael Luntley has also resigned as our local authority governor. As the former Chair of Princethorpe parish council Michael brought great expertise at planning and chairing meetings and driving agendas forward. He strived hard, but ultimately unsuccessfully, to obtain funding for an additional classroom which could have doubled up as a much-needed village hall and playgroup. We shared his frustration but appreciated his efforts on behalf of the village and school. Michael remains a very active villager and supporter of Our Lady's.

The above means we now have 3 vacancies on our Governing Body which we aim to fill as soon as possible. These are non-elected positions – 2 Foundation Governors are appointed by the diocese and our local authority governor by the LA. *The role of the Governing Board is to act collectively in the best interest of the children, ensuring the good conduct of the school and promoting high standards of educational achievement. In practice this means ensuring the school has a clear vision, ethos and strategic direction, holding the executive leaders to account for educational performance and overseeing the school's financial performance.*

These days the responsibilities of governors and their commitment as volunteers, giving freely of their time in the interests of the school, means it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit suitable candidates. At the FGB on 6<sup>th</sup> July the governors elected Peter Griffin as Chair and Elizabeth Burnett as Vice-Chair. Peter and Elizabeth would be delighted to provide further information to prospective governors who may be interested in joining us.

### **School finances and Marketing**

In our last newsletter to parents in May, we drew your attention to the projected budget deficit Our Lady's is facing in the forthcoming school year (2020-2021) and informed you that we were holding a meeting with the local authority to discuss ways in which this could be managed and reduced. A Sustainability Action Group (SAG) has been established and met for the first time in June with representatives from the local authority and the governing body. A further meeting is planned for October.

With Covid the opportunities to meet with and discuss this situation with you parents has not been an option available to us but we will be proactive in order to ensure our intake in September 2021 is high and enables us to tackle our budget deficit. **We know Our Lady's is a wonderful school in a**

**beautiful location with fantastic staff and very supportive parents.** Above all the evidence is our children are very happy and receive a first-rate education. As Year 6 prepare to say 'farewell' in 2 weeks time they have been writing their views about what made their time at Our Lady's so special. Here are a few of them..

*A school with happiness and friendship. Even though we are a small school we are a big community and you can make great friends. As a Year 6 pupil, about to leave, I am really happy here. Before I came to this school I went to a school with a big population of pupils, but I prefer Our Lady's. From my point of view, it is better to have a close group of friends rather than lots and lots of friends!*

*At Our Lady's school we love to have a good time! We're a very small school with about 120 pupils, but we take that as a positive. Our school community is small, but it's friendly, almost like a family. Everybody in school knows everyone! As a Year 6 pupil, I recommend this school. I've been here from the start and loved every second! Our Lady's has given me joyful memories, I will never forget this school.*

*As a Year 6 pupil I would choose this school because everyone is friendly and the teachers are kind too. Almost everyone in my year has been here from the start. This shows that our school is welcoming; children love it and want to stay. I also love the amount of playing space we have. We can get regular exercise which keeps us all fit!*

These sentiments from our 'leavers' echo the overwhelming positive messages Mrs Batson has received from parents in response to her recent questionnaire.

We will be writing to all parents early in September to explain our plans and to enlist your support; we are fortunate that Chris Bartup is both Chair of the PTA and now a parent governor and we're confident that many parents will want to engage with and support our efforts to promote Our Lady's and make us better known to prospective parents within our very large but scattered catchment area. At this stage we would encourage you all, over the summer, to think of your friends, neighbours and relations with young families who will be making plans about schooling for their children from September 2021 onwards. Where appropriate please make them aware that Our Lady's could be an option for them to consider.

### Thank you

We want to conclude by again thanking all parents for your support and understanding during this very difficult time. For many parents of school age children the demands of home-working with home-schooling have been immense whilst others have continued to work or have had the worry and anxiety of being furloughed or facing the prospect of redundancy. In addition, some of you may have become victims of this dreadful virus or have even lost loved ones. We want you to know that you are all in our thoughts and prayers at this difficult time.

Stay safe and God bless

Peter Griffin

Chair on behalf of Our Lady's Governing Body