

Hotwells Primary School

Governor Newsletter

Spring 2017



A Message from our Chair of Governors

Who am I?



My professional background is in Social Services and Health with my final job being Deputy Chief Executive in a Local Authority in Wales. I am not an educational expert and my only recent links with schools were through having grandchildren in primary education in Brighton.

I joined the Full Governing Body (FGB) as a "Community Governor" just before Hotwells became an Academy in March 2014. Having lived in the Hotwells/Cliftonwood area for 12 years, I wanted to do something that linked me into the community plus I had just retired so thought that I had oodles of time.

Why be a Chair?

A big thank you to Eddie Harding who was chair for over four years and steered Hotwells through the Academy process. So, why me? Well, someone had to do it and I was almost the oldest Governor, in length of time on the FGB, certainly in age.

I also love the school; its creativity, its energy, its diversity and its values. The Head and her staff care deeply about how children grow and learn. They are a great team and do their utmost to deal with:

- The idiosyncrasies of the building;
- The challenges of managing curriculum changes and ever growing expectations;
- The lack of money;
- And so on...

We have a capable and committed Governing Body with a range of skills and Governors are developing into their specific roles. The two sub committees are very ably chaired by Rob Logan and Claudia McConnell. Governors all give their time voluntarily and I recognise their effort and contribution.

How have I found it?

A bit daunting and the oodles of time have gone out of the window. I am in the school at least weekly: seeing the Head, attending school inspector visits, going on learning walks, interviewing for staff, helping (hopefully) to problem solve/problem anticipate, watching performances and attending/chairing a range of meetings.

I link with other chairs through the NW24 partnership or the Bristol Governor Development Service (GDS). I probably do not see enough of parents and aim to make contact with the PTA but at present rely on parent Governors to help bring in the parent voice.

Major Themes:

- **Money.** Budgets are getting tighter with the proposals for the National Funding Formula and no inflation allowance pointing to more pain to come. The vast majority of the Hotwells budget goes on staff and they are our greatest asset. So it's no secret that we will have to do all we can to manage within our resources and be creative about how we can generate income.
- **Multi-Academy Trusts.** Budget cuts in the city Council have meant that they have had to shrink support for education. Schools in North West Bristol have voluntarily collaborated as NW24 to provide inputs with mentoring, moderating and professional development including within specialisms. But there is a strong push, on a national political level, to move schools into more formalised Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) where secondary and primary clusters combine under an executive lead. There are pros and cons for Hotwells and FGB have begun to consider these but to date it is in the "finding out" arena.
- **Momentum.** Hotwells has a proud record of achievement and we all want that to continue and grow. It is now possible to track progress of individual pupils and cohorts on a real time daily basis so that any performance issues can be addressed straight away. It has been an eye opener to me to realise what is expected of staff involved in teaching and learning. Every level of potential achievement has to be nurtured. Quality First teaching demands exceptional delivery and skills and there is a clear build up through the years of the school to ensure that pupils reach their

potential. We have a very motivated staff group and as governors we recognise the necessity of promoting that against the backdrop of change, demand and tighter budgets.

- **The Building.** We would love to radically alter some parts of our buildings and have some exciting plans. Unfortunately, at this point in time we do not have the necessary funds to invest in developing a bid for Capital Funds but will look at what we can do on a smaller scale.

In short it has been an interesting 6 months. I am still standing and still learning and a huge thank you to my fellow Governors and especially to the Head and her staff.

- **Moyna Wilkinson,**
Chair of Governors.

World Wildlife Fund

On the 1st February this year, the school assembly focused on the World Wildlife Fund and endangered species. This came, following an idea from one of our Year 6 pupils who wrote to Mrs. Delor at the beginning of the year, suggesting a 'Wear it Wild' day to raise money for the charity. Much interest in supporting this fund was expressed by the staff and pupils and so the assembly, led by Mrs. Delor, explored further the species under threat. Children, staff and even a governor came dressed as wild animals. The costumes were amazing and showed much hard work in their making. Mr. Jones then led an animal hunt around the hall to great delight of the children.

Each class helped raise money that will go towards supporting an endangered species and even the Governors have done so!

Governors' Surgeries on Parents' Evenings

Did you know that there is at least one Governor present on each Parents' Consultation Evening? This is an opportunity for you to meet Governors and have an informal chat or comments you have as a parent about anything from the state of the boys' toilets (!) to how much your children enjoy after school clubs. At the last Parents' Evenings two Governors were present on the first occasion and one governor on the second. Sixteen families dropped in to the Governor(s) on duty. Comments are all anonymous and whether positive or negative are fed back to the Governing Body.

You are most welcome to take advantage of this provision usually held in the little room opposite the school office. N.B. Please note that there is an up to date list of Governors on the Governor notice board outside Class 4 and on the

display outside the staffroom. A list of Governors can also be found on the school website.

Learning Walk

Each year, our Governing Body is involved in a whole school Learning Walk. This acts as a monitoring exercise and allows the Governors to see an area for development in action. This year, we decided to focus on the development of writing. The learning walk took place on 23rd March and involved governors and staff members. It was an opportunity to visit and observe classes in a formal way and for several of our Governors to experience what the school day is like. The group also had the chance to speak to several pupils about their learning in English as well as having the opportunity to look through a range of exercise books. The observers were in total agreement that the children were completely absorbed in their learning and many classes were using film and images as a stimuli for their learning, which was a result of training that several teaching staff attended during our last INSET day: children in Reception were enthused about their work on Jack and the Beanstalk; Year 2 children were using a short film called The Light House and Year 4 were exploring still images as a stimulus. It was also fantastic to hear the children talking so positively about their writing experiences.

Raising Funds for Hotwells

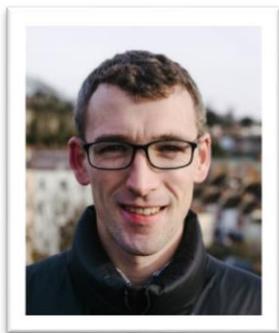
As many parents will be aware, the consultation on the proposed new national funding formula closed on 22nd March 2017. Bristol is set to lose significant monies for both general education and special educational needs because of the way the formula works. The Director of Education and the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills in Bristol have represented their concerns to the Education Minister. Governors in Hotwells discussed our concerns at our most recent meeting, and we will continue to review the funding situation, and possible options to mitigate our reduced resources, over the coming months.

We hope you have seen a copy of the recent letter written by Moyna Wilkinson, our Chair of Governors, which explained some of the impact of Government cuts to Education – including how this will affect us at Hotwells. As Governors, we are committed to supporting the school in raising funds for the pupils and looking at creative and innovative ways to raise extra income for the school. If parents have any ideas of how the school could raise more funds or make our resources go further, we'd love to hear from you. You can contact us via the school office or talk to our School Business Manager, Carrie Spittlehouse.

Your Governors – Who's Who?

We are lucky enough to have many Governors who are also parents at Hotwells. However, we are also fortunate to have several other Governors from further afield, who bring a wealth of experience to our Governing Body. Below, are just a selection of our Governors; there is also a full list of Governors and their roles on our school website.

Chris Bond



I was appointed as a Community Governor, as the Pastor of Hope Community Church based in Hope Chapel, in Term 5 of last year. Hope Chapel is keen to support Hotwells School in whatever ways it can, such as the use of Hope Chapel for school plays

and other events. I am always happy to meet to talk about the school and local community. I have a daughter in Year 3 and two sons, in Year 1 and Nursery.

Deborah Douglas SEND Governor

I joined the Governing Body of Hotwells Primary School last September and I am really enjoying being part of the team. My motivation for being a school Governor is that I would like every child to feel the way that I did throughout my education. I am grateful for the opportunity to support the Head Teacher and the teaching team in their continued efforts to provide the children at Hotwells with an excellent learning environment in increasingly financial challenging times. In my day job, I work full-time as a solicitor in central Bristol.



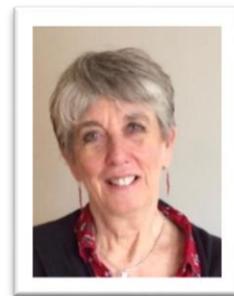
Siobhan Flynn

I have two children at Hotwells (my daughter is currently in Year 6 and my son is in Year 1) and over the years have actively supported school in many ways. I work for a charity promoting and supporting adoption and I am also an international adopter myself.



Claudia McConnell

I became a local Governor in December 2014 and am now Vice-Chair, Chair of the Teaching and Learning Standards committee, and lead Governor for assessment and performance. The role enables me to contribute to my local school, while drawing on my previous work as a commissioner of children's services in Bristol. I have lived in Clifton Wood for 18 years; I love this area with its strong community feel and really enjoy walking in the neighbourhood and meeting people I know. My interests are walking, swimming, music (piano and choral singing), the Hotwells panto, and spending time with friends and family.



Jane Thomas



I was appointed as a Community Governor in October 2015. After a long career in education, I became a Registrar of Birth, Marriages and Deaths. Both were rewarding occupations. Now I give talks entitled 'Men I have married... 231 at the last

count!' I have the governor's responsibility for Pupil Premium and am a member of the Teaching and Learning Standards sub-committee. Activities I enjoy include singing in a choir, the gym and visiting elderly neighbours.

James De Havilland

Hi, I'm James. I currently have two children at Hotwells, in Year 6 and Year 3. When I'm not helping out at Hotwells as a Governor or parent, I'm a designer that creates drawings for new places and towns. I'm also passionate about music, film and windsurfing.



Estelle Talfan-Davies



I have worked at Hotwells Primary School in the office for nearly three years. I have three children from 7 to 16 and live in Westbury Park. My background is varied having worked in marketing and as a nurse, and I am currently studying

AAT Accounting Level 3. I enjoy keeping fit, long walks and motorbike trips. I have learnt a lot during my time as Staff Governor, and think it is important to represent the views of staff at governor meetings.