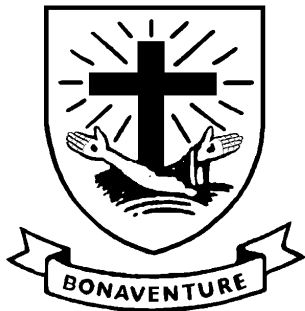


GOVERNORS' NEWSLETTER

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*"Striving to be the best
we can guided by the
light of Christ"*

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter!

We would like to share with you a small snapshot as to why we are so proud to be governors at St Bon's. Walking through the playground just before morning prayers recently, three or four of our younger children were witnessed enjoying a game of jump rope. A few minutes in and some much older children walked past and joined in, then some more. All in all there must have been 12 or so children of varying year groups happily playing together and caring for each other like one big family. It is these small moments when we stop for a minute and feel inspired by our children and what a great start they have at St Bon's and how lucky we are to have your children and the staff that teach them.

We wish you all a very Happy Easter and hope you have a restful break with your friends and families.

The Governing Body of St Bon's

Changes to the Governing Body

At the time of writing our last newsletter, Fr Tom had just joined us as a Foundation Governor in place of Fr Michael and we would like to take this opportunity to welcome him properly. Prior to taking on the position of Parish Priest at St Bonaventure's Church, Fr Tom was at St George's in Warminster, where he was also a school governor. He has over seven years of experience in governance having seen one school move from "special measures" to a "good" rating and in his last parish through working as part of a dynamic governing body where he was able to make the journey with the school from "requires improvement" to another "good" rating. Fr Tom said "I am very aware of the demands of good governance and what makes a good school. I'm very excited to be here at St Bon's, which is such a vibrant and energetic place to be and I look forward to being involved in the school as it makes its journey from good to outstanding. The children are absolutely delightful and the staff have been very welcoming." Fr Tom has shown his commitment to the School right from the start and we are very pleased to have him on our board of governors.

We would also like to announce the appointment of Giovanni Maniglia as a Foundation Governor. Giovanni was previously an associate member of our governing body and has a wealth of experience in finance and continues to sit on our Finance Premises and Health & Safety Committee, where he provides invaluable support. Welcome Giovanni!

Whilst we are delighted to have Fr Tom and Giovanni on board, this does mean we have had to say goodbye to one particularly special member of our governing body. Tony Nelson has been a governor at the School for over 16 years and without his persistence we would not have the new school buildings that we are so very fortunate to have. Thankfully, we still have him as an associate member while we complete the School grounds but we would like to thank Tony deeply for all the hours of dedication he has shown (and still shows) the School. You are a truly remarkable man and we are so grateful to have your support.

St Bon's & The Future

As we reflect on the end of another term, we are also starting to look ahead to what 2016/17 might bring for our School. We heard last week that the Government is keen to change the way schools operate and are held to account. It is too early to speculate what this might mean for us but it is another change on top of many others, including a new curriculum, the on-going development of academies and changes to our admission policy.

All of this means we need to be ever vigilant to what the future might bring so that we can be ready to exploit the opportunities. By the time we write to you next we will have agreed a budget for 2016/17. This is based on a core amount for each of the pupils that are educated at St Bonaventure's – plus some additional, but often small amounts, of specially targeted funding. This is always a tricky task to pull off, planning for future needs from an allocation based on historical pupil numbers.

We are also involved in a number of strategic alliances, including a cluster of Catholic Primary Schools and a cluster known as NW24 Teaching and Learning Partnership (NW24).

St Bon's has been part of the Catholic Primary Schools cluster for a number of years and we value the support and guidance that we receive through this alliance and the opportunity to support other Catholic schools in the Diocese. NW24 is a new initiative and comprises a network of schools in Bristol collaborating to ensure the delivery of the highest possible quality of education for all pupils. All of the schools in NW24 are located to the North and West of Bristol city centre – from Stoke Bishop across to Bishop Road and from Hotwells up to Westbury-On-Trym. NW24 includes Infant, Junior, Primary, Secondary and Special Schools. It includes Bristol Local Authority maintained schools, standalone academies, sponsored academies and Free Schools. The diversity of the membership is one of the biggest strengths of the Partnership. Heads, Governors and Business Managers have all made a commitment to strengthening the links between schools for the benefit of the children and families we serve. Teachers, learning support teams, pastoral support workers and administrative staff can all benefit from the opportunities that this collaboration brings.

Through these clusters and networks we aim to share and learn from best practice and look at ways in which we might collaborate in the future to save both time and money. These are both seen as crucial as we see the gradual decline of the support we used to rely upon from the Local Authority.

All of these present a challenging back drop to the day-to-day oversight of the school, which is why being a governor can be frustrating, exciting but overall extremely rewarding.

*“Life is a journey.
When we stop,
things don't
go right”
Pope Francis*



Update from our MECP Committee

As some of you will be aware, as well as meeting once a term as a Full Governing Body, we also have 3 main sub-committees to support the School: Standards (focusing primarily on the curriculum and pupils' attainment and progress); Finance Premises and Health & Safety (FPH&S); and Management Equality & Child Protection (MECP), which is responsible for staffing as well as equality/inclusion and child protection.

This issue we focus on MECP's work.

The key focus for MECP at the start of this academic year has been that of supporting Mrs Charles and her team with the performance management process for both teaching and non-teaching staff to ensure it is applied consistency and fairly. Whilst we are not involved in any actual performance management of staff, Mrs Charles has kept us abreast of the processes involved and the supporting activities, for example, book scrutiny and lesson observations. Staff now use an online performance management tool called BlueSky where their objectives for the year can be recorded and this enables staff to detail their achievements and review their actions throughout the year. It also allows staff to track particular pupils' progress to ensure that they remain on track to meet their targets, which is a key objective for staff this year.

Governors were recently trained on how BlueSky works and, whilst it was acknowledged that the inputting of data for staff can be quite time-consuming, governors felt that it will help staff to see the work they are doing and enable them to provide the best for our pupils.

Admissions also fall within the remit of our committee and you will be aware that the admission policy for 2017/18 has now been determined following guidance from the Diocese. Please do take the time to read our letter posted under the Admissions tab on the School's website, which hopefully goes some way to explain the changes that have been made.

MECP has also been monitoring the work of the Inclusion Group. You will note that the Equality Objectives are now on the School's website and will be regularly updated. We hope to report back to you more fully on this work later in the year.

As a governing body we like to see evidence first hand of what we are told in meetings and to support this we track the School's work through our annual governors monitoring and evaluation programme (known as AGMEP). These visits usually involve two governors visiting the School during the school day working closely with staff and meeting with pupils. We focus on a key area with a specific agenda agreed in advance. AGMEP visits this year by members of MECP have included Leadership and Management, the performing arts and sports provision to name a few.

There is so much excellent practice at St Bon's that every visit has been a joy and this is testament to the hard work of the staff, so please can we say a big thank you to you all for letting us visit.

Next time we'll update you on the work of the FPH&S Committee.



*"As each one has
received a gift, use it
to serve one another,
as good stewards
of God's varied grace"*

1 Peter 4:10

The Governors of St Bonaventure's Catholic Primary School

Egerton Road
Bishopston
Bristol
BS7 8HP

Phone:
0117 3538230

Email:
clerk.st.bonaventures
@bristol-schools.uk

Website:

<http://www.st-bonaventures.bristol.sch.uk/>

Finishing the School Grounds

We hope you will be pleased with the way our School grounds are shaping up, now that we have brought the MUGA (multi-use games area) into use. There is still work to do but this is weather dependent. Our aim is to have all of this completed in the Summer Term and finally be able to call time on the re-development of our School.

In the coming months you will see turf being laid. This will be after the soil surface has been cleared of stones and some of the slopes re-graded. We will be providing the children with some planting beds, alongside the bicycle store and see the return of our climbing wall. We are also sourcing some mature trees which will provide some welcome shade, if or when, we get a summer! The final touches come in the form of our bridge, between the two tunnels, which is a design to replicate Brunel's Suspension Bridge, and the St Francis Garden, which was part of our original design concept.

Once complete this will mean the end of our eight year mission to re-develop St Bonaventure's and in the time honoured tradition we will organise an event to recognise this achievement. Watch this space for further details.

And finally ...

- We are truly blessed by the most amazing team of staff and incredibly talented pupils. The Easter festivities have been superb this year. Thank you to all for your hard work and entertainment!
- We must also thank Mrs McGrath, her team of dependable parents and staff and of course the pupils that have wowed us with their production of "Charlie & The Chocolate Factory". It is an incredible feat to produce such a performance and involve so many of our KS2 pupils. Truly St Bon's at its best letting your lights shine so brightly!
- We remain at full complement as a governing body but we always welcome your involvement so please do contact our Clerk (contact details above) if you are interested in getting involved.
- As always, do feel free to let us have your ideas for areas you'd like us to cover in the future by contacting our Clerk. One of our aims this year is to improve on our connection with parents and we hope that you have found it useful having a governor presence at the parents' evenings.
- There is definitely a feeling of spring in the air (thank goodness!) and we look forward to welcoming you all back in Term 5. Happy Easter!

