



The **Governor Bulletin** aims to provide a direct communication channel from governors to parents about the school's development priorities and long-term strategic plans. Previous issues can be found on the school's [Governing Body pages](#) on the school website.

Who are the school's Governors?

Chair: Jane Zibarras, Co-opted Governor

Vice Chair: Naomi Roberts, Co-opted Governor

Lucy Miles, Headteacher

Peter Collins, Parent Governor (previous Chair)

Viv Bennet, Local Authority Governor (previous Chair)

Hugo Brown, Parent Governor

Una Tibbetts, Co-opted Governor

Lauren Nimmo, Staff Governor

Cathy Higgins, Co-opted Governor

Matt Bull, Associate Member

Angela Murrey, Associate Member

Clive Keeble, Associate Member

Madeleine Rickard, Clerk

Contact governors via the School Office: office.2104@great-tew.oxon.sch.uk

The key responsibilities of school Governors:

- Setting the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils;
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Governors are volunteers who share a commitment to improving learning at Great Tew School. We represent the School's main stakeholder groups - parents, staff, Local Authority and the community.

From the Chair,

The Governing Body extends a warm welcome to new members of our school community and will use this issue of the Governor Bulletin to update all parents on its work since schools closed in March as well as the school's current strategic priorities and to invite you to consider standing for election as a parent governor when we open the polls next half term.

At Great Tew School at this time of year we would usually be celebrating the SATS results of Year 2 and Year 6, remembering a wonderful summer production, watching the older pupils help the little ones settle into school life, looking forward to so much, and getting to know the families who have recently joined.

This mid-October, in a changed world, we find ourselves thankful that so far school has remained open. Now that the children are settled back into school routine, teachers are focused on understanding where the gaps are in children's learning, developing strategies to close those gaps and preparing for the possibility of remote learning. Preparations for remote learning are based on an analysis of the school's own experience during lockdown, published research, and conversations with practitioners in other settings – to best understand what works and what doesn't. The term 'Blended Curriculum' has become commonplace in the 2020 vocabulary of education but, be in no doubt, it presents the biggest challenge to have faced educators in decades.

There is also a strong focus on the well-being of the children. These are anxious times for many, but the children must learn to live with this ongoing situation. What we also know is that children must feel safe and secure to learn effectively. Mental well-being and long-term academic progress go hand in hand. These priorities are all reflected in the school's development plan for this academic year.

In this climate it is easy to overlook the fact that in July 2020 a group of young people completed Year 6 and have now embarked on their secondary school careers. Due to the sheer determination and creativity of school staff, and against so many odds, the 2020 Year 6s, having returned to school in the June partial re-opening, enjoyed an unusual but very fitting end to their time at Great Tew. There was an end of year performance, albeit in a Covid-19 safe format, they did get to share their memories in the Church and they impressed everyone with

how responsibly they adapted to a changed school setting. They thoroughly enjoyed each other's company and were conscientious and well behaved throughout. These young people embodied the spirit and values of our very special small school and we wish them well for the future.

The phrase "walking a tightrope" has been used a lot in recent months - at times it seems very apt. Ensuring sufficient control measures are in place to protect staff, children and the more vulnerable members of our community whilst providing children with the opportunity to learn and enjoy school is a constant balancing act. Schools across the country are taking different measures depending on their particular circumstances. My children attend two different schools; one takes my son's temperature on arrival, the other doesn't, one asks pupils to wear masks in more situations than the other, though 'bubbles' do remain a common theme in both. Whilst some of this is confusing, what is clear is that each school is taking steps to reduce transmission risk in their particular settings in order to protect their communities and to keep schools open for as long as possible. As Mrs. Miles has stressed in her communications, the situation at Great Tew is fragile. There is **no** spare capacity. The staff is small, there are no 'extra' teachers – so every member of the community plays a vital role in keeping the school open. Thank you for everything you are doing to observe government guidance and school procedures to support the school in its mission to keep your children in the classroom.

The school governing body has met remotely six times since March. We met on our planned meeting dates and called emergency meetings in response to developments around the re-opening of the schools. In addition, committees and working parties with particular focus areas such as risk assessment met throughout lockdown, partial reopening and the summer holidays. I am grateful to my fellow governors for their commitment to their roles on top of everything else they were dealing with at home and at work and their willingness to not only meet at short notice, interpret reams of government guidance but also to work alongside staff to prepare school for re-openings in increasingly challenging circumstances.

"Staff expect a lot from pupils and guide them through their school life with kindness and grace."

Ofsted Report, Great Tew School, October 2019.

In October 2019 when Ofsted visited, the "kindness and grace" of staff was recognized and commented upon by Ofsted. Since March governors have seen more evidence of this than I can recount here. Governors have also seen resilience, determination, understanding, patience, adaptability, creativity and good humour – a few of the qualities displayed by our school staff in their response to the current situation. Teachers' days are long and without proper breaks as they must supervise their bubble of children throughout the school day. The governors appreciate all that they do and thank them wholeheartedly.

The staff have been led by Mrs. Miles who has demonstrated the highest qualities of leadership throughout 2020. An often overwhelming burden has been placed on headteachers this year. Headteachers - with governing bodies, but it is the headteachers who are very much on the frontline – are being asked to make judgements and decisions based on ever changing guidance and to find ways of achieving health and safety standards to reduce transmission risk in a pandemic with **no** extra funding or resources and, until very late in the proceedings or sometimes not at all, clear instructions on how they should be achieving this. The coming months will continue to be no less challenging.

Mrs. Miles has helped many families and individuals within the school community before and since March – the governors are continually impressed by our head teacher's care and dedication. Throughout many hours of virtual meetings with governors during the last seven months, Mrs. Miles has consistently put the well-being of the children, staff and the wider community at the top of the agenda. "Going the extra mile" doesn't really begin to cover it. Like many of you, my family enjoyed the lockdown assemblies. Sometimes, knowing what else Mrs. Miles was going to be dealing with later that day, and often into the evening, I would marvel at, and be hugely appreciative of, the warmth, kindness and fun that was so much a part of every one of her assemblies.

"Extraordinary professionals responding to unprecedented times." *Paul Whiteman, National Association of Head Teachers, General Secretary, paying tribute to school leaders, 9th October 2020.*

“The school contributes exceptionally well to pupils’ character development”, *Ofsted Report, Great Tew School, October 2019.*

There are many amazing things going on in school right now. Your children are in a school where people care deeply about their academic progress but also about their individual welfare. The Great Tew School community is strong and we must continue to do all that we can to help staff keep the school open and enable them to focus on the children’s learning and development in all areas.

Parent Governor Election Next Half Term 2020

Would you like to become involved in the management of the school? We currently have a parent governor vacancy. Naomi Roberts, vice chair and a parent governor since 2014, has recently been co-opted by the governing body leaving a parent governor seat vacant. We are delighted to be able to continue to benefit from Naomi’s experience and knowledge, and are excited at the prospect of welcoming a new governor to the board. There are currently 12 governors (including three associate members); their names appear at the top of this Bulletin and you can read about them and their responsibilities on the school [website](#).

Do you have skills, experience, ideas and enthusiasm that the governing body would benefit from? Would you like the opportunity to contribute to the improvement of the Great Tew experience for pupils, staff and families? If so do consider standing as a parent governor.

There are three parent governor seats on the school’s governing body. The role of parent governors, like all other governors, is entirely voluntary and self-nominated candidates are voted for by the parent body of the whole school via a well-publicised election process. Successful candidates serve a term of four years – though a governor can step down at any point. There will be an election for a parent governor next half term.

Being a governor requires time, essential training, attendance at meetings throughout the year, but above all it requires a commitment to school improvement for the benefit of every pupil. These are without doubt challenging times in education and in society as a whole, but I think all of us on the governing body will reflect in calmer times and be glad that we had an opportunity to make a real difference at a time when the preparation of children for their next steps has never been more important.

Another way that you can become more involved in school life is to join the Great Tew School Supporters Club. In recent years the GTSSC has organised some fabulous events – raising much needed funds for the school. The fundraising landscape of course looks very different at the moment but in typically dynamic style and undaunted by a pandemic, the GTSSC ran a phenomenally successful online auction in the summer term, generously supported by school families and the wider community. As mentioned earlier, there really are no extra funds for schools to cope with the impact of Covid-19 – fundraising efforts are more important than ever. You can find out more about GTSSC by contacting the [school office](#).

Thank you for reading to the end! If you have any questions about the content of this Bulletin or would like to discuss standing as a parent governor, please do not hesitate to contact me at Chair.2104@great-tew.oxon.sch.uk. *Jane Zibarras*

“All governors regardless of their constituency are elected or appointed with one common purpose – to govern the school in the best interest of pupils. Parent governors are no exception. They are not elected to represent their stakeholder group, but are elected in order to contribute to the work of the governing body in ensuring high standards of achievement for all children and young people in the school, contributing to strategic discussion, holding senior leaders to account by monitoring school performance and ensuring money is well spent.” *National Governance Association, 2020.*