



WINTER 2024

Word from the Chair

As we move into 2024, I wanted to write to you all to send my best wishes for the year ahead and also to update you on what we as a Governing Body have been focused

on over the past few months. Our governing team has expanded by two recently, with Mrs O'Sullivan joining us as Staff Governor and Sarah Wright joining us as Parent Governor. Mrs O'Sullivan will be focusing on Staff Wellbeing, and Sarah will be focused on "other curriculum" areas such as PE, Geography and History, as well as keeping us all on track as part of her Training & Development role. We very much look forward to working with them both over the coming years.

As Mrs Stray mentioned in one of her newsletters last Autumn, we were (once again) delighted with our latest KS2 SATS results, with all results being well above not only the national average but also the Herts average - they were wonderful. As Lizzi mentions in her 'Spotlight' section below, whilst we do not believe the success of a school



should be judged merely by results such as these, it is heartening to see that all of the hard work of the teaching staff (and children!) is being recognised in this way.

It has been lovely to follow the sporting journey of the school over the last term, as sport was a focus of the Pupil Achievement Committee meeting in November, with governors recognising what an important role it plays, and the many benefits it brings. A specific aim is to increase the participation of girls in sports teams, and so it's been encouraging to see such a high number of girls representing the school in football matches, with some very impressive results, and to see the Year 6 netball team showing such hard work and resilience to improve so much. We've also seen an increased participation in cross-country events (rather than me!), and the boys football team even managed to take home the St Albans City FC Plate which was a welcome addition to the ever-growing trophy cabinet. A big thank you to the staff members and parent volunteers who have worked so (cont'd)

hard with the teams, and to the parents who have ferried the children around and spectated in far from pleasant weather conditions!



As a school which takes its responsibility for the environment seriously, we are very excited to see the much longed-for solar panels being installed. Whilst a big financial investment, we believe it to be an important one and one which will create many learning opportunities for the children once we start producing our own electricity. Thank you to all of you who were able to donate to this cause - your generosity is much appreciated, and if anyone else would like

to donate the link is here: <https://app.goodhub.com/alban-city-school-9605>. I've also been heartened to see the work the school has done to support the local community, including a very successful Food Bank appeal back in October, and the PTA's Christmas Present Appeal for the Salvation Army - thank you to everyone who was involved in arranging, and who donated to, these worthwhile initiatives. In my last newsletter I asked you to continue spreading the word about our wonderful school, to help combat the effects of the falling birth rate across Hertfordshire. This issue continues to be on the governors' agenda, with the Resources Committee frequently discussing ways we can increase income and reduce costs, all without adversely impacting what we offer as a school. It appears that you answered my call, with a record number of prospective parents attending one of the many school tours led by Mrs Stray over the past few months, so thank you. Hopefully we will turn many of these visits into applicants, meaning that we can continue to offer a quality education to as many children as possible.

If you ever have any questions about the work we do as governors, or would like to discuss anything we mention in these newsletters, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me via the school office.

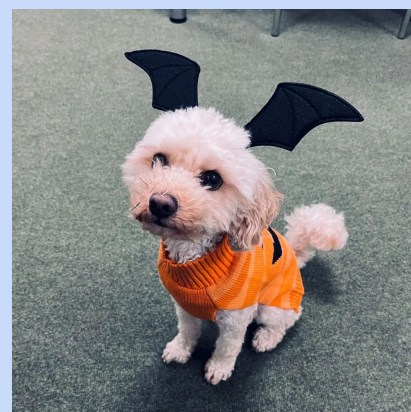
Paula Willoughby, Chair of Governors

Spotlight on Wellbeing

As Link Governor for Wellbeing, I enjoy visiting the school and hearing all about the work they do to ensure the children are as happy as they can be. With all the pressures on children these days, we as governors feel that it's more important than ever to ensure that pupils' wellbeing is prioritised as much as academic progress. So I thought it may be useful to highlight a few of the initiatives I have been looking into recently. (cont'd)



A particular area that we on the governing board have been prioritising over the last academic year is the development of a lunchtime provision to ensure the children enjoy happy, safe and active lunchtimes. During my last visit I spoke to Miss Lord all about the alternative lunchtime provision which was recently introduced. For children who find the busy playground overwhelming, they now have the chance to spend their lunchtime in a calmer environment, whether that be a room inside or a separate part of the playground. On speaking to a few children who make the most of this provision, I was happy to hear how much they appreciate the chance to spend their lunchtime playing chess, or other games, in a more relaxed area - and I believe this is of benefit to the whole school community. I was also pleased to hear from Mr Clements about his plans to introduce more sports clubs at lunchtimes, thereby increasing the amount of physical activity the children are doing and making the most of the space we have. Since our discussion, we have seen the introduction of several sporting clubs at lunchtime, including badminton, netball and futsal, and it's wonderful to see the continued expansion of opportunities for the children.



One other area I have a particular interest in is how the school deals with Year 6 SATs, especially with all the press attention one of the particularly difficult papers received last year. It was interesting to discuss with Miss Lord the conscious effort the school makes to make no fuss about SATs, treating them (as far as they can) as just a normal day at school, and assuring the children that although it's important to try their best, they are by no means the 'be all and end all'. This approach not only appears to me to be a positive one in terms of wellbeing (with Lani even accompanying some of the children during an exam last year), but has also resulted in yet another wonderful set of results.



Finally, in the summer I was lucky enough to observe a Year 2 "Thinking Classroom" where the children were taking part in activities to do with the "Learning Jungle". I was impressed that, even at a young age, children were able to pin-point their own characteristics and those which they could work on, in order to become better learners. For example, be more like 'Kelly the Koala' and ask lots of questions. Each class has one lesson per half term taught

by their teacher on this initiative, but it is hoped that the children use the skills and concepts throughout the year to enhance their learning.

Lizzi Hodgkinson, Link Governor for Wellbeing and SEND/Pupil Premium

Getting to Know Our Governors



Gordon Baisley

Favourite St Albans restaurant: I'll plump for Dylan's. I recently had their bavette steak with chimichurri and beef fat chips for lunch and it was a treat.

Favourite book: The Trial by Franz Kafka. I travelled to Prague with friends soon after the Velvet Revolution. Kafka was mentioned everywhere. Reading the book added to the feeling of connection to the city, and its atmosphere felt relevant to the political changes at the time.

Favourite film: I always come back to Cool Runnings. No matter how often I watch it I always get a tear in my eye when they climb out of the crash and walk the bobsleigh across the line.

Why did you become a governor at ACS?: My eldest, Hamish, was in just the 3rd intake at the school. With it being a young school there was a real feeling of everyone being in it together and all wanting to help the school succeed. Standing to be a governor was me looking for a way to contribute.

What areas do you focus on?: Finance, I chaired the Resources Committee for a number of years; and Eco School, where I'm link governor. I'm proud of our Eco credentials. We've been on a green electricity tariff for 5 years; changing our lights to LED reduced electricity use by 40%; we've planted > 250 trees in our school grove; and we'll soon have solar panels. Our Eco Council helps to drive forward many great in-school initiatives, from planting, to food waste, to switch-offs, and I was delighted when all the hard work was recognised when the school was awarded the Eco Schools Green Flag last year.

What is your favourite thing about ACS?: I think pick-up time. There's such a positive atmosphere. Children and staff emerge with smiles on their faces from the day's school. There's excitement to pick out a parent, an urgency to tell stories, and still some energy for a shot on the climbing equipment before going home. It all speaks to a positive environment.

Describe yourself in three words: Doing my best.

