



## SUMMER 2024

### Word from the Chair

It seems like no time at all since I wrote to you to wish you a Happy New Year, yet here we are at the end of another school year, bidding



a fond farewell to another group of Year 6s. It's been a busy term, especially for those departing Year 6s who have put on a wonderful "I'm an 11 Year Old Get Me Out of Here" play,

gone on an action-packed residential, hosted a Science Fair, completed their SATs (to a record-breaking level!), celebrated at their Leavers' Disco and still have their Leavers' Assembly and trip to the West End to come. I have enjoyed following all of the school's achievements since I last wrote to you. The children have participated in more



sporting fixtures, with the Year 4 Netball team winning the High Five Tournament, the Boys Football team managing to win the league for the second year running and the mixed Cricket

team winning their league once again. The girls football team also did amazingly well to finish

runners-up in their league, in only their second year taking part.

There have been more orchestra concerts,



including one at the Alban Arena, numerous school trips and visits from many members of the community, including the Mayor and local Vicar and Rabbi.

It was lovely to have so many of you attend the Open Evening at school last week. Walking around the classrooms, it was clear to us as governors that the children benefit from such a rich curriculum and produce such impressive work, all in a vibrant atmosphere.



Thank you to all the staff who made the Open Evening possible. I have also been excited to hear of the plans to redevelop the playground, in order to maximise use of the space and enhance the children's outdoor learning and experiences. A big thank you to the PTA Committee for agreeing to help fund this project - their tireless work to fundraise and arrange fun events for the children is to (cont'd)

be applauded and really does make a huge difference.

It has been another busy period in the governing world. We have continued to



school, which is great to hear. We thought it worth updating our policy on this, so both students, parents and staff are clear about the school's ethos and rules in this regard.

spend a lot of time discussing the financial aspects of running the school, implementing new initiatives to increase income. In our Winter Newsletter, I mentioned the governors' continual monitoring of admissions numbers against the backdrop of a falling birth rate, and the hope that the numerous school tour attendees would turn into lots of applications. I am so happy to report that they did - to have a full intake of 60 children joining us in September is a remarkable achievement, and will help us with our mission to continue offering all we currently do for the children. Thank you once again for spreading the word about our school, and of course to Mrs Stray for devoting such a lot of her time to running these tours, and not forgetting your lovely children for showing prospective parents what a wonderful place it is. Our Pupil Achievement Committee ("PAC") has focused on Science and Geography this year, and also reviewed and updated lots of school policies. Of particular note is the updated Behaviour Policy. The children's behaviour is often praised by visitors to the

Please do take a read of the [updated policy](#) if you haven't done so already. At every PAC meeting, one topic that is always on the agenda is attendance. There has been a wealth of research carried out which shows that those children with a higher attendance rate not only fare better academically, but also socially. Mrs Carter is our Attendance Lead and works really hard to monitor the school's attendance figures, to ensure we have as many children in school as possible. The national target for attendance is 96% but we as a school have set ourselves the target of 97%, as we witness the impact that missing school days can have on the children. Please do support the school as much as you can in this area, and if you ever experience any issues which make attendance difficult, please chat to Mrs Carter as the school will always do what they can to help.

We are bidding farewell to three governors at the end of this term: Linda Crawley, Gordon Baisley and Peter Harris. They have all been such a valuable part of the governing body and will all be (cont'd)

missed. Peter has chaired our PAC and brought such positivity and good humour to the board; Gordon has been a governor for 8 years and provided valuable input on all aspects of the school, most notably on the financial and eco side; and Linda has been a governor since 2010 as she headed up the



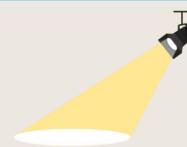
group of parents and staff who set up the school. I cannot express in a few sentences how much Linda has done for us at Alban City School, and so I thought I'd leave Linda with the last word (see "Linda's Letter" at the end of this newsletter).

Wishing you all a happy summer holiday.

**Paula Willoughby**



## Spotlight on the Student Council



The School Council came into existence around five years ago, and gives pupils in Years 2-6 the chance to stand for "election" by their peers, with each child given the opportunity to give a short presentation on why they would make a good school councillor. The school councillors attend regular meetings to discuss issues relating to school life, and are able to represent the views of their class. This academic year the Council is headed up by Miss Hanbury.

We as governors have been pleased to see this forum really develop over the years, and to see all of the opportunities it has provided the children. When Sarah, Rob and I met with the School Council a couple of weeks ago we enjoyed hearing about all of the exciting trips they've been on, including their recent trip to the Houses of Parliament where they were lucky enough to witness a live debate, take part in a debating workshop (cont'd)

and meet Daisy Cooper. It was lovely to hear that the councillors had also chosen to visit a local nursing home, where they chatted to residents and played games with them, acting as



great ambassadors for our school and strengthening our links with the community. We enjoyed hearing about the council's accomplishments this year (one being the introduction of a water fountain in the playground - this has been a huge hit with my Year 1 daughter!), and also their ideas for the future which they will pass on to the new councillors in September.

At the end of our meeting, we asked the councillors if they had any questions for us. We were anticipating perhaps one or two questions, but we spent over 15 minutes answering lots of well thought-through questions, with each councillor chipping in. Ranging from questions about the decision-making process at governor level (who has more power - us or Mrs Stray!); where the school gets its money from; how we are elected, to whether we have the power to change the curriculum so the children would no longer need to do spelling tests! We were struck by the children's confidence and the fact that they had clearly benefited from taking on this role.



Don't forget to take a look at the [School Council's blog](#), to keep up-to-date on what they've been up to.

Lizzi Hodgkinson

## Getting to know our Governors



Lizzi Hodgkinson

**Favourite St Albans restaurant:** Two of my three favourite restaurants (Tabure and Dylan's) have already been chosen by fellow governors, so I thought I'd better get featured in the newsletter sharpish, before my other favourite is taken! My husband and I recently celebrated a big birthday at Bar Meze, and all of our friends and

family had a wonderful evening. I don't think you can fail to have a good evening there - great food and a great atmosphere. A couple of months ago we had a Sky Class dinner there, and it was the perfect place to go as a big group.

**Favourite book:** Of the books I've read over the past couple of years, *Lessons In Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus sticks in my mind. Poignant, with a splash of girl power.

**Favourite film:** *500 Days of Summer*. I love a rom-com, and especially enjoyed this twist on a classic rom-com. It has a (cont'd)

fab soundtrack too.

**Why did you become a governor at ACS?:**

Having finished my two years as Chair of the PTA, it felt like the natural next step, as I wanted to carry on helping the school in some small way. I currently have two children at the school (my eldest left a couple of years ago), so I was keen to be involved in the direction of the school, in order to help the school continue to thrive.

**What areas do you focus on?:** I am Link Governor for SEND/Pupil Premium, and Wellbeing. I enjoy meeting with Miss Lord

and Mrs Lawton each term to hear all about what the school is doing in these areas, and I especially enjoy speaking to the children directly.

**What is your favourite thing about ACS?:**

Mr Edwards. It never ceases to amaze me that Mr Edwards is there every single day to greet every single child with a warm smile and a high-five. He brightens up my day.

**Describe yourself in three words:**

Organised, stubborn (I blame my Taurus star sign!) and loyal.

## More Highlights from the Term

Visit our Instagram page for the latest! [@AlbanCitySchool](https://www.instagram.com/AlbanCitySchool)



It was early January 2010 when I received a phone call from County Hall, asking me whether I would consider looking at a building in St Albans that could possibly become a Free School. I had long complained about the lack of school places in central St Albans, so I agreed to meet with 2 people from school planning at the old University of Hertfordshire's building. It was an absolute mess inside with a huge red brick building in the only outdoor space. But as we walked around the dilapidated building, I could hear myself waxing lyrical about how it could be turned into a school. Before I realised what I was doing, I had agreed to lead a group to set up a Free School!

With a great deal of support from Kate Leahy, at School Planning, we set up a group of interested prospective parents and plunged into a year-long push to alter the inside layout, develop an ethos and draw up a curriculum for a new school. We were given the "go ahead" in early 2012, following a visit by Michael Gove. We appointed our first Headteacher, Janet Goddard, ready for our opening in September 2012. During this time our daughter had presented us with our first grandchildren, twin boys, in November 2010 so life was very hectic!

There followed a whole host of surprises: Janet and I were invited to tea at the House of Lords in June 2012 to celebrate our acceptance as a new Free School. Then I was invited to Number 10, to celebrate the opening of the first 50 schools in the country in November 2012.

At this point my son-in-law dared me to take a birthday card for (cont'd)

the boys and get David Cameron to sign it. I said, "no way". But took a card and photograph of the boys just in case! Once at number 10, I realised that everyone wanted to speak to the Prime Minister. So, I approached one of his aides with my "dare". She told me that Mr Cameron would love it and introduced me to him. He duly signed the card, saying, "I would love to see your son-in-law's face when you give it to him!"

I received an invitation to a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace along with my husband in the summer of 2013 and was then awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2015. Although, I have always felt that this award was for all those who worked together to open our wonderful school! What a journey! But as with all good journeys, they must end sometime and given my ability to "talk for England" as my family constantly remind me, I would like to draw attention to some of the highlights of our journey.

The first, must be the appointment of Mrs Goddard, who epitomised the warmth and experience that was needed to lead the school in the way we had envisioned. I remember, before the school opened, Mrs Goddard and I arguing with the county planners who were horrified that we had chosen such bright colours for the children's toilets and that we wanted the doors of the classrooms painted in different colours! Between the two of us, he had no chance, and we got our way!

A major highlight was the first day of term in September 2012. The children seemed so tiny as they arrived, some clutching tightly to a (cont'd)



parent and some rushing to the activities that had been set out. But I particularly remember one young boy who was quite teary and who eventually snuggled up to me on the carpet as I read a story, then he gradually allowed his mother to leave. By the end of the week, he would join me on the carpet, helping to turn the pages. There were so many firsts that year - first assembly, first school trip, first visit to the pantomime, the first end of year production - not a dry eye in the place!

Another less happy moment was the shock when Mrs Goddard decided to retire. A long chat with Mrs Goddard and a little persuasion of the Governing Body led them to agree the appointment of a Joint Headteacher. We did not want to lose the ethos that was thriving in the school and with the appointment of Mrs Stray, we gained another brilliant headteacher. Together they lifted the aspirations of everyone beyond our expectations.

When Mrs Goddard retired, the wonderful Mrs Stray stepped up and lifted the school to another level. She has enhanced Alban City into the most amazing school we have today. This is not always the case when headteachers move on!

I would like to thank every staff member, child, parent and governor (both past and present) for making Alban City such a caring and brilliant school. I will continue to visit and help where I can, but in a more "Granny" mode, taking me closer to the reasons why I became a teacher in the first place!

**Linda Crawley MBE**