

A Message to Parents from the Chair of Governors

November 2016

Dear parents and carers,

I had hoped to write a letter introducing myself as the new Chair of Governors a little earlier in the term. Apologies for the delay. I could give you varied excuses. As you all know, life as a parent is busy. However, one of the reasons is because the parent community at Bishop Wood includes a lot of people. I know some of you quite well; some of you, a little bit; and some of you, I don't know at all. Bishop Wood children have families of all shapes and sizes, making our own unique journeys through life, with our own family cultures, our own particular hopes and aspirations for our children, our own challenges and stresses and fears. What to say, by way of introduction, that might be relevant to so many different people?! I'm not sure I've got the answer, but time is pressing on and sometimes good-enough has to do. So on the basis that it is better to say hello imperfectly than not to say hello at all, let me introduce myself

My name is Beth. I have been living in Tring for 13 years and married to Christopher for about the same length of time. I grew up in Northwood, just the other side of Watford. I lived in Cambridge for a number of years, before moving first to London, then to High Wycombe and then, in 2003, our respective jobs brought us to Tring. Before giving up work in 2011, I worked as a music therapist within the Specialist Learning Disability directorate for Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Trust. Several years before that, I studied music at university and music, especially playing the piano, is still important in my life. I have three children, Nathan (in year 5) and Hannah (in year 3) at Bishop Wood and Sammy, in reception at Goldfield. I was appointed a foundation governor at Bishop Wood for a four-year term in September 2014 and elected as Chair of Governors in July this year. Being a foundation governor means that I am one of eight governors appointed by the church. Since moving to Tring, St. Peter and St. Paul Church has been an important part of my life. Christopher and I got married there in May 2003 and we have been regular members of the congregation ever since. I don't have all the answers when it comes to Christian faith, but I do believe in God as the source of all love. I believe that this love is greater than any source of fear and that it is transformative both in terms of our relationships with ourselves and our relationships with each other. I understand that our school community includes families of a variety of faiths and none. However, it is my hope that every child that passes through Bishop Wood experiences a little more of what it means to love and to be loved during their time here.

I would like to mention the staff team at Bishop Wood, both teaching and non-teaching staff, who are a vital part of the school community. They too are a diverse bunch of people making their own unique way through life with their own strengths and vulnerabilities, hopes and fears. Since becoming a governor, it has been a privilege to get to know the staff a little better and in particular, to get to know Mrs Hardman and to support her in her leadership. The sheer volume of work that goes on in school on a daily basis has been an eye opener to me. With so many different things to consider, schools can often be stressful places to work. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff for the work that they do. It is my hope that Bishop Wood is a place where staff too are

able to thrive and reach their potential, where they feel loved and valued and, as a result, where they are able to love our children and give of their best to them.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work of the Governing Body which is made up of individual governors, some appointed, some elected, who work in a voluntary capacity to give strategic oversight to the running of the school. We consider all aspects including finance, safeguarding, maintenance, curriculum and personnel issues amongst other things. I would like to pay tribute to the outgoing Chair, Liz Manning, who is a former teacher at Bishop Wood and who has given huge amounts of time and commitment to the school during her time as governor. As I take on this mantle, from the perspective of a parent, I hope to help build positive working relationships between everyone connected with the school so that, in spite of, and because of, our diversity, we can work together to support each other in supporting our children.

With very best wishes to you all,

Beth Townsend

Chair of Governors