Welcome back to St John's


Marion Stevens


Myra Johnson


Phil Shayler


Peter Luckham


Richard Rowe


Alice Jones


Mike Shorthose


Sonia Lay

On behalf of the full governing body, welcome back to the Autumn term at St John's. We also warmly welcome parents of our new reception class as they begin their journey with the St John's family.

We all have a very busy year ahead of us. I have promised the Governors I will not use the words 'challenging' or 'unprecedented' too many times in this letter... but we also acknowledge that our families have had different experiences during this time.
It has been inspirational to see how the community have worked together. I would like to thank Mrs Stevens and her team for the marvellous work they have done to prepare the school for reopening. We also welcome Mrs Duerden to our early years team. With their tremendous level of experience, it is a pleasure to work with such a strong and dedicated team.

There is a lot to look forward to this year. The school will celebrate its 150th year anniversary and you will have already noticed the improvements to the outside space, including new fencing and playground designs. The teaching staff are working hard with your children to prepare them for all that comes this year, and the governing body also have an important role to play in the strategic development of the school. Here at St John's School we want our children to be happy and to enjoy their education whilst achieving their full potential. Every child is valued and recognised as an individual. We believe that all of the children can grow as life–long learners and have a bright and exciting future ahead of them.

All the staff and the governing body work hard to achieve this success, because we understand that to improve, we must constantly review and evolve. That is why a key area of focus for the school this year will be implementing our school recovery curriculum. As with all our decisions, we have put our children's well-being at the centre of our planning. This term the Governors will be working with our Headteacher to finalise the school's 5-year plan which continues to support achievement of the long term goals of the school. We will share with you our vision and long-term strategy for the school and you will have an opportunity to give your feedback.

It is a privilege to be on the governing body of such a welcoming and caring School and to have such a strong team of Governors capable of steering the school forward. Each of the Governors brings a diverse set of skills and experience to the board. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to the three newest members of the Governing body.

Clair Craven
Chair of Governors



Mike Shorthose

I have been a resident of Churt since 2013 having lived in the area for many years. Although my boys have long since completed their school and university careers, I maintain a strong interest in education believing that it is the first few years that create the foundation. I have been impressed by how many people I have met in Churt whose children have passed through the school – they all talk so fondly of their experiences and, having seen the school and met the staff, I can see why it is such a great place to start learning. It is a real privilege to be a Governor of such a vibrant community.

My background is of having been the founder of a consulting company in aviation. Of the many roles I have played, a key one was as finance director. I will be bringing this expertise to the Governing Body and taking on the role of Chair of the Finance and Resources committee. St John's has a really strong set of finances at the moment but there are many challenges ahead, not least in keeping up pupil numbers and I will be helping formulate a longer term plan for the school which will help address that issue. There are also some immediate consequences of COVID to address as well, including the difficulty our Parent Body will have in fund raising when there are so many restrictions on meeting up. It would be so lovely to see more parents and pupils soon – I hope the second wave is over soon and we can socialise without restriction once again.

Sonia Lay

Our family got to know the school in 2011 when our older daughter joined Reception. We fell in love with the nurturing family like ethos built on the foundations of strong values. When our younger daughter, Scarlett, joined the school last year, I was delighted with the opportunity to become a parent governor and support the school from behind the scenes.

Having worked as a teacher and a school leader for many years, I hope to contribute my experience and support the school in maintaining the excellent teaching standards and the truly unique ethos. My main interest is the curriculum and how the children's needs are reflected in the day to day classroom practice. I believe in holistic approach to education where nurturing of the whole child is valued as highly as academic success. One of my favourite things about St John's is the emphasis on everyone's wellbeing and enjoyment of school. We all share the understanding that happy children learn more!

Alice Jones

I moved to the local area over 20 years ago with my young family. I am delighted to be a newly appointed governor and am looking forward to learning from and working with my committed and enthusiastic fellow governors and all the staff at St John's. I am founder of my own company which I set up over 16 years ago, and the best part of my work involves mentoring and guiding young students who find education a struggle.

I strongly believe that formative educational experiences are the key to successful career outcomes and I relish the opportunity to be part of a school that has such a warm and caring environment for all. My main focus as a governor is to ensure we are all mindful of mental health and wellbeing, alongside maintaining the very high academic standards achieved at the school, particularly in a rapidly changing world. Outside work, I love to keep fit. I ran the London marathon raising over £7,000 for the Beacon Centre. I also love to ski, hike, walk my dog, surf and sing!

A huge thank you to all parents who have already pledged donations to the St John's School fund, we are truly touched by your generosity.