



# St. James' Church of England Primary School

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13th July 2018

Governors end of summer term letter

Introduction from Jim Hutchinson, Vice -Chair of Governors,

*It is with great sadness that we shall be saying farewell to our Chair, Sir Simon Hughes, who will be stepping down at the end of this term after over 24 years as a governor and over 23 years as our chair. Simon has been a tremendous source of sage advice over the years. His wide knowledge of and deep attachment to the local community has meant that he always knows someone or some organisation that can help when problems arise. Simon has fought tirelessly over the years to make sure that all pupils at St.James' have equal access to the best education possible. Parents and carers will know of his support as MP for the radical and effective Pupil Premium initiative. We know that you will join me in wishing Simon well and hope that he'll keep in touch with St.James', a school dear to his heart and one which he has helped to mould so successfully over the years.*

Jim Hutchinson, Vice-Chair of Governors

*Dear children, parents and carers,*

*July 2018*

St James' governors are responsible for making sure that our school is a happy, safe, effective environment. We have to oversee the budget, approve the staffing levels, sign off any maintenance and building work. We have to be satisfied that everything possible is being done to achieve high levels of progress and attainment. We are concerned that no child gets left behind and all have the appropriate support. Then we are responsible for setting the admissions procedure and dealing with any appeals. Governors also sit on disciplinary panels. You will also know that there are many school policies; all of these have to be approved by our governors.

It should be remembered that governors are all voluntary and unpaid. We are very fortunate in having a highly skilled governing body with a collective expertise which covers law, finance, education, special educational needs, the voluntary sector, building maintenance and other expertise.

Increasingly more and more regulations are issued. In particular and of the utmost importance is the legislation around safeguarding. We have a governor responsible for overseeing this and several of the governing body have been on special training courses. Monthly checks are made with the lead safeguarding governor and the Headteacher to make sure that we are following all the correct practices and procedures in full.

New national and European Union data regulations (General Data Protection Regulations) came into force in May. Huge progress has been made in applying these, governors have received training and the school is now following the new rules.



We are pleased to report that we will be fully staffed from September. Mrs Willis will be in school for three days a week next year while she peruses academic research on the Reggio teaching methods, and we are very fortunate in having a skilled and experienced senior leadership team. Mr Oliver remains our Deputy Headteacher and we have three assistant. Headteachers: Miss Moore, Miss Thompson and Mr Wood.

Over the years we have benefited from having School Direct students at St. James'. Next year we shall have four students with us.

The governors are delighted that the Reggio approach in nursery has been a success, which is backed up by data. This style of teaching will now be extended to year 1.

The Curriculum Committee has continued to take regular and close interest in Progress and Attainment data and we note that firm measures are in place to remedy weaknesses, especially in reading. We also congratulate the school for the management of the Pupil Premium money which is making a real impact.

One of the thorny problems facing all schools is how to deal with special educational needs now that local authority services and support have been greatly reduced. St. James' has been employing, on a part time basis, two educational psychologists. Staff and parents alike welcome the expert support these give.

We all know that league tables have to be treated with care. The Curriculum Committee asked why St. James' appeared about half way down the table for Southwark Primary Schools. Further investigation into the data revealed that once social and population demographic factors are taken into account our school does very well, as we are the second most successful school in the borough when compared with schools of a similar intake. It is a tribute to the staff that they have achieved such excellent results.

Fortunately, there has been a lull in the need for major building works. The governors have decided to postpone radical plans for upgrading and reorganising the kitchens. The Old Jamaica Road building roof has been repaired ( although for how long remains to be seen!). Over the summer an extra classroom will be squeezed in to the Alexis Street site.

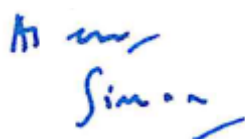
You will also be glad to know that our finances are sound with adequate reserves.

I must end with a personal note. I informed the governors at our last meeting that I will finish my long time as a school governor and chair of governors at the end of term. After nearly a quarter of a century, I believe it is right for the school and for me that I should hand over this responsibility. It has been a privilege to lead our governors from the time Mrs Robinson was our head, to appoint Mrs Willis and then to work with her and all the school community over many years. We have grown from a small school on Old Jamaica Road also to take on Alma School pupils, staff and the site in Alexis Street. Mrs Willis has led wonderfully to bring the two former schools together. We have opened a nursery and now follow a very successful new way of teaching nursery pupils. We have hugely improved our buildings and our grounds. We take full advantage of our wonderful location near the centre of Europe's greatest city and near one of the world's most famous rivers.

We have recruited really excellent full-time teachers, teaching assistants, and support staff, and many other part-time people too. Our diverse staff team of women and men come from many backgrounds and communities. Large numbers of children every year apply to join us, from families in the Christian church, of other faiths and none. We are an inclusive school. We have the strongest of links with the Christian communities of St James' and St Anne's parishes, and with Gary Jenkins, Paul Warren and Penny Molyneux from the churches' leadership team. We work every day of every term to make sure girls and boys learn ever more successfully, and think, sing, act, dance, play music and sport. And learn to take care of each other, their families, neighbours and our world. We seek to practice the Christian gospel of loving each other and in particular loving the children in our care.

It has been a privilege to be a governor and chair of governors. I will continue to live in Bermondsey and be a member of St. James church. I shall also continue to be involved in the community and in education locally. So this is not 'goodbye' but 'see you soon'. With the daily presence of our loving, watchful God, with our exceptional vice-chair of governors, Jim Hutchinson, and our other governors, and with the inspired leadership of Mrs Willis and her team, I am confident that St James' and all our children will be in good hands.

All very best wishes to you all. I hope you all have a really happy summer holiday.



Simon Hughes  
Chair of Governors