



English Martyrs Catholic School, St. Mark Street, London E1 8DJ

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'We are special people on a journey, growing and learning together in search of excellence, as we follow in the footsteps of Jesus.'

GOVERNORS NEWLETTER – July 2023

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the first ever English Martyrs Governors Newsletter. We hope to use newsletters in future to better engage with parents and staff on what we have been doing as the Board of Governors for English Martyrs Catholic School.

Introduction to the Full Governing Body

Every Governing Body needs a blend of knowledges, skills, perspective, and backgrounds to govern effectively. The Governing Body is also a dynamic group as different terms of office mean that the board changes on a regular basis. We believe that we have an effective team with a balance of skills to both evaluate the current and future needs of the school. All non-teaching governors are volunteers, and they meet regularly to discuss a variety of topics and issues.

Those on the Governing Body are as follows:

- **Amy Winkelgrund – Chair** Amy has legal expertise, four children, and is committed to providing a rich, diverse and stimulating experience to pupils.
- **Mike Topley – Vice Chair and Local Authority Governor** Mike has expertise in financial management and strategy.
- **Peter Edwards - Foundation Governor** Chair for 36 years and passionate about Catholic education and English Martyrs
- **Fr Alex – Foundation Governor** Parish Priest of English Martyrs
- **Gabrielle Ettridge - Foundation Governor** Gabrielle is an ex-pupil and an active member of the English Martyrs Parish. She has always worked in education and has specialist SEN support experience.
- **Claire Watts - Foundation Governor** Claire is an active member of the English Martyrs Parish and has broad experience working in education.
- **Catriona Ferris- Foundation Governor** Catriona has broad experience in the commercial sector and is passionate about equitable access to education for all.
- **Liza Bartlett – Foundation Governor** Liza has been a governor for two years, a parent, and a member of the English Martyrs Parish. Living an active life with a hearing disability, Liza is a strong advocate for children at the school with special needs.
- **Dawn Lauder - Parent Governor** A governor for this past year, Dawn works in behaviour change communication with experience in the public and private sector.
- **Joan Cameron Foundation Governor** Newly appointed to the Board, Joan has much experience in SEN provision and is an active member of St Patrick's Parish.

- **Genda Forrest - Associate Governor** Genda is an ex-parent and has commercial and financial experience.
- **Bronagh Nugent: Headteacher**
- **Melanie Moore - Staff Governor**

Governing Body ways of Working

For the Governing Body to work effectively it is supported by a number of supporting committees and sub-committees made up of smaller groups of governors who spend more time reviewing detailed running of the school with the support of the staff to ensure decisions taken by the Full Governing Body have been scrutinised and due diligence applied.

The main Committees are as follows:

- **Standards Committee** led by Claire and Gabrielle
- **Resources Committee** led by Mike
- **Remuneration Committee** led by Amy

These committees meet in advance of the Full Governing Body meeting every half term, and put proposals to the Full Governing Body meeting for discussion, debate and eventually ratification once any outstanding questions have been addressed.

We also appoint some governors as a Link Governor to oversee a specific aspect of the work of the school, support the staff member responsible for that area, and monitor the implementation of the school's strategy. We currently have Link Governors for Safeguarding, RE, SEN, EYFS, KS1, KS2 and Healthy Lives.

Governing Body Priorities 2022-2023

The 2022-2023 academic year has been challenging for everyone in education and English Martyrs has been no exception.

We are still very much experiencing the effects of the impact of Covid on the education of our school community but are delighted with the progress all children are making in all aspects of the curriculum. The Standards Committee has a key role to play in monitoring both the curriculum and attainment levels in the school, in conjunction with the very hard work done by the teaching staff daily and we are happy with the progress being made as a school after a difficult time for all in education. One of our key priorities of the year was to improve standards in writing, and evidence of the school's success can be seen in the eight prizes awarded to English Martyrs pupils in the Tower Hamlets 2023 school writing competition.

As a Catholic school, RE remains a priority. After a successful inspection last year, the school has acted upon the report's recommendations to ensure good progress is made across the three areas of RE – Catholic Life and Mission, RE Curriculum, and Prayer and Liturgy. We are now analysing the requirements of the new Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection framework, against which the school will be measured.

Another continuing priority is Safeguarding. The Safeguarding Link Governor meets regularly with the school's Safeguarding Team and attends training. But Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. If you have any concerns about the wellbeing, safety or health of a pupil, you should share this information with our Designated Safeguarding Lead Miss Nugent, or the Deputy Safeguarding Leads Mrs Pasha and Mrs McInroy. Working together, we ensure our children thrive in a safe and happy environment.

Our Board monitors attendance closely, and while the level of attendance has dropped post-Covid (as it has across England) we are working with the school on ways to increase attendance in the new academic year. Please support your child's education by ensuring they are in school on time and no holidays are taken during term.

We set ourselves the target of achieving a Silver Award under the Healthy Schools London award programme with the introduction of the “Daily Mile”. Dedicated staff and enthusiastic children have run a mile in the playground several times a week throughout the year. We are pleased to say we have been awarded our Silver, are on the way to Gold and, most importantly, have seen a tangible increase in the fitness levels of pupils, with teams from KS2 winning several sporting events across Tower Hamlets and the majority of pupils achieving higher scores in the popular “beep test”.

Rising costs across the board have put enormous pressure on all aspects of the school budget and, guided by the Resources Committee, we have had to make some difficult decisions around both staffing and resources. This has been a difficult time for everyone, but we are proud of the professionalism of our staff and in particular for the senior leadership team who have put the children first in every conversation with either governors or staff.

We want to acknowledge the support of all the parents in their fundraising to support the continued provision of Music and Spanish in our school curriculum. None of the decisions made by the Board have been easy but, as always, the priority is ensuring our children are growing and learning together in a supportive environment instilled with the values of love, respect and honesty.

2023/2024 Governing Body Priorities

Our financial positioning going into the 2023/2024 school year is robust given the difficult choices we have made and our goal is to strengthen further our financial position while ensuring our children and staff have resources in place to enable them to maximise their potential.

One of the key elements that would improve our financial position is an increase in the number on our roll, particularly in KS2. We have identified this as a key priority and have set up a working group to identify opportunities to strengthen and improve our offer for this age group. The group has identified a number of opportunities – some straightforward and others longer term and we’ll continue to drive this agenda and will inform you as we make progress.

Contacting any of the Governing Body

You will see some of the Governing Body around the school but many work full time and volunteer in the evening to attend meetings, but we are all happy to answer any questions parents have and can be reached via the school office who will pass on messages/questions and we will respond.

Wishing you all a wonderful break and we look forward to welcoming you in September for the start of another school year. In the meantime, be kind, look out for each other and support each other – we have done this throughout the year as a Governing Body and know it works.

God Bless.

English Martyrs Governing Board