

You could be a great school governor!



Simon Richards, chair of governors at Newport C of E Primary School on the Isle of Wight

Improvements at our school are 'palpable'

SIMON Richards became a governor because he wanted to help improve education and life chances for children and young people from all backgrounds and circumstances.

He is the chair of governors at Newport C of E Primary School on the Isle of Wight. When he started there two years ago the school was deemed 'failing' by inspectors, but through commitment by all involved in the life of the school, including the governing body, improvements are being made and it is no longer rated inadequate.

"Two years ago, very few island schools were good, with many failing to provide children with high quality education," Simon said.

"I saw an opportunity to contribute to an islandwide community partnership commitment to improving education for all children, by using the skills I have gained through my career in business management.

"Being a governor is immensely rewarding and challenging in equal measures. There are occasionally uncomfortable issues to discuss and challenging decisions to make, such as recruiting the headteacher and dealing with staff disciplinary hearings or parental complaints.

"But it is very rewarding to be part of a school that is getting better and better, and to see the improvements having a positive impact on the children.

"Being a school governor is not just about supporting the headteacher, it is about working collaboratively with the headteacher to make the school as good as possible, to give the young learners the best start in life.

"Newport Primary is a very different school today; the improvements are palpable. I feel very proud to have been part of the journey and instrumental in helping the school to thrive.

"Anyone looking to contribute to their local community will gain great satisfaction from helping the future generations of children grow and flourish under their governorship."

ARE you passionate about helping children and young people to flourish and grow into the person that only they can be?

If so, we're looking for new foundation governors to serve at Church of England schools across our diocese.

Foundation governors are clergy or lay people appointed on behalf of the local parish or diocese. They are a vital link between the church, the school and the wider community.

Working as part of a team, they support and challenge the school leadership team as they strive to provide the best possible education, learning environment and future prospects for pupils.

Almost 10 per cent of foundation governor posts are currently vacant across our diocese. This has fallen from 13 per cent last December, but we're still looking for new people to support and enhance the life chances of pupils.

Governors come from all walks of life with different skills and experiences, but are united in their passion to make a difference in the lives of children and young people.

The Rev Trevor Filtness is chair of governors at St John the Baptist C of E Primary School in Rowlands Castle.

He said: "I have always believed that education is everyone's right and is the basis for everything that we do in life. My own background is village primary school and failed 11-plus.

"But then O-Levels at the local secondary modern and a transfer to a grammar school for A-Levels taught me to love learning and to understand that education opens up the world, not just jobs.

"I have remained an enthusiast for learning and specifically in our early years where it is important that we learn to love learning.

"If our schools, together with parents encouragement, can achieve this then a young person will be well equipped to face life.

"Even better, if this can be achieved in a Christian environment where we can learn to put others at the centre of our lives and not ourselves then we will undoubtedly be better world citizens.

"As a Christian governor in a church school we can directly influence and promote this learning culture within a Christian-based environment. What better can we do for our children and young adults?"

The role is not without its challenges, for example, getting to grips with 'education-speak' and the complexity of the world of education but there are huge rewards as well.

Trevor said: "The joy on children's faces when they have achieved something new, to watch them grow, year by year, into the people they are going to be and to know we as governors may have helped and the friendship of governors, teachers, staff and



parents. These are all hugely rewarding aspects of being a governor."

Jill Phipps is a governor at Swanmore C of E Primary School. She was originally a foundation governor and subsequently chair of governors at the school around 20 years ago when her own children were pupils there.

She now volunteers as an ex-officio governor on behalf of her vicar the Rev Claire Towns, whose increasing diocesan responsibilities meant she could no longer dedicate the time to being a governor.

"I was delighted to be asked and to have the opportunity to work with the staff and the children again. I also wanted to strengthen the links between our church, St Barnabas, and the school," Jill said.

"For me being a governor is very much about being part of a team. My specific role involves the pastoral care of staff and children, leading on RE and collective worship for the governing body, and the church aspect of school inspections.

"I work closely with the teacher responsible for RE teaching, Liz Bradbury, and go on the diocesan courses which are always very interesting and thought-provoking."

Jill is part of a group that has introduced Open the Book assemblies in school and is also involved with Worship on Wednesdays (WOW) where Years 3-6 visit the church

for assembly.

Following on from a successful 'Easter Experience' for Year 6 pupils led by the parish's Mothers' Union which started this year, Jill is introducing 'Experience Church' for Year 3 children, and it is hoped that both of these will become annual events.

"It's a great privilege to work with our headteacher, John Paterson, and our very dedicated and talented staff, and to get to know the children and I am learning a lot too," she said.

Making a difference for 20 years

JEAN Morgan has been a foundation governor at Alverstoke C of E Junior School for more than 20 years.

She started volunteering when her children attended the school, and she found the role so rewarding that she decided to stay on after they left.

"I enjoy the challenge of trying to ensure that every child has a good education while enjoying their time at school," Jean said.

"It is very rewarding when you are able to make decisions which have a real impact, for

example, being part of the panel appointing a new headteacher.

"I have had the privilege to do this more than once and, while it involves a lot of commitment, it is one of the most significant events in the life and direction of the school.

"The most challenging parts are keeping up with the constant changes in the education landscape, ensuring the appointment of good staff and balancing the budget."

Being a governor does involve a certain level of commitment to attending

"Joining with the children in worship and having fun, singing with them, listening to them talk and joining in classroom activities, it is a great joy and very humbling. I love being able to share the successes of the children and the developments in school with our church family and the wider community.

"There are challenges, for example trying to understand and coping with the uncertainty around the government's plans for the curriculum and for academies, and of

course managing the school budget.

"As a governing body, our headteacher helps us to understand the complexities of monitoring the children's progress and the curriculum changes, and my fellow governors have many skills, so we share the responsibilities.

"The diocesan advisory team and the county education department are also very helpful and on the end of a phone or email for advice and the governors training courses are good.

meetings and training sessions.

"Governors at our school attend one full governing body meeting each half term and are also members of one other committee which usually meets twice a term," Jean said.

"Governors also monitor progress against items in the school improvement plan but this is arranged at times convenient to the relevant staff and themselves.

"Some potential governors worry that they cannot commit to regular school visits if they have full time jobs but most



Left: The Rev Trevor Filtness gets his hands dirty with children from St John's C of E Primary School in Rowlands Castle at the opening of their outdoor learning centre; above: Jill Phipps at Swanmore C of E Primary School

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL GOVERNOR

Working as part of a team, the governing body is responsible for:

- ensuring that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined;
- ensuring that the headteacher performs his or her responsibilities for the educational performance of the school; and
- ensuring the sound, proper and effective use of the school's financial resources.

course managing the school budget.

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"The diocesan advisory team and the county education department are also very helpful and on the end of a phone or email for advice and the governors training courses are good.

"Being a school governor is a time consuming responsibility but the opportunity to make a difference and the joy of seeing children grow and develop, as well as working with and learning from dedicated professional teachers, is a huge pleasure for me."

If you are interested in becoming a foundation governor at a church school, please contact diocesan education officer Abbie Eales on 023-9289 9685 or abigail.eales@portsmouth.anglican.org.



Right: Jean Morgan

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