

The Governors of Beaminster School



Robin Amswych – Local Authority Governor

I have been the Local Authority Governor for the past four years and look to continue in this role. As a Beaminster resident I am committed to supporting the local community – for example I run weekly internet help sessions in the Yarn Barton Centre. I see the school as a key part of the community and seek to develop our contribution to its success. I also encourage others in the community to provide us with their support. Now retired, I am able to use my business and management experience to support our leadership team in managing the resources needed to prepare pupils for successful careers. On a more personal note, my great grandparents were all immigrants to the UK from countries as far apart as Lithuania and Turkey. From this I have a focus on the need for the school to be equally welcoming to pupils from all backgrounds and have taken on the lead Governor role on Equality Policy.

Reverend Canon David Baldwin – Ex-officio Foundation Governor

I have been the Team Rector of the 14 parishes that make up The Beaminster Area Team Ministry since December 2010. I am appointed to the Board of Governors as an ex-officio Foundation Governor by the Diocese of Salisbury. I have served as a Governor at several schools in Staffordshire, Shropshire and Dorset for 27 years. Outside of work I am a qualified ECB umpire standing most weeks in the Dorset Premier League and at County youth games and I have a passion to reintroduce cricket back into state schools.

Richard Barnes – Assistant Head Teacher (Associate Member)

I started working at Beaminster School over 20 years ago, initially planning to stay for just a couple of years! It is fair to say that I enjoy working alongside the students, staff and Governors at the school. I have held a number of posts: Head of Religious Studies, Head of Sixth Form and Assistant Head. My time at the school has allowed me to see the important role Governors play in respect of both their support and challenge. To me, Beaminster is a supportive community and positive place to work and Governors play a key role in this.

Nicola Chalkley – Co-opted Governor, Staff Member

I have been a school Governor pretty much ever since my son started school – and he's now nearly 30! I became a Foundation Governor at his primary school when it went into Special Measures and had no Headteacher – so it was a very steep learning curve! It was a really interesting, challenging and fantastically rewarding time helping the school get back on its feet again. Before joining Beaminster School as the Headteacher's PA and Office Manager, I worked for a technical typesetting house producing textbooks and journals for the academic community and Government departments. I am now a Staff Governor here and really enjoy being able to contribute (in a small way!) to the wider life of our school.

Patrick Fleming – Parent Governor

I was delighted to join the Governing Body as a Parent Governor in June this year, as I have seen my three children progress through the school since September 2011. My youngest child is currently in Year 8. Most of my working career has been spent in the travel industry, in purchasing, sales and marketing, product development and general management. I enjoy working in a team, improving processes and planning ahead – and of course, travelling! There's a lot to learn as a new Governor but it's great to be able to make a contribution to the school, having seen my children benefit so much from their time at Beaminster. I am looking forward to supporting the school with its plans for the future.

Keith Hales – Head Teacher

The lure of West Dorset drew me to Beaminster School in 2004, when I started as Deputy Headteacher. Ever since then I have felt incredibly fortunate to work with such a group of committed teachers and Governors and a wonderful, supportive community. This enjoyment led me to take on the privileged position of Headteacher in 2014. Governors play a vital role in overseeing the leadership and management of the school to ensure that it runs effectively to provide our children with the very best education in a safe and supportive environment.

Helen Harding – Staff Governor

I was elected as Staff Governor earlier this year, after 10 years as a teacher at Beaminster School and although it has been a steep learning curve, I am enjoying finding out what goes on "behind the scenes" to make our school run smoothly. Having qualified as a maths teacher back in 1994 when we still used chalk boards and had no email, I have seen teaching change and develop over the last quarter of a century and I felt it would be good to be able to contribute and give something back. I have 3 children aged 14, 16 & 18, all of whom have attended or are attending Beaminster School. This helps me to see things from both the work perspective as well as that of a parent. Beaminster School has a brilliant community feel and as a Governor or staff member there are many ways to become involved in this community: from dressing up for World Book Day to taking part in the Fun Run or helping to organise sports teams and outings or being involved with the school drama productions. These are things I would encourage all Governors to become involved with to really get to know Beaminster School.

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Tanya Harley – Clerk to the Governors

I started working as the Clerk to the Governors at Beaminster School in 2009. I was living and working on a small organic farm in Beaminster and saw the job as an opportunity to support my local community and the school my children attended. In the past 12 years I have gained much knowledge, completed the ISGC Accredited Clerk programme with a distinction, made friends and connections, watched children thrive and move on in their journeys and helped shape the school and supported everyone involved. I still find the role thoroughly rewarding and feel very privileged to be able to support the Beaminster School community.

Bridget Millwood – Co-opted Governor, Chair

I became a Parent Governor in 2012 when my daughter joined the school in Year 7. I was attracted to volunteer for the role because I was keen to support the school in becoming the very best version of itself. My son joined the school three years later. I have continued to be a Governor at Beaminster despite my children now having grown up and left. I feel very invested in the school, its staff and students sharing in their success and supporting them through challenge. I find volunteering as a school Governor really rewarding, even though I have been in post for a number of years, there is constant change and new developments in education which ensure I am always learning.

Gerry Montague – Co-opted Governor, Parent

I have been involved with education for most of my working career, culminating in the directorship of a college of further and higher education, where my chief concerns were the quality of provision and outcomes for students, including the over-seeing of teacher training. I was also an Ofsted inspector for post-16 education. I believe high-quality education to be of absolute primary importance in society and became a Governor to see what I could do to further this belief. I have a daughter in Year 11. I am also involved with the Parents' Association – which needs more members, hint, hint.

Sally Ann Palmer – Co-opted Governor, Vice Chair

I was a Parent Governor for four years. My twin daughters left Beaminster in 2020 and I was appointed a co-opted Governor this Summer for a further four-year term. I am one half of Cilla & Camilla – although neither Cilla or Camilla! – with four shops including one in Beaminster. I enjoy being a part of both the school and local business communities. My daughters benefitted hugely from their time at Beaminster – both academically, socially and from the many extra curricular activities they were able to be involved in. In my role as Governor, I hope to continue to support the school as it moves onwards and upwards.

Katherine Patten – Co-opted Governor, Teacher

I have been Lead-Teacher for History at Beaminster School for four years. I have only recently been appointed as a Governor, but I am very much looking forward to learning and developing in this role. Having been teaching for ten years, four of which at Beaminster, I have a good understanding of the education system and how I can help as a teacher to move the school forward, which I now hope will assist with my work as a Governor. Outside of the classroom, you will often find me looking after our pigs and our ducks on our cider orchard. I hope to bring this wealth of experience to this role and contribute to Beaminster's continuing improvement.

Elizabeth Smith – Co-opted Governor, Parent

I have been a Governor for almost two years and enjoy supporting Beaminster School. I have been a primary school teacher for 24 years, with the last 16 of these years as Y5 and Y6 teacher at a local primary school. I have a daughter in Y9 and a younger daughter at primary school. My role as Governor allows me to use my professional and personal experience to help Beaminster School continue to move forwards.

David Solly – Co-opted Governor

I have been a Governor (including past Chair) for many years following my two children's schooling at Beaminster. Born and bred in Dorset, and retired from 30 years teaching Humanities at Puddletown and Sturminster Newton secondary schools, I farm and run a self-catering business with my wife, along with enjoying sailing, country activities and worldwide travel amongst other interests. My aim as a Governor is to support this excellent school in as many ways as possible using my lifetime of experiences.

David Withers – Deputy Headteacher (Associate Member)

I joined Beaminster School in 1995 as a newly qualified PE teacher. The students I taught in my first few years are now all in their early forties! Happily, many have gone on to entrust us with the education of their own children – something that I think speaks volumes about the type of school we are. I too chose to send my own 2 children here (both now in their 20's) and, despite them having to endure being taught by their Dad, they genuinely loved their time and experiences here. For over a third of my career, I have also served on the Governing body of one of our feeder primary schools. It has been a huge privilege to have such close involvement with the educational journeys of so many youngsters – right from the age of 5, to the young adults they become as they leave our sixth form aged 18. In all of my 27 years at Beaminster, we have never failed to attract a rich and diverse Governing Board – full of committed, knowledgeable and talented folk from literally all walks of life. I would fully recommend the role of Governor to any parent. Not only will it connect you more closely with your child's experience and reward you with a deeper understanding of their education, it will also provide you with a unique opportunity to help shape the future direction of the school.