



Our Governors

Gail Radford

When:

I joined the governing body as a federation co-opted Governor in Spring 2024.

Why:

I have worked in education since 1980 and have always been passionate about children and their learning. Ideas have changed many times over the years but my interest in making sure that children are at the heart of decision making about their learning has remained. I have been a governor on and off for 30 years; as a staff member, as a parent, as an LA rep and as a co-opted governor. Although the title is different, the role is the same - making sure that children get the best deal from their school. When I retired from education nearly three years ago, I decided to try out other interests but the pull of the children and their education drew me back when the opportunity to become a governor at the Burley Sopley Federation arose. I became Chair of Governors earlier this year and am proud to have been able to appoint a new Headteacher and be very involved in the structure of the school.

About Me:

I live locally in Poulner and have a husband and two grown up daughters one of whom also works in education. I enjoy the forest and the beach equally and feel grateful to live in such a beautiful part of the world.

Maria Speirs

When:

I joined the governing body as a parent governor at Burley in 2014 when my three children were at Burley, after moving from London to the New Forest. I became a federation co-opted governor in 2018.

Why:

I became a governor when the Headteacher resigned, and I wanted to be a part of the school's future. I wanted to learn more about the school and how things worked and use my skills to implement changes and improvements. I believe that as governors we put the children in our schools at the heart of every decision we make.

About me:

Having worked in the hospitality industry for a number of years, I enjoy working with people and being part of a team. I have varied work experience in the areas of recruitment, budget setting, team management and I am especially good at making and serving tea and cake - all useful skills for being a part of the governing body!

Colin Floyd**When:**

I joined the federation of Burley and Sopley Schools on the 1st of January 2022 as the Caretaker / Site Manager. Later I applied and offered the opportunity to be a co-opted school governor.

Why:

I have worked in Education for 50 years. I have worked in a number of schools in Southampton and Hampshire from small primary schools to large secondary schools and sixth form colleges.

I was for 25 years until my retirement a Project Manager for Southampton City Council delivering a wide portfolio of building projects to improve and increase the capacity of a large number of schools. This involved managing substantial capital funded government allocations.

About me:

I am a committed Husband and Father of two Sons and a Grandfather to my eldest Sons three children. Most of my leisure time is spent with my grandchildren.

I support Southampton FC even though that is frowned upon by anyone who lives near Bournemouth.

I have volunteered with the Scout Association for 30 years and held the role of District Commissioner of Southampton and have worked in several senior scouting roles in Hampshire.

Bethany Bennett-Smith**When:**

I joined the governing body as a federation co-opted Governor in May 2023.

Why:

Since my eldest started at Burley Primary in 2017 I have been heavily involved with volunteering and fundraising for the school. In my son's first year at Burley I volunteered with the Burley Primary School Association, progressing quickly to secretary and from there I held the chair position within the charity for a number of years. I have also spent a number of years volunteering within the school and working with the children so it felt like a natural progression to take on a Governor role. I was incredibly interested in deepening my understanding and learning more about the schools from a different aspect. I

care deeply and am extremely passionate about the schools, their future and the pupils of the federation. I hope to help the schools, alongside their brilliant team of staff, to be the best they can be.

About Me:

I am a mum of two. My eldest, who went all the way through Burley school is now in Secondary school and my youngest is still at Burley. I love meeting new people and have been involved in community events and the charity sector over the past 7 years. I enjoy helping people, being creative and spending time with my family.

Peter Egerton

When:

I am recently retired and have been a school governor for three years now.

Why:

I have lived in Burley for the past 26 years.

About Me:

My main hobby was motorsport which has taken me all over the UK, across Europe and to New Zealand. I also enjoy mountain biking around the forest in all weathers. I have been a member of Burley Golf Club for over 20 years and run the junior section with the help of a number of volunteers.

Claire Bleakley

When:

I joined the governing body in May 2016 when the federation was first formed, originally as a co-opted governor and now as a staff governor. I've been part of the team at Sopley Primary school for over seven years as a class teacher and have been Inclusion Lead and SENDCo for the federation now for over three years.

Why:

As the staff governor for the Federation of Burley and Sopley Primary Schools I hope to continue to use my professional experience to support the development of the federation and ensure good education for all children. My previous roles include being Math lead, senior leader of a large inner-city primary school in London, KS2 SATs marker for over eight years and the chair of a local pre-school committee. I enjoy working in a team, problem solving and moving learning forward. I believe every child has the right to achieve their full potential, have any barriers to learning supported and be encouraged to develop confidence and individuals as they journey through primary school.

About me:

I have been a teacher for over twenty years and was a staff governor in a previous school in South-East London. In that role I enjoyed the opportunity of being a voice for my colleagues and playing a role in developing the links between staff and governors to ensure all children had the best opportunity to learn and left the school equipped with skills for life.

Lucy Thomas**When:**

I joined the governing body as a co-opted governor in 2022.

Why:

My eldest joined Burley Primary School in September 2021 and I wanted to learn more about the federation and how best to support it moving forward. I wholeheartedly believe in the power of community, so for me, being a governor is practising what I preach.

About me:

I am first and foremost a mother to my three beautiful children. I also support families through the monumental experience of birth and early parenthood in my role as a doula. Perhaps more pertinent to my position as a governor is over ten years' experience in the NHS. This means I am used to sitting with the challenges that come with being part of a public sector organisation and also have the privilege of seeing the very best of people and the way many in the public sector give tirelessly. Outside my many roles, I enjoy dance, poetry, and crochet.

Sian-Elen Fernhough**When:**

I have had the privilege of being a Governor for nearly 10 years, initially at Sopley Primary School and now with the Federation. My two youngest children attended Sopley, enjoying all the benefits of a village school, not least in their opinion, the two-minute walk from home to school!

Why:

I was a Primary School Teacher, mostly in London, for a decade before having children and understand the importance of a safe, secure, and happy environment to enable children to thrive and learn from whatever background they come from. I also helped run a Mums and Tots group in Ringwood for many years reminding me of the value of communication and being part of a local community.

About me:

I am fortunately able to commit time and energy to being a Governor and find it fascinating to view and participate in the life of the schools from a slightly different position, whilst enjoying the wonderful individuality of children and the uniqueness of the schools within the county of Hampshire.

Chris Walter**When:**

I was elected as a Parent Governor to the Federation in 2017 when my two children were at Burley Primary School. I became chair of the Finance committee in 2018 and vice-chair of the Full Governing Board in 2019. As my children have now left Burley, I am a co-opted Governor.

Why:

A vacancy for parent governor came up at a time when I was becoming concerned about the funding for small, local, village schools like ours. I became a governor to see if I could make a difference and help secure the future for our schools.

About Me:

My family and I moved to Burley about ten years ago, before that we lived in London. My background is in finance and financial consultancy. Before that I worked in academia. I now spend my time taking photographs in the New Forest and around the world - two of my photos in Shappen Cafe! I also enjoy making things from bits of wood.