

NKS GOVERNORS' UPDATE

Summer 2025

Governor Day 2025 **A Reflection from the Governing Body**

Each year the Governing Body spends two dedicated days in school, engaging directly with students and staff to gain a fuller picture of daily life at Norton Knatchbull School. Our recent Governor Day in June was wide-ranging, thoughtful, and, above all, a genuine privilege. What we saw, heard and experienced confirmed that NKS continues to be a school filled with ambition, integrity, and a deep commitment to its young people.

Governors joined a variety of sessions—from Curriculum and Sixth Form leadership discussions to student voice panels and classroom visits. Students were articulate, reflective, and honest in their views—speaking with pride about their learning, but also offering thoughtful suggestions on areas like inclusion, enrichment and personal development.

Our conversations with staff were equally insightful. We were particularly struck by the shared sense of purpose, openness to reflection, and commitment to supporting students. Staff spoke candidly about evolving approaches to quality assurance, the benefits of subject-specific CPD, and the value of increased autonomy and collaboration.

It was also clear that the pastoral culture at NKS is strong, with many Sixth Formers stepping into leadership and mentoring roles that model integrity and respect for younger students.

There are, of course, always areas for improvement, but what we all saw was a thriving, forward-looking school where people matter and where everyone is working together to make Norton Knatchbull the best it can be.

With best wishes

Jane Burnett
Chair of Governors

NKS Equalities Commitment **Marianne Highwood, Chair of Education Committee**

As Chair of the Education Committee, I have the privilege of seeing first-hand how inclusion, diversity and equality are shaping life at Norton Knatchbull. These principles are not only values we uphold, but essential to creating a respectful, aspirational school community.

For 2025–26, the school is focusing on three clear equalities objectives. The first is to ensure that every student can say, “This is a school for people like me.” In a time of increasing polarisation online, school must remain a safe place where young people feel seen, heard, and respected.

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Secondly, we want to ensure that all students—particularly those with SEND, those eligible for the pupil premium, and students from minority backgrounds—receive the support they need to succeed academically. Clear tracking and early intervention are key to this work.

Finally, we are committed to promoting gender equality. In a largely male environment, it is vital that respect for women is embedded in attitudes, classroom culture, and staff leadership. Student sessions around masculinity and respectful behaviour are part of this wider strategy.

These priorities sit at the heart of the School Improvement Plan, and as governors, we will continue to monitor progress and challenge where needed. We are proud to support a school that takes equalities seriously—not as a checkbox, but as part of the fabric of what it means to belong at NKS.

Marianne Highwood

Message from the chair of personnel

Tom Saville

As Chair of Personnel, I want to thank all staff—both teaching and support—for the care and professionalism you bring to our school community.

During Governor Day, we had the opportunity to speak with staff at all career stages, and it was clear that the culture at NKS is one of support, reflection, and continuous improvement. Staff shared positive feedback about the recent behaviour policy changes, especially the consistency of sanctions and the centralised follow-up, which has helped reduce workload.

The school's approach to CPD continues to evolve. Staff valued the shift towards department-led sessions, praised the focus on inclusion and gender respect, and welcomed support for accredited training. It was encouraging to hear that professional development feels more relevant and responsive. Workload was another area discussed, with staff appreciating the additional PPA time and SLT's flexibility around personal circumstances. Practical concerns—such as the impact of space constraints on drama and summer temperatures in certain rooms—were also raised and will continue to be monitored.

The apprenticeship programme also received praise. Staff described how the scheme had grown in confidence and impact, while apprentices themselves valued the opportunity to gain experience across departments. Mentors, in turn, spoke positively about their role in shaping future talent.

Our thanks to all who shared their insights. As governors, we remain committed to listening, supporting, and helping to foster a working environment where everyone can thrive.

Tom Saville

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Premises and Environment

Johnny Holland, Chair of Finance Committee

The Finance & Premises Committee continues to oversee the strategic development and day-to-day management of the school site, ensuring works are safe, sustainable and deliver best value.

One highlight this year has been the new catering contract. Governors were closely involved in the tendering process, working alongside SLT and student representatives to assess bids. The students' input—prioritising quality, sustainability, and service experience—was invaluable. We are pleased to be welcoming **Culinera**, whose fresh, student-centred approach stood out. The new contract includes a £55,700 investment, a new Sixth Form catering pod, and the launch of the “**Social Kitchen**” initiative, which we hope will become a Kent-wide model.

Elsewhere on site, the updated five-year premises plan remains on track. Essential compliance works, including phased fire door replacements, are prioritised, and we are exploring longer-term projects such as a new 3G pitch and mezzanine floor for Sixth Form. These larger-scale proposals will require significant external funding, and we are actively pursuing all possible sources of support.

On a smaller but no less important scale governors heard that the temperature in classrooms was a concern on days of intense heat, and we were delighted to learn that the Site Manager and his team has since purchased and installed air-con units.

Governors would like to thank the Site Manager, SLT and all staff involved in delivering improvement works with limited resources.

We remain committed to ensuring that the school environment is safe, welcoming, and fit for the future.

Johnny Holland

GOVERNING BODY

This term we will be saying goodbye to Corinna Sewell-Hill, who is stepping down as a parent governor. Corinna has recently taken on a demanding new role with her firm and is no longer able to commit the time that governance requires. We are very grateful for the valuable contribution she has made over the past 18 months, particularly through her work on the Education Committee and her insightful input during Governor Days. Corinna remains a parent at the school, and we look forward to seeing her around the school.

Have a lovely Summer!