



Staplehurst School – Governor Biographies

Local Authority Governor

Chris Roome – Chair of the Full Governing Body; Chair of the Learning & Development Committee; SEND Link Governor

Chris has taught in a number of primary schools in London and Kent and been headteacher of two Kent primary schools. From 1990 he was a schools inspector and, with the arrival of Ofsted, became a registered inspector. He worked as a freelance educational consultant from 1999 to 2011 and has trained headteachers and Governors, and offered advice and support for schools.

Parent Governor

Caroline Bennett – Vice-Chair of the Full Governing Body; Safeguarding (incl. Online Safety) Link Governor

Caroline is a qualified solicitor and practised family law in London for eight years. Her main focus was on child law, care and adoption proceedings and safeguarding children, as well as matrimonial breakdown. More recently she worked as an adjudicator for the Financial Ombudsman Service, investigating complaints about insurance and banking products. She moved to Staplehurst in 2015 and has two children at the school.

Co-opted Governors

Sean Clark – Chair of Finance & Premises Committee; Finance Link Governor

Sean has worked in local government finance for 30 years. He is the Director of Finance and IT at Thurrock Council. His position on the senior management team involves working closely with education colleagues and includes local authority responsibility for schools' funding.

Caroline Downey

Caroline is a Human Resources Director with 27 years' experience in Financial Services. Her key HR focus is on organisational design, leadership development, mentoring and performance management. Her role on numerous Boards and Executive Committees has resulted in a high level of competence in regards to governance and oversight duties. She has been a Governor at Staplehurst School since 2010 and was Chair of the FGB from December 2014 to December 2017, prior to which she was Vice-Chair for over three years. She was formerly Chair of the Learning & Development, Finance & Resources and Equality Steering Committees.

Stephen Harmer

Stephen is a lecturer and manager for further education courses in the land-based sector at Plumpton College. Before this, he taught and was a team leader at Hadlow College. Stephen specialises in garden history and is a published author and tour leader, and has also done radio work on this topic.

Rob Hartley

Rob has been a member of the Government Statistical Service since 2005 and has worked in the Department for Education on post-16 analysis since 2012. As a result, he has knowledge of a number of educational policies, although his main professional focus is on older age groups.

Mary Henley – Early Years Link Governor

Mary has lived in Staplehurst since 1975. Her four children attended the school, and her grandchildren are now pupils. Mary retired from primary education having taught in Early Years and Key Stage 1, and as a Senior Teacher.

Paul Turpin – Chair of Community, Engagement & Growth Committee

Paul is a qualified architect, Director and Education Sector Lead for a 60 strong firm of architects based in Central London. He has worked in education for ten years, leading the design and delivery of a large portfolio across all of the education strands, including nursery, primary, secondary and sixth form facilities, and in the new build and refurbishment/remodel sectors. As well as a design architect, he is a registered Client Design Advisor, advising local authorities and engaging with schools on education design; and a STEM Ambassador for Kent and Medway. He works with local authorities, contractors and central government agencies, and is involved with a centre-right think tank which is influential in establishing government policy.

Fran Zimmer

Fran has been Business Manager at Staplehurst School since 2009 and prior to that was Clerk to the Governors. She spent the first 17 years of her career in Investment Banking IT, the last four years of which were in Investment Research.

Staff Governor

Victoria Laslett

Victoria studied Classics to post-graduate level at the University of Liverpool before a short stint working for Savills Private Finance in the City. She then retrained to manage the Child Protection Unit for the London Borough of Greenwich for seven years. She gave up this position when she moved to Kent in 2009. Victoria now works as the Inclusion Assistant at Staplehurst School.