Dear Parents,

I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce myself as the new Chair of Governors for St Philip Westbrook. I have been on the Board of Governors for 4 years now, and have been Vice Chair for the last year. I thank the outgoing Chair Mrs Janet Hulme for her dedication over many years, as both Governor and Chair, and for allowing me to work closely with her to enable me to take on this significant role. As a brief background to me, I have two children at the school in Reception and Year 3 and my work experience is varied. After University I spent a decade managing an Architects and CDMC Practice, working closely on contract litigation up to High Court level/building projects up to £5 million. When I had my first child I took a part-time role and became a Manager at United Utilities managing onshore teams. I then stopped work when my second child arrived. I am currently a Trustee for a North West Charity alongside this role at St Philips. As a Board of Governors we are blessed with many new members from this September (all of whom will be introduced on the new website), with much enthusiasm and new talent, to work alongside existing Governors with their wealth of experience and knowledge of our school already, with backgrounds ranging from Marketing, Education, Health, HR and construction. My thanks go to them all for their valuable input and time, around their busy work and home lives.

This new academic year signals a new start for St Philips now that the core of the building work is completed. The last year or so has brought with it the added burden of everything such a large building project inevitably brings, alongside the normal day to day running of a large primary school, and I would like to thank personally all of the staff, and our Head Teacher Mrs J Wightman, for ensuring our children continued to receive high-quality teaching provision and remained safe and happy during that time. Thank you too to all parents for your patience with access arrangement changes while the works took place.

Thinking back to when we first sat with the LA in a meeting over two years ago to discuss the proposals, I think that all involved have a real sense of satisfaction on what has been achieved. Alongside new build sections of the school, the existing building has been refurbished throughout, including the Reception classes and Hall which has had to be funded by the school itself as the LA programme did not cover this. The facilities and learning spaces that have been created are bright, airy and up to date and have transformed our teaching spaces and facilities; with a new larger kitchen to accommodate the extra pupil intake, a new small hall and good quality and child appropriate furniture throughout. I hope over the coming year as you visit school for parents’ evenings and performances you get a good sense of how fresh and smart the school building now is and how settled the children are in their new environment. The latter shows as whenever I visit the school in my role I am struck by how well behaved, happy and polite all the children are. The school are now turning their attention to the outside space and what can be improved upon there. Recent Fundraising efforts by the Tough Mudders will be going directly to this for the benefit of all age groups. In other news, the school website is currently being updated, a new staffing structure is now in place to enable the continued smooth running of what is a growing school and our SATS results were well above the national average, which is a real accomplishment - Well done to all!

Over the coming months I plan to keep you up to date by Newsletter on exciting things that we as Governors have observed happening within the school, for e.g. dance coach lessons. We are also going to undertake visits as Governors to observe what impact resources and strategies are having for our pupils. Our first session will be to observe lessons using the new Singapore Maths programme and to speak with staff and pupils, which we will then feed back to you. There are lots of challenges with running a school, many of them financial in the days of austerity and government belt-tightening and the Governing Body will work to support the school in gaining the best value and best outcomes for our children. I am very proud to be able to undertake this role and believe that with the cooperation of the Governing Body, our new Vice Chair Mr Neal Woods, and the dedicated and hardworking staff, our Head Teacher Mrs Wightman and of course, the parents’ support, we can help our school to develop and progress for the benefit of all pupils. Kind regards, Kate Strickland-Wright