

Marijke Miles – Foundation Governor



I joined the governing body in September 2019 having been appointed by Bishop Philip as a Foundation governor. However, this was also the year that my twins joined the school in Year 7, so I am also a parent, but not a parent governor.

I was a student at Oaklands myself, as were my 2 sisters. I am delighted, but not surprised, to meet so many of my former peers back at the school as parents, staff and governors. It is a place that just draws you back and makes you want to be part of such an amazing school and such an important wellspring of nurture and sustenance for our faith and our values as a community.

In my day job, I have been a Headteacher for 17 years, leading 2 different secondary schools for students with special educational needs. I also have a number of national advisory and advocacy roles in education practice and policy, as well as doing a lot of coaching and facilitating to develop aspiring school leaders. I trained as a music teacher, thriving on the rich musical life of Oaklands while I was a student, but have spent much of my career teaching modern foreign languages alongside music.

I am a parishioner at St Patrick's Church, Hayling Island, and do my best to enhance the worship with music, and especially to encourage others to feel inspired to participate in music making. I have been a catechist for both First Holy Communion and Confirmation candidates over the years.

What do I do?

I am the Special Educational Needs Link Governor, which gives me the chance to understand how we ensure that our key value of "no one left behind" is lived out in practice. It is also my role to ensure that there is advocacy and representation for the students with special educational needs, their families, and the staff who work with them, whenever we are making strategic decisions. I love visiting the SEN department, observing their work, tracking individual students across the school to understand their experiences and hearing about the relentless thirst for improvement, and passion for the students from the team.

As a Foundation Governor I have a specific duty to ensure that the Catholic vision and character of the school is maintained throughout every aspect of our work as the golden thread. I love the fact that we pray together, before and after every meeting, and there is a true sense that we place ourselves and work into the presence and guiding wisdom of the Lord when we come together.

What is the best thing about Oaklands Catholic School?

It is very interesting to see the school through the eyes of a governor, having been a student. I loved my time here, but even so, I didn't realise how lucky I was. The opportunities for the students are absolutely amazing and the imagination and ambition of the staff seem only to be limited by the number of hours in the day and weeks in the year! My sons are thriving here, getting involved in all sorts of aspects of school life.

The other thing that has really struck me is how the Catholicity of the school really does influence every moment of the day and every decision, from the most minor to the most weighty. There are challenging moments in leading any school, but with demanding systems of external accountability, I have been really impressed and reassured by how sincerely the governing body and the school's leaders do make courageous decisions which are extremely authentic to our faith.