

Peter McGarry – Foundation Governor



I was born in Hartfield (East Sussex) and moved to Portsmouth at the age of four when my father was appointed as a lecturer at the new Portsmouth College of Technology. After two initial years in the local infant school in Paulsgrove, I started my Catholic Education at Daley's School, Kingston Crescent in Portsmouth which my elder sister already attended. It was a well-established girl's school but they took a small number of boys in the Junior School. I spent a very happy four years there before I passed my 11+ examination and won a place at St John's College in Southsea. Greatly impressed by the De La Salle Brothers I had ambitions to join their ranks and so spent three very happy years as a boarder at the De La Salle Junior Novitiate attached to the then twin La Sallian School, St Peter's in Bournemouth.

Daily Mass, Spiritual Reading, and other training left its mark at an early age.

It was no surprise, then, that following three years of study in London, I applied for a post of Science Teacher, with special responsibility for Chemistry, at a Catholic School, St Edmunds in Portsmouth.

I served as a Head of Department and then as a Head of Year (mainly year 11), and then, twenty-one years later (I was very happy there!) and seeking a new challenge, I became Head of Senior School at my former school in Southsea, St John's College.

After leaving St John's I had five very happy years at Hamble Sports and Community College, taking my tutor group through from entry in year 7 through to leaving at the end of year 11. I tried to retire, but clearly was not ready for it, and took up an FE post of Lecturer in Chemistry at Chichester College – which lasted for a further ten years! Apart from As and A2 level Chemistry I had the privilege of teaching the Chemistry component of the University of Sussex Biological Sciences Degree group. This made up 40% of their teaching time which was matched by 40% Biology. I also, for five years, taught a similar group for the University of Bath. Later I had the challenge of HE level teaching on an HND Applied Biology course.

My wife Anne and I have been married for 48 years and have three sons; Steven, John-Paul and Peter Joseph. We have two granddaughters and one grandson.

My other interests (a teaching career is very demanding, time-wise) include steam engines, buses and coaches, opera and football. I gained an FA coaching badge and a Psv (bus driver's licence) whilst I was still a student in London. The London Double Deck bus that I took my test on (LLU 829) RTL 1050 still exists as a museum exhibit in Southport, Lancs.

What do I do?

I am a Foundation Governor, appointed by the Bishop. I have always been true to my Roman Catholic upbringing but I am welcoming to all who have love and respect for Christian values. I also respect members of other faiths and their beliefs without necessarily accepting things that I do not fully understand.

Although I have received most of the sacraments at St Colman's Church in Cosham, and was married there, my wife and family attended St John's Cathedral when we lived in Portsmouth. On moving to Wickham I reconnected with Park Place where I have been fortunate to have attended many Sunday Masses and shared other celebrations with Franciscan Father Andrew McMahon and the community of Franciscan nuns over the years. Father Andrew can only say Mass occasionally now but we have had Father Tom (now back in Ireland) and Father John to cover for him. I still sometimes read and on most Sundays I sing the Psalm to keep up my love of singing.

As a Foundation Governor I attend full governors meetings and also serve on two sub-committees – as well as attending others when possible. I am link Governor to the excellent Politics and History departments. I feel happy to serve at a school which seeks to uphold the values that I have learned to respect over the years, and where each pupil is valued for what they are and what they can become with the right guidance from both home and school.

What is the best thing about Oaklands Catholic School?

Undoubtably it is the atmosphere, but not forgetting the environment. The atmosphere cannot be artificial, it can only be genuinely felt and it is certainly present in Oaklands. In staff, pupils, support staff and parents it is evident in the smiles, kind words, gestures and attitudes. It makes any visit to the school something to look forward to, and a place that one can be proud to have an association with.