



Our Lady & St Thomas Primary School –

Governor Pen Portraits



Ruth Veitch, Head Teacher

I have been the Head teacher of Our Lady and St Thomas RC Primary School since September 2017 and have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know all our families. I am very proud of this schools' achievements. Our pupils achieve exceptionally, often within in the top 5% of the whole country. We are a family school at the heart of our community and pride ourselves on the exceptional care, support and challenge all our children receive to help them achieve their full potential.

Prior to my appointment in Willington, I was a Deputy for eight years and Acting Head teacher in a one form entry primary school. I have led most subjects and have a passion for Special Educational Needs and ensuring a love of learning.

Professionally, I have a wealth of experience and have taught for 21 years in a number of schools throughout the whole of the primary age range. I love getting into class whenever I can and being with the children. There is no greater privilege than being important in the life of a child and playing a part in shaping young minds.

I have two children – a boy and a girl aged 9 and 6 and spend most of my free time in the whirl of motherhood. I love spending time by the sea, travelling and exploring new places and cultures. I have recently discovered an enjoyment of cooking as my family have all become vegetarian so am experimenting with new family dishes. I have an inner runner inside of me and when I can like to escape by myself with my music running along the railway lines of beautiful County Durham.

I am extremely proud to lead this experienced, creative and innovative team. This school is full of North East passion and spirit and has an exciting future ahead.

Alison Aisbitt, Chair of Governors

After studying law at Liverpool and attending the Bar in London, I now work for Sunderland City Council as the Legal Advice Development Manager for Social and Welfare Law, This involves delivering and commissioning free legal advice to ensure people can assert their rights .In this role I have developed a wide range of experience of managing people and services, dealing with change and monitoring plans

I was appointed as a Foundation Governor about 20 years ago, and have been Chair of the Governing Body since 2002.

I became a National Leader of Governance in May 2014, part of this role, involves being deployed into other schools to offer support to Chairs & Governing bodies, to improve governance to bring about improvement.

I attended OLST myself ... many years ago and so did my daughter India – a teacher herself now. I am fully committed to the school and the children who, I would say, come first in any decision I make.

In my spare time I am an avid football supporter, making regular trips to watch Liverpool FC play, love going to the theatre to watch musicals and have recently taken up jogging.

Madeleine Fulton, Staff Representative

I joined the Governing Body as Teacher Representative a number of years ago bringing a wide range of educational experience to the table.

I qualified as a teacher in 1987 after completing a four year B.Ed. Honours degree with a specialism in Early Years teaching. My career began in Newton Aycliffe, moving to OLST in 1994, where I worked First in Reception / Year 1 / Year 2, moving to a range of different year group combinations in the years since! At some point along the way, I became Deputy Head, a role I embrace wholeheartedly as it allows me the chance to help guide and lead my school as a member of the senior leadership team but to continue to work where I know I am at my best – in the classroom. I have taught every year group across the Primary Curriculum but I have to say, that my favourite Year groups are Years 5 and 6. I love seeing children on the cusp of young adulthood, learning to make reasoned judgements and wise choices. There is no greater pleasure than helping them realise the potential that they often don't see within themselves and I am proud that we teach our children to be articulate and confident in expressing their own opinions. I have an absolute passion for this school and its pupils and I can't imagine teaching anywhere else! I work alongside a team of the most dedicated and gifted colleagues anyone could wish for and it is a joy to come to work every day.

Another of my passions is the training of those new to the profession – it is an honour to be at the forefront of shaping future generations of teachers and I look forward to re-establishing my link as a trainer for Durham University from September 2018. Many of my past students are now colleagues in other schools and it is thrilling to know that I have helped them become the teachers they are today.

As a local resident and member of our Parish, I am immersed in my community and so teaching here is very personal for me. I am a mother of two grown up children who both attended OLST and flourished during their time here and I am at my happiest when surrounded by my rather large family, spending most of my time outside of work with them.

Joanne Norman, Parent Governor

I have lived in Willington since 2009, having moved from Bishop Auckland where I was born. I have two children, both of which are pupils at OLST. I have been a Parent Governor since May 2017.

Shortly after graduating from York St John University I began working for Groundwork, an environmental charity, delivering projects in Durham, Gateshead and Sunderland for almost 14 years.

As a Senior Project Officer, I delivered a wide range of community projects including play projects, heritage schemes, education projects, environmental improvements and community engagement activities. I also managed educational and engagement activities at Chopwell Wood in Gateshead and led a project to re-establish a community centre. Much of my work involved community consultation and securing funding to develop projects.

I changed career in 2018 and currently work in Public Health as a Wellbeing Practitioner for Wellbeing for Life. My role focuses on supporting people to change their behaviour in order to live a healthier lifestyle or improve their mental wellbeing.

Since 2017 I have been a Parent Governor Representative on Durham County Council's Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Involvement in this committee has helped me access useful information for our school but also gives me the opportunity to highlight the challenges a smaller school such as Our Lady and St Thomas faces and raise this with policy makers.

My aim as Parent Governor is to support the school to be the best it can be and ensure it provides for all children's educational and developmental needs. I am delighted that the school places such emphasis on the role of families to help children develop and am committed to helping the school sustain this.

I have particular interests in health and wellbeing and the environment and look forward to supporting the staff and children develop new projects in these fields.

Tina Mortimer, Parent Governor

I was born and raised in Willington and attended OLST. After spending 17 years in East Durham I moved back to the area to be near family and to enable my daughter to attend OLST.

Music was all around me growing up as I came from a musical family, so at the age of 10 I began playing the cornet. Following on from lessons with my mum I knew from an early age that I wanted a career in music and I went on to train with Phillip McCann at Huddersfield University. In 2009 I was awarded the Licentiate of Trinity College London with Distinction and a Certificate of Teaching from the Associate Board of the Royal Schools of Music.

I have performed on a number of occasions in many of the country's most prestigious venues, including The Royal Albert Hall, The Sage, Gateshead and Birmingham's Symphony Hall. I'm proud to have been the first female Principal Cornet of The Reg Vardy Band (Formally Ever Ready), winning Best Principal Cornet in the North East for 3 consecutive years. I'm currently principal cornet for the NASUWT Riverside Band, North East Area Champions.

My music career began in North Yorkshire and Newcastle Music Service where I taught brass and woodwind and I was responsible for the delivery of training to other music authorities in whole class teaching when the initiative was first introduced. In 2007 I made the move to Durham Music Service and my experiences there have included teaching in various settings, from early years through to Key Stage 5, including preparing students for GCSE and A Level performances, external music examinations; ensemble leading; SEN; leading workshops; delivering whole class teaching; one to one and small group teaching. I very much enjoyed covering the role of area manager and joining the management team for East Durham from 2011-2012 when I had my daughter. In addition to my formal teaching commitments, I am the principal conductor of Durham County Senior Wind Band and Associate conductor for the newly reformed Durham County Youth Orchestra.

I was delighted to become a parent governor in September 2018 and I am particularly interested in supporting the school in developing a rich and broad curriculum. I'm passionate about all children being able to access music and the arts as it can have the ability to improve academic skills including language and reasoning, it develops physical skills, refines discipline and patience, it can be an introduction to other cultures and it cultivates social skills as well as boosting self-esteem.

Sarah Jackson – Foundation Governor

I have been a Foundation Governor since November 2018. I studied Psychology at Lancaster University for three years and during my studies I volunteered as a mentor with children who were isolated in the community, then with children who were NEET (not in education, employment or training) and supported them to realise they could achieve their aspirations. Once I had completed my degree I began working for Barnardos in Burnley, supporting families who were at risk of eviction and who had complex needs.

I moved back to Durham in 2012 and began working for Durham County Council doing a similar job, working with families who had multiple and complex needs. I now work in Children's Services in Newcastle as a Family Support Worker.

Since I began volunteering I have always been passionate about helping families, parents and children, to achieve their potential and this is why I love my job and find my job so rewarding. I am also an active member of Our Lady and St. Thomas Catholic Church, I volunteer with the Children's Liturgy and I have recently become a catechist to support the children preparing to make their First Holy Communion. In my spare time I like spending time with my family and friends.

Laura Minto – Foundation Governor

I have lived in Willington all my life and I attended Our Lady & St Thomas School. For the past five years I have helped out with the children's liturgy on a Sunday morning in church. I also help the children to prepare for their first holy communion.

For the past six years I have worked for Durham County Council. I have recently become a housing officer and provide advice and support for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

I have recently been appointed as a Foundation governor and my aim is to provide support to the school to ensure all children's needs are met.

Marie Roe, Foundation Governor

I recently became a foundation governor for Our Lady & St Thomas Primary School, after being a parent governor since 2015. I have worked in the Housing and Regeneration sector for the past eighteen years. I lead teams who ensure that businesses manage themselves well. I am a fully qualified specialist in Human Resources and Organisational Development, I support the school in designing and delivering whole school initiatives".

Fr. Dennis Tindall – – Foundation Governor

Indications of appointments and areas of work are listed below.

For a personal statement, I would add that I strive and struggle to learn more about and follow Jesus. The ministry of education is a huge part of the way in which the Church and the Diocese expresses the Lord's Gospel message. The care and development of our children is a key part of our belief in the human dignity of every person as Jesus showed us. We are all made in the image and likeness of God. We honour that and help to enhance all that it means through the indispensable work done in our dedicated schools and our teaching and auxiliary staffs. It requires a never-ending and fulsome commitment. The work of our bodies of school governors is an additional affirming support for the ways we live the Gospel in valuing our children and their families and a further reminder of the Lord's care for children that he entrusts to us. To help in forming the minds and attitudes of the generations that will succeed us, is to help shape the future of our area and beyond. It's a time-consuming, very responsible, but great privilege.

22.02.1970	Ordained priest for the Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle
1970 – 1975	Assistant priest St John Vianney's, West Denton, Newcastle on Tyne and also Assistant Bishop's Secretary.
1975 – 1981	Bishop's Secretary and first Diocesan Press Officer. Chaplain to 3 Children's Care Homes
1981 – 1986	Director of Diocesan Rescue Society (Diocesan Social Services)
1986 - 1994	Director of Diocesan Ministry to Priests Programme (Clergy support and In-service training) Master's Degree in Pastoral Studies, Loyola University, Chicago, USA
1994 – 2009	Parish priest, St Mary's, South Moor, Stanley. Diocesan Safeguarding and Child Protection Coordinator
2010	Sabbatical. Resident at Ushaw College.
2011	Parish priest, St Mary & St Wilfrid, Bishop Auckland (and Area Dean)
2017	Parish priest also of Our Lady & St Thomas, Willington.
2020	Appointed as a Canon of the Diocesan Cathedral Chapter
1984 to date:	Chairman of Northern Cross, the diocesan monthly newspaper

Dr. Gamage Wijesiri (MD, LLB, MRCOG), Foundation Governor

I was born and raised in Sri Lanka and moved to the UK, after completing my undergraduate studies in medical science at Rostov State Medical University, Russia. Since migrating to the United Kingdom, I have completed Bachelor of Law in Employment and Common Law (LLB) followed by National Vocational qualification in Health and Social Care Management. In 2017 I became a member of Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists (MRCOG). I'm a trilingual person with ability to command in Sinhala, English and Russian languages.

My experience in working with local authorities and people with special needs was started when I worked as a Business Manager for a multi-million private sector health and social care provider in London. By working closely with numerous local authorities around South London area, I managed to develop the business to become a leading health and social care provider for that region.

In 2008 I have moved back to medicine after completing my medical entry exams that enables me to practice in the UK. I started my career in NHS at University Hospitals of Morecombe NHS foundation trust as a junior doctor in the spectacular part of the country side in Lake District. In 2011. I moved to North East with opportunity to train to become a Consultant in Obstetrics and Gynaecology with special interest in Gynaecological Cancer. During my nine years long training period I have worked in all the NHS trusts in North East and currently attached to University Hospitals of North Durham. I will finish my training by end of 2020 and look forward to start the next chapter of my life as a consultant in my chosen field that I am so passionate about.

After moving from country to county and region to region we have finally selected to settle permanently in beautiful Willington in 2018 and my both children have started schooling at OLS. I become a foundation governor in 2019. As a doctor I know the value of education and I strongly believe it helps individuals to achieve their dreams as me and my wife achieved ours. I believe that children should have every opportunity to learn various subjects and experience different skills at a very young age, so it gives them an idea when it comes to choosing their own path. Therefore, I'm looking forward to provide my full support and assistance to the school to provide an outstanding education to the children so that they get the best foundation to fulfil their dreams.

Fraser Tinsley, LA Governor

I have been a school governor since 2014 and live in Willington with my wife and three children.

I am a Durham County Councillor representing Willington & Hunwick Division and Chair of Greater Willington Town Council. I am a member of Durham & Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority Board and a Charter Trustee of the City of Durham.

I am a Chartered Town Planner and qualified Teacher (QTS) and have experience working in the public and private sectors in central government and private consultancy. Awarded an MA (Hons) in Town Planning and a Master in Business Administration (MBA) I also hold a Post Graduate Certificate in Pedagogy from St Mary's University.

I have significant experience of governance in many different contexts. An ability to drive change and work with stakeholders to achieve results. I am committed to using my skills and knowledge to support the development of this area, with a particular focus on developing opportunities for children.

In my spare time I play cricket for Willington CC in the North East Premier League.