



**Oaklands School**

"The best for all, the best from all"

- Meet the School Governors
- The Role of the School Governors



## **Our Governing body currently consists of the following types of Governors:**

- 1 x Head Teacher
- 2 x Parent Governors
- 1 x Staff Governor
- 1 x Local Authority Governor
- 7 x Co- Opted Governors



**Oaklands School**

"The best for all, the best from all"

# Neil Oxley

**Governor Type:** Head Teacher

**Committees:** Teaching and Learning and Standards, and Finance, HR, and Health and Safety

**Term of Office:** 1st January 2018

Neil joined the governing body at the time that he was employed as Headteacher at the start of the spring term in 2018.

Neil started his teaching career in Winsford as a physical education teacher. He went on to complete many other roles at his first school and progressed to the position of Assistant Headteacher, with responsibility for leading SEN provision, behaviour, pupil welfare, attendance and inclusion. Neil moved on to work as an Education Advisor for Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority, and supported many primary and secondary schools across the borough. Neil returned to teaching as a Deputy Headteacher working at a SEN school in Liverpool, where he progressed to become Headteacher. Following a successful period in Liverpool he returned to Winsford to take the position as Headteacher at Oaklands.

Neil works effectively with all governors and has developed the governors support process, allowing the governing board to strategically support and challenge the school to continue to grow and improve.



# John Williamson

**Governor Type:** Chair of Governing Body, Local Authority Governor

**Committees:** Teaching and Learning and Standards, and Finance, HR, and Health and Safety

**Term of Office:** 24 June 2026 to 23 June 2030

John has served in school governance for over 10 years and is passionate about supporting high-quality education for all children. He brings a wealth of experience in leadership, business management, and team development to the governing body at Oaklands.

Professionally, John is an animal nutritionist specialising in aquaculture, where he develops nutritional solutions for a wide range of fish and shrimp species. He has held senior roles in the feed industry, including many years as Managing Director of a large multinational company. More recently, he founded and now runs his own successful nutritional consultancy business.

Originally from Durham in the Northeast, John moved to Cheshire in 1991. He is married with three children, one of whom is currently a pupil at Oaklands School.



# Laurence Conlon

**Governor Type:** Co-Opted Governor; Vice Chair of Governing Body

**Committees:** Finance, HR and Health & Safety Committee (Chair), Teaching and Learning Committee

**Term of Office:** 22 June 2023 to 21 June 2027

Laurence joined the Governing Board as a Co-opted Governor in June 2023. He is Vice-Chair of the Full Governing Board and Chair of the Finance, HR and Health & Safety Committee.

Laurence holds a degree in Economics from the University of Manchester and has over 20 years' experience as a consultant in the IT sector, with a strong focus on finance. He currently works in senior management for a company that provides software to the waste management and recycling industries. Laurence has a daughter at Oaklands, currently in Year 11, and he looks forward to supporting the school in continuing its great work.

Laurence is married with two children. Outside of work and governance, Laurence's spare time is largely taken up with exercising his two dogs and his role as a football coach and Welfare Officer for a junior football club based in Chester.



# Lisa Gallagher

**Governor Type:** Co-opted Governor

**Committees:** Teaching and Learning and Standards, and Finance, HR, and Health and Safety

**Term of Office:** 14 March 2024 to 13 March 2028

Lisa was elected as a Co-opted member of Oaklands governing board in March 2023. She is also a member of the Finance, HR, Personnel and Health and Safety Committee and also the Teaching and Learning Committee. Lisa is the link safeguarding governor working closely with our safeguarding lead.

Lisa has spent almost 30 years working in Further Education, and she currently works in the Department for Education's Skills Group supporting regional performance and college oversight. She has a background in commissioning and improving provision for young people with Special Educational Needs, and she's passionate about making sure learners get the right support and opportunities to achieve their best.

Lisa brings plenty of hands on experience, a practical mindset, and a genuine commitment to helping pupils and their families feel supported and understood. She enjoys being part of a school community where she can make a positive, real world difference.

Outside of work, Lisa is a keen runner and recently completed the Cheshire Spring Half Marathon. She's also a proud mum of two grown up children.



**Oaklands School**

"The best for all, the best from all"

# John McGrail

**Governor Type:** Co-opted Governor

**Committees:** Teaching and Learning and Standards, and Finance, HR, and Health and Safety

**Term of Office:** 12 June 2024 to 11 June 2028

John was elected as a Co-opted member of Oaklands governing board in June 2024. He is also a member of the Finance, HR, Personnel and Health and Safety Committee, and also attends the Teaching and Learning Committee.

John studied Geography at Oxford before becoming a Chartered Accountant, training in Manchester, and more latterly completed an MBA at Manchester Business School.

John has been a Finance Director and Chief Financial Officer in a number of charity and not for profit organisations including Further Education Colleges, The Criminal Justice sector, and over the last 15 years for a number of large social housing associations across Greater Manchester. He brings a wealth of financial, commercial, property and senior management leadership experience in a 30 year plus career across the North West.

John was born in Stretford, South Manchester and remains an optimistic football fan, as well as loving to travel, walk in the Lakes and a keen outdoor sports enthusiast.

He is very proud to support and be part of Oaklands School - he describes it as a fantastic school that strives to achieve the very best for all its wonderful pupils and ably lead and supported by a brilliant team of dedicated and professional staff .



# Caroline Harrison

**Governor Type:** Co-opted Governor

**Committees:** Teaching and Learning and Standards, and Finance, HR, and Health and Safety

**Term of Office:** 12 June 2024 to 11 June 2028

As a school governor I am committed to providing strong leadership and accountability across the school community. The governing body plays a vital role in ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction; holding school leaders to account for the educational performance of pupils and the performance management of staff; and overseeing the financial performance of the organisation to ensure public money is well spent. With over 20 years' experience working in law enforcement, I bring a well-developed background in decision-making, safeguarding, and professional accountability. I am passionate about ensuring that every young person - particularly those with learning disabilities - has the right support, direction, and opportunities to achieve their full potential.

Outside of my professional life, I am a keen DIY enthusiast and enjoy taking on practical projects. I have a strong personal commitment to supporting children and young people, especially those from areas where social mobility can be more challenging. I believe deeply in creating environments where every child feels valued, supported, and able to thrive. Being part of a learning-disability school community is a privilege, and I am dedicated to helping shape a school culture where pupils are encouraged to be the very best they can be.



# Alexa Carter

**Governor Type:** Parent Governor

**Committees:** Teaching and Learning and Standards, and Finance, HR, and Health and Safety

**Term of Office:** 17 May 2024 to 16 May 2028

Alexa joined Oaklands Board of Governor's as a Parent Governor in June 2024. Her eldest son was a pupil at Oaklands from 2020 and he has just transitioned to Reaseheath College to study Animal Care.

Alexa has a background in the law and practised as a general litigation and dispute resolution solicitor for a number of years. She then focused on SEND law working as legal advocate supporting families with the local charity ChAPS. Most recently she has qualified as a Level 4 Independent Sexual Violence Advocate.

Alexa is passionate about ensuring that all voices are heard and hopes to represent other parents to ensure that Oaklands continues to provide an outstanding education for all its pupils.



# Jackie Foulkes

**Governor Type:** Staff Governor

**Committees:** Teaching and Learning

**Term of Office:** 16 October 2023 to 15 October 2027

My name is Jackie Foulkes, I have worked at Oaklands as a Teaching Assistant for 6 years. Prior to this I worked in a number of other schools in a variety of different roles; such as cover supervisor.

At Oaklands, I have many different roles, I am first aid and medicine trained, which means I attend and support school trips and residential, which I fully enjoy. I work a lot with the pupils in key stage 4 and 5, and part of my role is co-ordinating work placements and post 16 transition. These positions have allowed me to see the pupils develop into young adults.

Since joining the governing body, I attend the Teaching and Learning Committee which has given me a greater understanding of how the school works.



**Oaklands School**  
"The best for all, the best from all"

# Karen Soper

**Governor Type:** Co-opted Governor

**Committees:** Teaching and Learning

**Term of Office:** 14 November 2024 to 13 November 2028

Karen began her career in secondary education as a PE and dance teacher before moving into various senior leadership roles spanning over 12 years. In 2022 she moved into specialist provision in the further education sector at Petty Pool College, first as Assistant Principal and later as Quality and Standard Lead across the trust. During this time Karen has had a particular focus on inclusion, teaching and learning and quality improvement.

Karen is passionate about inclusive education and ensuring that all learners have access to meaningful opportunities to support their independence, including work related skills. Outside of her professional role she enjoys spending time with her family and making the most of the great outdoors, particularly walking and skiing.



**Oaklands School**  
"The best for all, the best from all"

# Georgina Blake

**Governor Type: Co-opted Governor**

**Committees:** Teaching and Learning and Standards

**Term of Office:** 25 March 2026 to 24 March 2030

I was recently appointed as a co-opted governor in March 2026, and I am delighted to join the governing body. I am a parent to two children, and my youngest began year 7 at Oaklands School this academic year.

I began my career in the voluntary sector working with children and families, specifically in family support services, SEND, and alternative education for pupils at risk of exclusion or disengagement. Since my first child was born, I've been employed as a clerk and governance professional within a Multi Academy Trust. This role has given me 12 years of experience working in school governance. In that time I have also worked with the National Schools Breakfast Programme, as well as SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service).

I am very much looking forward to committing my skills and time to the governing body at this fantastic school.



# What is the role of our school Governors?

- School governors provide strategic leadership and accountability in schools. They appoint the Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher. The role of the Governing Board is a strategic one with three key functions:
  - Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
  - Holding the leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of the staff
  - Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent