

Virginia Gorna – Vice Chair of Governors - Berrymede Junior School

It is difficult to imagine Governing Body meetings at Berrymede without her presence....more than 20 years of dedication to this community....

She radiated warmth. There was an immediate awareness that she had arrived, charismatic and larger than life; bright, colourful outfits with perfectly matching accessories, including a range of matching canes and not forgetting her bright yellow sports car! Always smiling, she never once complained about her illness, referring to herself as a 'walking miracle.' Her illness was merely a nuisance which interrupted her full enjoyment of life.

Governing body meetings, for anyone who has ever attended, can be quite dry at times and on occasion there would be passionate, quite vocal discussions. Virginia would make little comments which would make me smile at best or double over with controlled laughter, the kind that makes your eyes water and stomach ache – great wit, humour and a certain childlike mischief – I would love to have known her as a child!

She was passionate, outspoken and above all, kind. She supported the children, the families, indeed the whole community with heart and soul; she rarely missed a meeting....always made a contribution.

She was clearly an exceptionally intelligent individual with high morals and purpose, the epitome of grandeur and politeness which was put aside if she had a point to make, where upon everyone quietened and listened, even the most argumentative of people – you dare not interrupt! During her time as Vice Chair, she was involved in numerous key decisions over the years which served to shape the future of our school as we know it.

Her family was also her passion, she always stayed to chat after meetings, no matter how long and tedious they were at times. She would enquire about staff, share moments about family - she always spoke of her family with love, she was clearly very proud of her daughter, Robin's achievement, her husband Maurice, her soulmate and when she chatted about her grandchildren, her eyes filled with joy – a source of great happiness!

Numerous colleagues, previous Governors, staff who knew her have all expressed their sadness yet at the same time they smile as they reminisce.....'She had such presence', the colour purple, the matching jewellery, the jolly persona that immediately relaxed and brightened the atmosphere as soon as she entered the room.

On a personal note, she has been more than a Governor of Berrymede, she has been a friend, a source of comfort and support at difficult times, a source of inspiration, a source of genuine praise, endorsement and care – we all need this no matter who we are, she gave so freely.

It is difficult to imagine meetings without her presence.....

Berrymede is indebted to Virginia Gorna, our Vice Chair of Governors.

*Lubna Khan
Head Teacher, Berrymede Junior School*