



Annual Governance Statement of the Governing Body of St Nicolas Church of England Primary School, Abingdon September 2023 – July 2024

Introduction

This Annual Governance Statement of the Governing Body of St Nicolas CE Primary School is published in line with the recommendation of the Department for Education to explain how the Governing Body has fulfilled its statutory duties over the previous year in line with the three core strategic functions:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school
2. Holding the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

We believe that this is good practice and an effective way for Governors to be accountable to parents and carers each year while also celebrating the school's achievements. We hope that you will find this report useful and informative and that, if you have any questions, you will get in touch with us.

Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school

- In September, we received from the Headteacher the **School Development Plan** which he and his colleagues had developed based on a set of three priorities that the Governors had identified with him prior to the summer holidays. They were:

Writing	Vision and Values	Attendance
To improve the standard of writing for all pupils that ensure a greater number of children are achieving the expected standard by the end of the academic year.	To root the school's vision and values in school life, creating a distinctive environment where everyone thrives	To improve whole school attendance and develop a culture of wanting to come to school and arriving on-time each day.

- Over the course of the year, we have seen **school vision to see all pupils “live life to the full”** embedded across all that we do – inside and outside the classroom. This is particularly evident through the implementation of the **“NICS Approach”**: **Navigate, Inspire, Challenge, Succeed**.
 - When we have met with pupils, they tell us that they are **clear on what is expected** of them inside the classroom, that they are **inspired by their teachers and classmates** (and want to be an inspiration to others), that they are **challenged to do their best** (and that they recognise that this might be different for each of them), and that **success – in its many and various forms – is always celebrated**.
 - Outside of the classroom, pupils have benefited from a range of opportunities during **Abingdon Week** from a bus trip to Marcham to a visit to the Abingdon Museum, as well as other **school trips** to Chedworth Roman Villa, Cotswold Wildlife Park, and the

Ashmolean Museum, the **Y3-4 performance** of “Rock Bottom” at the Amey Theatre, and residential trips to **Youlbury and Kilvrough**.

- We have been pleased to hear of the extensive opportunities that pupils have had to **represent the school in sport** (including cricket, tennis, athletics, and football) and of the successes that they have had this year.
- In addition to these activities, class **teachers have volunteered their time to provide after school activities** from cricket club to choir and from book club to forest fun. We are extremely grateful to them for putting on these popular clubs that are open to all pupils from Y1-6, free of charge.
- We have continued to focus on developing a culture of high **school attendance** and have seen the impact of prioritising **effective strategies to support families** resulting in a 94.9% whole school attendance this year, an improvement on the previous year (93.9%) and above the national average (94.2%).
- Continued investment in **staff wellbeing** has resulted in a 0% turnover in class teachers this year. However, Governors are **concerned to hear of the increasing incidents of verbal abuse towards staff**, particularly the Senior Leadership Team, and will be looking at this more closely at this next year.
- We continue to review and update all [statutory policies](#), as well as monitor progress against our [Equalities Plan](#) and [Accessibility Plan](#) to ensure that all pupils can benefit from every opportunity available.
- We would also like to **thank the SNSA** for their hard work in building the school community particularly through their ongoing commitment to annual events such as the fireworks and May Fair, together with the second hand uniform shop.

Holding the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils

- **Regular monitoring of pupil progress and attainment** across the school has shown the impact of teachers’ consistent work to develop **writing skills** both during literacy lessons and across the wider curriculum. This has included the use of a wider range of vocabulary and opportunities for **extended and independent writing**. In addition, writing has been embedded through the use of Rocket Phonics across all year groups.
- We have reviewed the use of **Pupil Premium** funding to support our most vulnerable children (16% of pupils) to make sure that the initiatives that we offer provide a tangible impact. These are summarised in the Pupil Premium [strategy statement](#) for 2023-24.
- The school continues to **support a high number of pupils with SEND** (19% of pupils) with class teachers and teaching assistants trained and focussed on delivering the school’s [Universal Offer](#) within the classroom. Our recently updated [SEND Information Report](#) provides more details on what we provide.
- We are incredibly proud of our pupils in Year 6 who achieved well-deserved results in their **KS2 SATS** (KS1 stats are no longer a statutory requirement). Once again, pupils, staff and parents approached these tests in the calm and positive way that is readily associated with St Nicolas School. **Pupils achieved strong results in reading (86% - national average of 74%), writing (68% - national average 72%) and maths (86% - national average 73%)** which is tribute to their hard work and the outstanding support of each member of staff working with these children.

Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

- The pressure on the **school budget is increasingly challenging**. This year we saw **increased staff costs due to the statutory increase in the school day and a continued rise in energy costs, but no additional funding from the government** to meet these rises.
- We remain committed to making sure we have the support in place that each pupil requires in order to thrive and to make good progress. **This will become increasingly challenging if government funding for schools does not increase.**

- Oxfordshire as a county still receives from the Department of Education **substantially lower funding per capita** to all its primary schools compared to the national average. For the financial year ahead, we have received **£1.9m from the Local Authority** which equates to an average of **£4,661 per pupil** (which includes initial funding for any additional or special needs support pupils require and free school meals).
- We therefore continue to **monitor the school's finances** on a regular basis, including benchmarking our financial position against other schools locally and nationally, to ensure that **best value for money** is being obtained, and the long-term viability of the school is secured through a carefully managed and balanced budget.
- **Efficiency savings** are considered at every level of budgeting and all contracts are monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. As part of this approach, we have fitted **LED lighting in the KS2 corridor and classrooms** last summer which has seen a significant reduction in our energy usage this year (although the increasing energy prices have meant that we have not seen a reduction in cost).
- The school continues to invest beyond allocated budgets in order to support the growing number of pupils with **SEND** and we are extremely grateful to **Christ's Hospital Abingdon** who have financially supported the school again this year to augment **Pupil Premium funding** for children from low income and vulnerable families.

As we come to the end of the year, we would like to take this opportunity to **thank all of the staff** for their incredible contribution this year and especially Mr Spooner and the SLT for their strong and steady leadership this year.

Governance

The Governing Body was reconstituted 1st September 2015 in line with government guidelines (the Instrument of Government can be found at on the school website of from the school office).

The Governing Body has a **programme of meetings** throughout the school year, and a committee structure that focuses on specific areas of governance. At St Nicolas School we have two main committees: the **Resources Committee** (for finance, strategy, personnel, and property items) and the **Performance and Standards Committee** (for academic and achievement related items with a focus on the curriculum, teaching and learning, and children's progress). There are six full Governing Body meetings per year and a minimum of four committee meetings. All the Committees report directly to the full Governing Body.

At the beginning of the year, **Katrina Hancock** was re-elected as Chair of Governors and **Vicky Drew** was elected to the role of Vice-Chair. As we come to the end of this year, we say **thank you and farewell to Eluned Hallas** who has served as a Foundation Governor for over 20 years and who has been our Safeguarding Governor, Vice Chair, and a member of both the P&S and Resources Committees over the years. We also say thank you and farewell to **Vicky Drew** who has served as a Parent Governor for the last five and a half years having focused on SEND and Early Years, and also to **Kate Daniell** who has been serving as an Associate Member this year. We were delighted to welcome **Sue Gibbins** as our new LA Governor, **Paul Smith** as our new Foundation Governor, **Lucy Fortnam-Paynter** and **Gemma Wilson** as our new Parent Governors, and **Ian Fishpool** as a new Co-Opted Governor. We would also like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to our Clerk, **Georgie Clarke**.

Over the year we have worked, as a Governing Body, to develop our own skills through additional **training** all of which were identified as areas in which our Governors needed additional training in our annual skills audit. With the addition of new Governors this year, and the ever-changing requirements of budgets and monitoring, we will continue to undertake training in the year ahead.

As this year draws to a close, we confirm the membership and attendance of our Governing Body¹:

Governor	Category	FGB meetings (x out of y attended)	Committee meetings (x out of y attended)
Lindsay Dowzall	Parent Governor	6/6	6/6
Vicky Drew	Parent Governor	2/4	2/4
Ian Fishpool	Co-opted Governor	3/3	1/2
Lucy Fortnam-Paynter	Parent Governor	5/5	3/3
Sue Gibbins	Local Authority Governor	5/6	6/6
Eluned Hallas	Foundation Governor	4/5	4/4
Katrina Hancock	Co-opted Governor	6/6	9/10
Roger Johnson	Parent Governor	5/6	5/5
Katrin Nolland	Foundation Governor	5/6	4/6
Lorna Page	Staff Governor	5/6	9/10
Andy Spooner	Headteacher	4/6	10/10
Alistair Weaver	Parent Governor	4/6	6/6

Governors have also undertaken ad hoc membership of the following committees throughout the year as required: Pay Committee and Headteacher Appraisal Committee.

Strategic Planning for the future

Looking to the year ahead, the Governing Body with the Headteacher has identified three priorities that we wish to focus on. We will continue our focus on writing, prioritising **improvement in the standard of handwriting and spelling**. In addition, we want to **enhance and adapt the school's Universal Offer** to ensure that we meet the **academic, social, and emotional needs for all pupils** both inside and outside the classroom. And finally, we intend to continue to **monitor and address persistent absence from school** and support and challenge those families where significant improvement is needed. These are ambitious goals particularly given the financial pressure that the school is under but, in all we do, we will continue to be **directed and guided by our vision to see every child "live life to the full"**.

How to contact your Governing Body

We always welcome suggestions, feedback, and ideas from parents and carers and are grateful to all those who completed the parents' and carers' questionnaire this term. The Chair of Governors, Mrs Katrina Hancock, can be contacted via email (cgov3247@st-nicolas.oxon.sch.uk) or the School Office in term time. More information about the School's Governing Body, including minutes of meetings, can be found on the school website: <http://www.stnicolasprimary.co.uk/>

¹ Total possible number of meetings varies by person depending on date of election and committee membership; all absences this year were due to personal circumstances/illness – apologies were received and accepted.