



Annual Governance Statement of the Governing Body of St Nicolas Church of England Primary School, Abingdon September 2022 – July 2023

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 responsibilities over the previous year. We believe that this is good practice and an effective way for Governors to demonstrate their accountability to parents each year. 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.

Summary of Activity in 2022-2023

This year, in addition to our statutory duties, the Governing Body of St Nicolas CE School has particularly focussed on:

- Celebrating a **good Ofsted outcome** that highlighted the school's strengths in phonics, maths, and PE and positive behaviour across the school
- **Monitoring and improving attendance** as a priority to help every child make the most of their education
- Embedding our **vision and mission** across the school, particularly in collective worship and in the classroom so that every child and staff member can see the sequence of **Navigate, Inspire, Challenge, Succeed** as a reality in their work
- Supporting a focus on the implementation of a new **maths scheme** using White Rose maths across the whole school to improve consistency in both resources and development of maths skills and understanding for all pupils, with a focus on challenge for those capable of achieving greater depth
- Monitoring **staff wellbeing** and ensuring appropriate support is in place
- Celebrating the return of and breadth of **after school clubs** provided by teachers as well as **school trips, residentials, and performances**, as well as thanking the **SNSA** for the return of the May Fair and other traditional school community events
- Reviewing and updating all **statutory policies**, as well as looking at progress made against our **Equalities Plan**
- Ensuring the sequenced teaching of all **foundation (broad curriculum) subjects**, in particular developing geography and history teaching through the **Abingdon Week**
- Updating the **website** as a "digital doorway" to the school with information for both current and prospective parents.

Statement of Strategic Function

In accordance with the government's requirement for all Governing Bodies, the three core strategic functions of St Nicolas CE Primary School's Governing Body are:

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.

This year, we have continued to organise this report to highlight the work that we have done, and the achievements of the school which we share in celebrating, under these three areas.

1. 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:

- To ensure a consistent and high-quality approach to teaching **literacy** across the school so that every child is regularly challenged and making good levels of progress
- To ensure a consistent and high-quality approach to teaching **maths** across the school so that every child is regularly challenged and making good levels of progress
- To enhance and improve both **school and local community engagement** to live out our vision.

These three areas provided our focus for monitoring this year and we are delighted to thank the staff team for the quality of their work and commitment to the children which was externally validated by a **good Ofsted outcome** in February. Teachers have worked hard to continue to map the **curriculum** taught at the school onto the Maestro Platform enabling them to ensure that there are now no longer any gaps in the provision of the full curriculum. This has been particularly effective in **mathematics** with the move to using the White Rose maths scheme, and has also been visible in the introduction of **Abingdon Week** to support geography and history, and the reintroduction of **school trips, residentials, and performances** which enable each child to “**live life to the full**”, in line with our school vision.

We have also spent time looking at how our **school vision and mission** are embedded into school life, both inside and outside of the classroom. Based on Jesus’ words in John 10:10 “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”, we recognise that we are all on a journey together and we are here to **serve our local community**. The approach we adopted last year, is now firmly embedded in our school life as it is easily memorable and applicable for all pupils, even from Reception:



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

We have supported the **implementation of the School Development Plan** (above) throughout the year primarily through **regular monitoring of pupil progress and attainment** across the school. Governors have continued to meet with subject coordinators to understand how **foundations subjects** are being taught across the school, alongside maths and literacy. We have also had a strong focus on **monitoring attendance** and supporting the Headteacher to see improvements for each child – providing support to the family where necessary. It is evident in the data that we have seen that every school day lost has a negative impact on each child’s own progress and so this must remain a focus if we are to see every child make the most of their time at school. We have seen some success in the new approach with **whole school attendance at over 94%** for the first time post-Covid, on a par with county and national figures but hope to see this increase next year.

We have continued to monitor the use of **Pupil Premium** funding for our most vulnerable children to make sure that the initiatives that we offer provide a tangible impact. The [strategy statement](#) for 2022-23 is published on the school website and we have also focused on supporting our Armed Service Pupils with these pupils attending a celebration event in June to mark their achievements as part of the Festival of Friends Oxfordshire. The school continues to have a strong reputation for supporting pupils with **SEND** and, with the increasingly limited resources available, continues to commit to providing the support each child needs in order for them to thrive in and out of the classroom regardless of whether or not they have additional or special needs.

This last year has seen some **challenging behaviour** from pupils but this has been managed well by the staff who have shown resilience and compassion in each situation. Having reviewed the Behaviour Policy in the Autumn Term, Governors have been encouraged to hear that this is being implemented consistently across all year groups, appropriate to the age and stage of each child. This was specifically noted and praised by the Ofsted Inspector in February and is also evident in the calm atmosphere in school over the last six months.

With all of this in mind, we are incredibly proud of our pupils in both Year 6 and Year 2 who achieved well-deserved results in their **KS2 and KS1 SATS** respectively. Once again, pupils, staff and parents approached these tests in the calm and positive way that is readily associated with St Nicolas School. We were delighted that **Year 6 had strong results** in reading (79% - national average of 73%), writing (72% - national average 71%) and maths (79% - national average 73%) which is tribute to their hard work and the outstanding support of each member of staff working with those children. What is particularly commendable is the **significant proportion of these children achieving greater depth**, particularly in reading and maths. As they prepare to leave us this summer we wish them well and hope that they will go on to excel in the next stage of their education. **Year 2 also did well** with 67% achieving expected standard plus in reading, 57% in writing, and 77% in maths. This is reflective of the ongoing impact that COVID-19 had in their early years around writing (the hardest subject to teach remotely) but also of the positive impact of the new White Rose maths scheme.

Alongside celebrating our progress and attainment in the core curriculum and foundation subjects, we have been delighted to see extra-curricular activities resume once again. When we surveyed parents and carers last summer, there was a lot of feedback about the lack **after school clubs provision**. We are delighted that the school is now back to a full complement of after school clubs ranging from **orchestra to cricket, eco-club to book club and more**. Having surveyed other primary schools in Abingdon, Governors were able to note that St Nic's provision is substantially **greater and more varied than any other school in the area**. We are very grateful to the school staff who run these voluntarily, together with some TAs and external volunteers, as they have been very well received and mean that they are offered free of charge. We are also delighted to note the return of **school trips into Abingdon, Oxford, and beyond**, as well as residential to **Youlbury and Kilvrough**, and the return of the **Year 3 & 4 performance** at the Amey Theatre and **Y6 Leavers' Performance** as well as other events and concerts throughout the year. We would also like to **thank the SNSA** for their hard work in rebuilding our school community following COVID-19 with the return of the fireworks, May fair, ice-pop sales and more.

We have continued to ensure that all **statutory and school policies** remain up to date and implemented and this year have returned to our **Equality Statement and Plan** to review our progress in making sure that all pupils are able to access all opportunities that St Nics can offer. This is an ongoing piece of work that will continue to be reviewed annually. We have also seen substantial investment in the content on the **school website** to make this a "digital doorway", particularly around the addition of the new "**learning**" tab which has [curriculum overviews](#) for all subjects as well as "**knowledge mats**" for each year group and for each term. the site, the curriculum, and information. We are committed to ensuring that the school is a **safe and welcoming environment** for every child as we know that this creates a stimulating and friendly place in which they can learn and play. We would like to express our sincere thanks to **Andy Spraggs** for his outstanding management of the school site and all of those within the **School Office** for their work behind the scenes to make the school such a safe place for every child.

3. 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 see **increased staff costs and increased energy costs as expected, but no additional funding from the government** to meet this >£90k increase in our budget. We will also see additional costs in 2023/24 with the statutory **increase in the length of the school day**. However, the careful budgeting from previous years means that we have a carry forward from the previous financial year which enables us to **balance the budget for this year**. We continue to receive **funding for pupils with EHCPs**, as well as grants for those eligible for **Pupil Premium** which will be supplemented by a grant from **Christ's Hospital Abingdon** for which we are very grateful. In our commitment to a **"universal offer"** for all pupils, we remain committed to making sure we have the support in place that each pupil needs in order for them to make good progress in year. **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 **£1.8m from the Local Authority** which equates to **£4,398 per pupil** (a £5 per pupil increase on the previous year). 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. **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 will be fitting **LED lighting in the KS2 corridor and classrooms** this summer which we hope will reduce our energy costs over time as well as creating a more pleasant learning environment for pupils. We have also renegotiated our **catering contract** to ensure continued meal quality and affordability.

As we come to the end of this year, the Governing Body is encouraged by the very **low turnover in the staff team**. We will be saying farewell to two class teachers – Mr Stead and Miss Swarbrick – they will be greatly missed. We are also very grateful to those Teaching Assistants who will be moving on this summer and thank them for all they have done to support pupils this year. We would also 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 Governance 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 **Eluned Hallas** continued in her role of Vice-Chair. As we come to the end of this year, we say **thank you and farewell to Hugh Price** who has served as an LA (Community) Governor for 12 years, and to **Jim Broadbent** and **Kate Daniell** who have served as Parent Governors for 4 and 11 years respectively – a further parent governor election will be held in September to fill this latter vacancy. Our particular thanks go to Kate for her work on the P&S Committee and as the literacy link governor who championed a relationship between the school and local bookshop, Mostly Books, and to Jim for his work chairing the Resources Committee but also in assisting the school in securing fasting broadband to assist pupils and staff. We are delighted to welcome **Alistair Weaver** as the new Parent Governor and will shortly be able to announce a **new LA Governor** once the nominee is approved by the County Councillor. We would 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** including **safeguarding, budget construction, suspensions and exclusions, preparing for Ofsted, health and safety, and induction for new governors** – 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)
James Broadbent	Parent Governor	3/6	6/6
Kate Daniell	Parent Governor	5/6	6/6
Vicky Drew	Parent Governor	5/6	6/6
Lindsay Dowzall	Parent Governor	5/6	7/7
Eluned Hallas	Foundation Governor	4/6	6/6
Katrina Hancock	Co Opted Governor	6/6	12/13
Roger Johnson	Parent Governor	4/6	5/6
Katrin Nolland	Foundation Governor	6/6	7/7
Lorna Page	Staff Governor	5/6	13/13
Hugh Price	LA Governor	4/6	6/6
Andy Spooner	Head Teacher	5/6	13/13
Alistair Weaver	Parent Governor (started T6)	1/1	2/2

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

Strategic Planning for the future

Looking to the year ahead, the Governing Body will have identified three priorities that we wish to focus on. Our primary goal is to **improve the standard of writing for all pupils** and accelerate progress for all. In addition, we want to **root the school’s vision and values in school life** to create a distinctive environment where everyone thrives, and finally to **improve whole school attendance**, developing a culture of prioritising arriving on time each day. We will also continue to monitor staff wellbeing and the pressures on the school budget as both need to be an ongoing consideration. Above all, we will continue to be **directed and guided by our vision and mission as we seek to help every child “live life to the full”**.

How to contact your Governing Body

We always welcome suggestions, feedback, and ideas from parents 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.