

St. Stephen's Church of England Junior School
Headteacher: Louisa Wilson
South Gloucestershire Council

...a positive, supportive learning community.



Governors' Annual Statement for Parents 2014-15

Introduction

With guidance from The Department of Education, I am please to share with you our Annual Statement. We hope that it will help inform you of the roles and responsibilities that the Governing Body has taken across this past school year.

The Government has defined statutory responsibilities for all governing bodies. The three core roles are:

- Ensuring the school's clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

With support from the Local Authority our Governing Body endeavours to fulfil these roles. In doing so we hope that we can help make our school the very best it can be for the benefit of our children and be a positive, supportive learning community.

The Department for Education guidance specifies that this annual statement should explain how we have fulfilled our responsibilities, including:

- the governance arrangements that are in place, including the remit of any committees
- the attendance record of individual governors at board and committee meetings; and
- an assessment of the effectiveness and impact of the board and any committees with details of any particular challenges that have arisen

Before covering these areas I should firstly explain that the Governor role is intended to be strategic in nature while being a "critical friend" to the Head teacher and the school leadership team, who are responsible for the day to day operational running of the school.

In reviewing the way the school works, the Governors have gained an enormous respect for all the staff in the school. The amount of effort, care for our children, and "going the extra mile" we see on a regular basis from all our staff, is nothing short of inspirational.

It is not only academic progress that is in evidence in the school, but all the clubs and other activities such as trips and sports events that show what a broad and fulfilling education our children benefit from in our school. I would like to take this opportunity to give a huge 'Thank You' to all our staff for the level of effort and care they all contribute.

Governance Arrangements

The Governing Body for the 2014/15 school year was made up of 16 positions as follows:

- 6 Parent Governors appointed by ballot of parents

- 1 Local Authority governor appointed by the Local Authority
- 2 Staff Governors (1 Teaching Assistant, 1 Class Teacher) appointed by staff ballot
- 2 Ex-Officio Governors: The Head Teacher and the Vicar of St Stephens Church
- 2 Co-Opted Governors appointed by the Governing Body
- 3 Foundation Governors appointed by the Diocese

The governors are listed in the Appendix to this document and all have the same responsibilities; they do not represent their appointers, but are intended to be representative of them. All are volunteers, giving up their own time to fulfil the roles for the benefit of our children.

From September 2015 the DoE requires that governing bodies are re-constituted in a manner that makes it possible to broaden and increase the skill base available to them. To this effect from 2015/16 school year the governing body will consist of 15 members made up as follows:

- 3 Parent Governors appointed by ballot of parents.
- 1 Local Authority Governor appointed by the Local Authority.
- 1 Staff Governor appointed by ballot of staff.
- 2 Ex-Officio Governors: The Headteacher and the Vicar of St Stephens Church.
- 5 Co-Opted Governors appointed by the Governing Body
- 3 Foundation Governors appointed by the Diocese
- Associate Governors, as required, to be appointed by the governing body.

For the conduct of much of the detailed work of the governing body the governors populate three sub-committees:

Achievement and Provision - Chair 2014/15 Abby Warren

Responsible for reviewing the Curriculum and related policies; analysing data regarding the performance of the school against both internal and external sources; monitoring impact of Pupil Premium on the achievement and attainment of pupils; monitoring the quality of teaching throughout the school and all policies related to staff performance management.

Community Chair - 2014/15 - Rev Ian Wills

Responsible for reviewing Attendance, Behaviour, Safeguarding and Equality and all related policies; well being and working conditions of Staff; the monitoring of the schools position as a Church of England school and the promotion of the schools Christian foundation and links within the community.

Finance and Resources – Chair 2014/15 - Dave Hanks

Responsible for setting and monitoring the budget for the school and overseeing the school's financial management. The resources element includes responsible for the maintenance and health & safety aspects of the school buildings and decisions on the use of the premises outside school hours.

All sub committees are responsible for monitoring and contributing to the development of the School Improvement Plan and planning school visits /learning walks in support of their responsibilities.

Attendance Record

The Appendix lists the attendance record for each of the governors.

Many of us are not educational specialists but bring experience and skills from other professions that help us together to form an effective governing body. Attendance at meetings is only part of the role.

Reading and preparation are required for each meeting and the various actions require following up, often via regular email correspondence.

We also talk to staff and pupils on different aspects of the curriculum and school life. We also make regular visits to school and a number of Governors are also parent helpers.

In line with our continuous improvement ethos we ask that all Governors undertake at least one Governor training activity each year, and most of us fulfil this responsibility.

Effectiveness and Impact of the Governing Body

We continue to review our effectiveness against departmental guidance, and discuss the effectiveness of each meeting we hold.

Local Authority training has helped us to ask the questions that are required to move the school forward and to monitor the impact of plans made with this in mind.

We are continually working towards improving our effectiveness with support from the Local Authority and internally we have reviewed our sub-committee membership and held a skills audit to ensure the correct people are in the right place to make a difference.

We have supported the Head and school in the School Improvement Plan and are excited with how the foundation is being laid to build upon in the future.

We have put in place some key policies which will ensure the school meets its statutory requirements for Health and Safety and Equality.

We have considered the views of parents and pupils in deciding our approach to the resolution of issues and making decisions on strategy.

Results from SAT tests last year show how the impact is positive and how by looking at the bigger picture we have grown as a Governing Body. We look forward to sharing with OFSTED how we have moved the Governing Body forward and show our new confidence and momentum in helping to lead the school to further success.

The main challenges that we have addressed this year include:

Continuation of the OFSTED plan:

In September 2013 we were given the judgement of 'Requires Improvement' by OFSTED. We felt this was acceptable as we did have areas to improve. With the appointment of a new Head Teacher, Miss Wilson, and fantastic support by the staff, pupils, parents and ourselves a plan was implemented which would see a fast-track approach to making the improvements that we needed to show OFSTED the school was capable of positive impact along with improved attainment by all pupils.

Our challenge this year was to continue to monitor the amazing progress that had been made in the first year and see it built upon during this year, with a view to how it would then be continued going forward. With the benefit of more knowledge and

confidence in asking 'Why are we doing...?' we feel more secure with how the school can show its capacity for continued growth for all pupils and the wider community.

Introduction of new Curriculum and Assessment procedures.

All schools are required to implement the new Government guidelines on both curriculum and assessment. This caused challenges for the school with not only what would be taught but how do you measure the progress of pupils as the nationwide scheme was being scrapped.

As a whole school it was decided that we would look at what was being done elsewhere and use what we thought would work for us. As a Governing Body we needed to see how the new curriculum would work for our school and develop a way of monitoring the impact. Staff gave presentations on the delivery and teaching of the curriculum and we saw how a Mastery approach would help the pupils to 'master' each area of the curriculum and gain a deeper knowledge of subjects.

Our Head is part of a group of schools looking at the ways new assessments can be implemented and how to use them against old standards.

On occasion the data from internal assessments has looked worrying and we have had to look into the 'Story' of how the data came about and ask questions as to whether this is the right way to teach or are the pupils missing out. Teachers have shown us that it will work, with some tweaks, and their extensive planning has been proven to work with pupils engaged and enjoying the new teaching methods and teaching standards still good to outstanding in all cases. The next few years will be interesting but we are confident that as a school we can unpick the data and keep the momentum that has started to keep our attainment and progress at the top.

Succession Planning.

I have served a number of years as both a Governor and as Chair of Governors and have been implementing a succession plan this year with the view that a change of Chair is a healthy development. We have a number of very able Governors capable of taking the role.

To keep the required level of skills and experience available to us we need to continue to recruit volunteers to serve as governors. As a new governor, it takes a while to understand the role before becoming fully confident and effective, so it is essential that we fill any vacancies as soon as possible in order to build our capacity for the future.

Conclusion

I hope that you have found this useful and any comments would be gratefully received. We welcome all suggestions and to find out more about the role of the Governors please see the school website where we have included useful information.

Finally thank you for your support of the school and especially the Governors, in particular Rev Ian Wills, Suzanne Hanks and Sarah Jefferies ,who all retired from the body this year

after many years of contributions, but also to all the governing body who without your time and expertise the school would be unable to fulfil its potential.

Best Wishes,

Becky Drake
Chair of Governors

Appendix 1: Attendance of Governors 2014-15

