

Governors Review of the School Year 2022-2023

This has been my first year as Chair of Governors and it has been a very busy but enjoyable year. There has been a great deal of work but also many fun moments sharing in events in school.

Governors began their year with a '**Back to school day,**' finally back in person following the pandemic. As ever it was a fantastic opportunity to hear updates from Mrs Magiera, Mrs Parr, Mrs Kenyon and Mrs Osborn about assessment, safeguarding, English, and Phonics. Mrs Osborn took us on a very interesting learning walk looking at why the school environment is designed the way it is. Governors had a session discussing our roles, best practice, how to conduct our visits, and available training. It was a great delight to be able to have lunch with the children once again and share in many conversations with them. The Head Boy and Head Girl joined us to share their thoughts on their role so far, along with what they are looking forward to most. They had some questions for us too!

To work effectively our governing body has sub-committees which meet once each term. The '**Environment Committee**' is responsible for ensuring our school buildings and grounds are well maintained and that health and safety policies and practices are effective in keeping our children and staff safe. In the autumn term the 'health and safety' and 'first aid' policies were updated ready to be agreed at the Autumn Full Governing Body meeting. In the spring term we updated our 'Premise's action plan' detailing planned maintenance on the school buildings and grounds such as redecorating upstairs classrooms and ensuring our hot water system was well maintained. In the summer we discussed using an energy efficiency grant and some of our own DFC funds to replace some of our LED lights and install 2 electric vehicle charging points. Termly checks of the accident book, first aid boxes and the defib are carried out by the chair of the committee prior to every meeting.

We had a period without a site manager from January right through until the end of the summer term. This meant a lot of extra work for staff from opening and closing the building, to filling up the paper towel dispensers. This placed a great deal of additional pressure on the staff concerned and governors would like to extend their thanks for all the additional work they undertook during this period. We are very lucky that we had fantastic support from the wider community for example the site manager at Rudheath Senior Academy helped with some plumbing jobs, a member of staff from Hartford CE High School carried out some regular maintenance tasks, and a number of parents stepped up to help with maintenance of our outside areas. Thanks must go to everyone in our community who helped out.

In the autumn term the '**Teaching and Curriculum Committee**' heard about the work Mrs Kenyon was doing in her new role as phonics lead to improve outcomes, with close monitoring, listening to children regularly and supporting our Early Career Teachers to develop their skills. Writing and early reading were also on the agenda and updates discussed. Updates on these areas were detailed at the spring term meeting too, with more information on 'Pathways to read' and 'Pathways to Spell' schemes being used in school.

The huge amount of work Mrs Parr had carried out in her maths lead role was discussed in the autumn term meeting, with positive impact being seen in the classrooms. Comprehension has been identified in both maths and English as an area to focus on, children need not just to be able to read the questions in a test situation but understand the questions being asked too.

The summer term meeting welcomed two pupil curriculum leads, who discussed with governors what their roles involve and what they had learned about their curriculum areas of science and maths. Governors also had the opportunity to look at pupils' books, for maths and English from Years 2 and 6, they observed the range of ability, particularly within the 'greater depth' and 'age related learning' categories which was very informative.

The '**Workforce and Community Committee**' have a remit for staffing and admissions as well as community and church links. In the Autumn meeting Vicar Andrew reported back on his meeting with Mrs Ball about planning worship. Mrs Magiera updated governors on her work towards becoming a SIAMs Church School inspector, and the focus in the new framework on spirituality and excellence. Plans for Governors to ask parents about which social media platforms they used in a short consultation at parents evening in November were discussed, we wanted to ensure we were finding the best ways to communicate with parents.

In the spring term meeting plans to convene a working group to ensure we were well prepared for our expected SIAMs meeting were discussed. As a result of the survey on social media use, Instagram was now added to Twitter and Facebook as a way for staff to share school news and celebrations with parents.

Other items for discussion were the new 'Young Leaders' programme and the low intake numbers which were impacting all local schools, with the inevitable impact on budget. In the summer the work of the SIAMs group was noted and the successful Coronation picnic was discussed, despite a shower it was a very well attended event with families, governors and guests from local high schools in attendance.

The '**Finance Committee**' must ensure that the money in our budget is well managed and spent in the most effective way to impact on the priorities in our school development plan. The committee includes experienced governors with the required skills to undertake our duties to support and challenge school leaders with respect to the school budget. We seek to ensure that these skills are maintained and enhanced through undertaking training and seeking to recruit new governors with financial skills to our governing body.

Our termly meeting includes a detailed line by line look at our school budget with our CWAC budget officer, and includes looking at pupil numbers, staffing and Special Educational Needs and Disability funding as well looking ahead at forecasts for the next 3 years for all budget areas. We also discuss the completion of the Schools Financial Value Standards (SFVS), a self-assessment that governing bodies of all council funded schools must undertake and submit annually in the spring term and ensure any actions or areas for improvement are followed up.

School budgets are under great pressure at the moment with all costs rising sharply, in particular our energy bills were discussed at the Autumn meeting, where the costs had doubled.

In the spring meeting pupil numbers and class organisation was discussed and the impact changes may have on budget, pupil outcomes and staff and pupil well-being. Our submission for the SFVS was discussed and finalised. In the summer term close monitoring of the budget continued and the way our SEND children were supported was discussed.

Link governors have an important role, meeting with the lead teacher in their subject and discussing action plans and progress in detail, reports of these meetings are shared with all governors prior to our Full Governing Body Meetings so they have the opportunity to ask further questions. Expectations of governors were agreed with an updated Governor visits policy and Code of Conduct at the Autumn Full Governing Body Meeting.

In February we were visited by **Ofsted**. Governors met with the Lead Inspector in the afternoon of the second day. She commented that she had never met with so many members of a Governing Board before, we were lucky that all bar two non-staff Governors were able to meet with her. We answered a great many questions on a range of different subjects. Whilst the outcome may not have been the one we wanted, staff and governors are working hard to ensure that all objectives are met. As such, the governors will be undertaking a review of governance, led by the National Governance Association, during the 2023-24 academic year. This will show us what we are doing well, as well as any improvements that we can make. We are an outward-looking governing body who welcome input from both members of our school community and external agencies.

Whilst governors work hard in their committees and link roles as detailed above, many also enjoy spending time in school helping with reading, gardening, worship and much more. They attend worship, celebration assemblies, nativity performances, events such as the Coronation picnic, charity events and coffee mornings. It was fantastic to see many of the regular events which had stopped due to the pandemic going from strength to strength, in particular the return of Friday morning Celebration Assembly, together with coffee mornings. Fundraising for a whole host of charities including Macmillan Cancer Care, Christian Aid, Mid-Cheshire Food bank, Royal British Legion, Children in Need, the Children's Society, Save the Children, NSPCC and Comic Relief has taken place.

The Young Leaders have been working very hard and chose to support The Share Shop, Chester. They invited the whole school to bring in donations of toiletries and clothing, which they used to make up lots of amazing hampers. They also held a coffee morning for parents with lots of lovely cakes! The children took donated supplies to the Share Shop. The generosity of our school community and the way our school lives out its Christian Values, 'Loving your neighbour as yourself', is remarkable.

Governors were also delighted to see children enjoying school trips and residential, these are invaluable learning opportunities for children which enhance and extend the exciting curriculum we offer in our classrooms. AmaSing were back, this time to enable a performance with many other schools at Chester FC's Deva Stadium. It was a fantastic concert in which the children represented the school beautifully and sang confidently and with gusto!

It was wonderful to see both Mrs Magiera and Jackie being nominated in the Northwich Guardian Education Awards, both very well-deserved nominations. Governors valued the opportunity to be able to join the virtual event and celebrate their achievements with them.

I am very much looking forward to continuing as Chair during the 2023-24 academic year. I am sure it will be another busy and exciting one!

Ruth Cannon
Chair of Governors

Sarah Merison
Foundation Governor

