

Governing Board Annual Report to Parents for the Academic Year 2020/2021

The 1986 Education Act requires every Governing Board to present an Annual Report to parents, and I am therefore delighted to provide this report which outlines our work for the academic year 2020/2021

Our Governing board for 2020/2021

Governor	Committee	Specific Responsibility
Mandy Reddick Co-Opted Governor	All Committees	Chair of the FGB Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) HTPM Committee
Claire Johns Parent Governor	All Committees Chair of PCC	Vice Chair of FGB Exclusions & Appeals Committee Website Compliance Pupil Premium
Lorna Collins Co-Opted Governor	SRPC	Maths Sports Premium
Elaine Couzens Foundation Governor	PCC	Early Years Foundation Stage Pay and Staff Grievance Committee
Ian Redford Co-Opted Governor	SRPC	Health & Safety/Sites & Buildings
Jen Shields LA Governor	Chair of SRPC	Exclusions & Appeals Committee Safeguarding HTPM Committee
Simon Stranks Foundation Governor	SRPC	Christian Distinctiveness Exclusions & Appeals Committee HTPM Committee Pay and staff grievance
Siobhan Wright Staff Governor	PCC	Pupil Premium Champion Staff Welfare
Nicola Parker Parent Governor	PCC	Science
Lucy Mayhew Parent Governor	PCC	English International Schools Pay and Staff Grievance Committee
Gail Reinhart Parent Governor	PCC	Website Compliance Pay and Staff Grievance Committee
Rev David Payne Foundation Governor	SRPC	Staff Welfare HTPM Committee
Sarah Boyle Head Teacher	All committees	
Sharon Keely Clerk to the FGB		

We began the academic year by welcoming three newly qualified teachers to the team who have proved an asset to the school and the children in their care. All are now fully qualified. The beginning of the school year was very positive and our children who started in Early Years settled very quickly. However, once again the school was directed to close because of the rise in COVID 19 infections, and so 'Google Classroom' was again used to support the children and their parents to engage with learning from home. I am assured that in the event of further school closures, this teaching and learning on-line access to education is now firmly established thus enabling parents and their children immediate access. I would like once again to take this opportunity to thank all parents who supported their child(ren) throughout the two school closures and appreciate that facilitating home learning (whilst sometimes working from home themselves!) was never an easy task. May I also thank the teaching staff for their dedication and hard work, the Administration Team who continued to work from home and all support staff whose workload has inevitably increased.

On the children's return to school in March 2021, teachers very quickly assessed each child to ascertain where there were gaps in knowledge and skills. Our highly trained Teaching Assistants spent many hours working with small intervention groups to try to ensure that all children were working at their personal expected level. Since then, there has been a detailed 'Recovery Curriculum' in place and it is hoped that soon, the effects of school closures will no longer be evident. Our curriculum continues to evolve as the needs of the children are assessed.

I am sure you will appreciate that the usual full range of extra-curricular activities and visits to enhance the curriculum have not been able to fully take place. However, these are planned to be reintroduced over the course of this academic year. Training for staff and governors has continued, albeit virtually, and as a Full Governing Board, we have conducted all planned meetings and therefore followed our original schedule for the academic year.

Staffing has been a challenge at times, but on only a handful of occasions the difficult decision to close down 'bubbles' was made due to staff being required to isolate.

Our Teachers for 2020/2021

EYFS	Natalie Bill (Acorn) Teresa Coles & Christina Bishopp (Chestnut)
Year 1	Siobhan Wright (Hawthorn) Lucie Baker (Willow)
Year 2	Beth Ambler & Charlotte Smith (Maple)
Year 3	Rianna North (Pine) Lauren Curtis (Palm)
Year 4	Nicola Parker (Oak) Emma Chandler (Elm)
Conifer	Sonia Shires
PPA cover	Lindsay Pugh (Music teacher)

It has been a difficult first two years of Headship for Mrs Boyle and there have been some decisions to be made which even an experienced Head Teacher would have

found challenging! We have both kept in touch regularly either by telephone or Zoom and Mrs Boyle has kept me fully apprised of any decisions regarding operational capacity.

We continue to work closely with St James The Great Church and were delighted to welcome Rev. David Payne on to our Board. I was privileged to be able to attend the Leavers Service and another general act of worship in the summer term. Both took place on the playground and were led by Rev. David. Even though the Reception class children had not been able to attend any acts of worship (except via Zoom), the children were respectful and very well behaved.

As well as making decisions regarding the strategic direction of the school, governors also offer challenge and support. All governors make termly focussed visits to the school and generally report that these are thoroughly enjoyable and that they are constantly impressed with the learning they see. Visits to the school are an important part of monitoring the work of the school and ensuring that high standards are maintained. I look forward to regularly visiting again as soon as possible this year.

As we begin preparation for the new academic year, I would like to assure you that the Governing Board will continue to support Mrs Boyle, especially knowing that there may be further challenges ahead. May I end by reminding you all of our school mission:

*'To be an excellent, God-centred, values based, community focussed school
where everyone is welcomed, encouraged, and included.*

*Our children will develop as creative, determined learners and responsible citizens
inspired to achieve their God-given potential and live life in all its fullness.*

We will foster understanding, tolerance and forgiveness within our caring

Christian community' (John 10:10)

Mandy Reddick

Chair of Governors

Strategic Resources and Personnel Committee Report 2020/21

This year has been another exceptional year for us all and has posed even more challenges and added uncertainty to school finances. Changes to census dates have meant shortfalls in funding in several areas, and additional Covid grants have provided additional funding in others. The constantly changing situation and guidance have meant that all schools have had to be agile in their approach and adapt quickly as changes are announced. I am pleased to report that Silsoe has met every challenge head on and would like to extend my special thanks to Mrs Gidley who has worked tirelessly to ensure that the school budget is constantly updated and on track.

As always, expenditure and resources are deployed in support of the School Development Plan which is established prior to the start of the school year. Given the uncertain situation at the start of this financial year (May 2020), the budget was prepared with a worst case scenario in mind. This meant that the extended school closure in 2020 and the additional school closure in early 2021 could be managed well and the additional costs associated with Covid security did not have a detrimental effect on the budget.

The SRPC meets at least termly, with the chair and other members meeting with Mrs Gidley monthly. We also review and approve the budget reforecast in October of each year and the new budget in April. This cadence allows us to have an up to date picture of income and expenditure and to support and challenge on any decisions being made.

Specific areas of focus are outlined below:

Carried Forward Revenue

This year the excess funding carry-over is higher than usual at around 12%. Whilst this is above the usually permitted 8%, the extraordinary circumstances of the last year, with the school being closed for most pupils for extended periods, have meant that funding has been received that hasn't been possible to spend. This money is allocated for specific areas (for example Covid catch up interventions) and it is expected that it will all be spent as intended in the coming year (as long as the school is able to stay open!).

Staffing

Staff related costs are always the biggest expense for the school so it is important that these valuable resources are deployed in the most effective way. The SRPC committee reviews the staffing plan for the year ahead in the summer term and has the opportunity to scrutinise and challenge to make sure that the plan supports the School Development Plan as well as providing best value.

Pupil Premium and Sports Premium

Governors continue to monitor the use of additional government funding to ensure that it is deployed in an effective way to support those pupils who need it most. Silsoe is very lucky to have Mrs Wright as Pupil Premium Champion who is passionate about ensuring that our Pupil Premium funding is used to its maximum and is supported by Mrs Johns as Pupil Premium Governor who provides robust

support and challenge as well as observations so that the rest of the governing board are well informed as to its use.

Value for Money

The SRPC formally reviews the school's Best Value Statement every year and the Chair and Office and Finance Manager review regularly throughout the year. This statement sets out the commitment that the school makes to ensuring resources are deployed in the most effective way to achieve value for money. The committee also reviews the Schools Financial Value Standard which is a framework provided by the local authority to audit the financial decision making and processes that the school has in place. These two exercises add an additional layer of scrutiny to the financial management of the school and have both shown that we have robust processes in place.

Conclusion

2020-2021 was another exceptional year and posed even more challenges to school finances than had been experienced before. The SRPC will continue to work closely with Mrs Gidley and Mrs Boyle to support and challenge and ensure that the school retains its strong financial position.

Should you require more information on school expenditure or the budgeting process please contact Mrs Gidley, Office and Finance Manager.

Jen Shields

Chair of Strategic Resources and Personnel Committee

Pupils & Curriculum Committee Report 2020/2021

Following the prolonged closure of all schools across the country in the latter half of the 2019/2020 academic year due to the ongoing pandemic, children returned to school for the start of the 2020/2021 academic year with enthusiasm and a certain excitement to reconnect with their peers. For those children beginning school life in Early Years, a phased approach was adopted over the first few weeks.

Whilst the main priority was to ensure that the children settled back into the routine of school and to observe and assess the impact of the disruption on their mental well-being, it was also the wish of Mrs Boyle to understand the impact of the pandemic on learning and identify gaps. Prior to the first half term break, the children completed one-off assessments in key metrics including Maths, English and Handwriting which provided the staff with a snapshot of where the children, cohorts and overall school sat. This helped focus the recovery curriculum implemented to support the already robust curriculum in place and identify where intervention was required.

Despite on-going challenges and disruption throughout the Autumn term, the school adapted well with the introduction of 'bubbles' and minimised the impact of the considerable staff absences (due to periods of self-isolation) on the children's learning.

Individual and group interventions continued to help close gaps in learning from the first lockdown. Furthermore, children in receipt of Pupil Premium funding were closely monitored and supported, as were all vulnerable pupils including those in Conifer Class and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Sadly, the concerning spike in cases leading up to and over the Christmas period saw the Government place the country into another full national lockdown in early-January and for the second time in less than a year, the school was forced to close again and move to remote learning. Having introduced the Google Classroom platform during the first lockdown, the school was much better prepared this time around, with both teachers and children familiar with the software and skills needed to teach/learn remotely.

Once again, the most vulnerable children and families who did not have access to digital technology and/or internet access were fully supported by the school and offered resources in the form of laptops and printed lessons.

For the most part, most pupils (and parents) responded positively and engaged with the lessons provided through Google Classroom. Following parental feedback from a survey the school conducted after the first period of remote learning, more teacher-led learning was provided through video recordings and occasional live lessons, as well as direct interaction between teacher and pupils and their families during weekly/fortnightly phone calls. The dedication and commitment of the teaching staff to provide a full and varied learning experience, albeit remotely, was evidenced in the resources, tasks and activities shared online. I would also like to recognise the invaluable work of the Teaching Assistants, who continued to provide in-school teaching and support to key worker children who attended school in person during the second period of closure.

In March 2021, the government lifted lockdown restrictions and most pupils returned to school, albeit with COVID-safe bubbles and social distancing restrictions still in place. Once again, the key focus was to welcome the children back to school, whilst carrying out several assessments to determine gaps in knowledge and skills. These assessments helped to shape the detailed 'Recovery Curriculum' adopted for the remainder of the academic year, and identify the areas where interventions were most needed to support children in achieving their personal expected level.

Despite all national assessments, test and exams being cancelled this academic year, the school has continued to assess the children to ensure the recovery curriculum continues to meet their needs and closes the gap in learning. This data has been analysed internally and results shared with this committee. Undeniably, two prolonged periods of remote learning and absence from school have had notable impacts upon the children, both academically and in personal development. However, with each day the children attend school the negative impacts lessen and the expected levels of learning and attainment across the school continue to return.

As we move into the new academic year and what we all hope will provide a more stable and consistent learning environment for our children. The Governors that form the Pupils & Curriculum Committee will continue to support, challenge and scrutinise the short term and long-term priorities of the School Development Plan to ensure all children at Silsoe Lower School are fully supported in achieving their god given potential. This committee will meet termly to review and discuss progress and share updates with the Full Governing Board.

Claire Johns
Chair of Pupils and Curriculum Committee