

Chair of Governors report – 2019/20

Following a very different end to the 2019/20 academic year in July, on behalf of the Full Governing Body, I am once again pleased and proud to share with you our annual report for Swavesey Primary School.

As you will be aware, just over a year after our long-awaited visit from Ofsted in 2019, in response to the COVID 19 pandemic, the UK Government chose to close all schools (except for the children of key-workers and vulnerable children), from the 23rd March this year. This marked the start of an unprecedented time for our community. From nearly every perspective, including governance, COVID 19 split the school year in two and I feel this report would be best treated the same.

Each year the school produces the 'School's Development Plan' (SDP) which sets out the priorities and actions for the programme of continuous-development across the school. This programme is in addition to maintaining the standards of our existing provision and this year our overarching priorities were: -

- *Maintain a culture of achievement and excellence in teaching which underpins high standards of learning and wellbeing*
- *Ensure all leaders are effective in promoting high standards across the curriculum*
- *Ensure strategic plans are in place to secure the school's stability and sustainability*

For those parents that may be new to the school, alongside our Full Governing Body meetings, the Governing body is organised into two sub-committees through which most of our 'hands-on' governance and support is organised. These committees are the Curriculum, Learning and Achievement (CLA) and the Resources committee, and both committees focus their time and energy on ensuring that the programme of improvement outlined in the SDP is delivered.

Throughout the school, great progress was made with the impact and assessment of the Foundation subjects*. From the introduction of policy documents, subject display boards and the selection and refinement of assessment systems, each subject lead made great progress in reviewing both the content and provision of the broad curriculum offered by our school.

The Curriculum, Learning and Achievement committee were able to evidence the progress made in supporting Boys' writing in English, and verbal feedback strategies in Maths, which will now be embedded in practices going forwards. Plans to invite role models in English into our classrooms are now put on hold until it is safe to welcome visitors to the school. In the Spring term, pupils and staff formed a new eco-committee as part of the school's focus on our environmental impact, which focused initially on a practical recycling project. Our new committee will lead the school through its action plan during the new school year.

Resources committee continued to focus on the challenging task of balancing the school budget in the short term and managing the longer-term sustainability and stability of the school.

With a large drop in our pupil numbers from our departing Year 6 cohort, the budget once again challenged us to implement the best possible class and staffing structure across the whole school, in order to optimise the learning and outcomes of all children. After considering many different options, and without certainty of the final funding model from the Local Authority, we were pleased to submit a budget that delivers the best possible education across the school.

Having worked closely on the budget setting process for a number of years now, I'd like to acknowledge and thank Wendy Whistler, the School Business Manager for the expertise provided to the school and the governing body, which allows us to take such incredibly complex decisions.

Representatives of the Governing Body also attended the January Parent's evening to offer parents a chance to provide us with feedback and to get to know who we are. Hearing first-hand how our parent and carer community feel about the school is invaluable and a foundation for effective governance. I would like to thank all the parents that engaged with us and provided great feedback. We considered every response, both in our full governing body and committees, to identify actions we could take and the governing body were unanimous in how important that opportunity was, and that we will repeat the process in the future as soon as we can.

In response to COVID 19, the second half of the school year became an entirely different challenge and as a governing body we took to video meetings to continue our governance duties.

At a time of great need, our staff responded with the utmost professionalism and dedication. As key workers themselves, they helped our community's key workers continue to support the country, moving learning on-line for our children at home and providing a safe and secure school for those children still attending.

With guidance and instructions changing daily, at both National and Local Government level, through lockdown and the phased re-opening, the demands on the school were significant. The 'bubble' based approach to re-opening required very detailed planning and continued responsiveness as the children returned safely to school.

For those who did return, I am sure the parents were as happy as the children to see some normality return to their lives. I would like to extend my appreciation to everyone who took a moment to pass on their thanks to staff in person, or over email during these last 6 months. It is difficult to convey just how motivating your support has been at a time when we were asking so much of our staff to adapt both personally and professionally whilst their own wellbeing and mental health was being challenged.

Like many of our local businesses, the services offered by our Breakfast and After-School clubs have been impacted. Whilst the Early Years and Play setting is formally part of the Schools' budget and governance, the clubs are a self-financing charity which rely on revenue to survive. After a very difficult summer, we continue to seek ways to increase and extend the services we can safely offer but recognise that, with so many parents now working from home, it may be some time before we can expect to see those clubs over-subscribed as they previously were.

This year our governor team has welcomed Rachel Hallam, who has previously held governor positions at another local primary school. Rachel adds her valuable experience to the FGB and CLA committees. We have also welcomed Lucy Parsons who joins our Resources Committee alongside FGB, both taking up Parent-Governor seats.

Jason Dear has recently stood down from his governor role, but we thank him for his dedication and support over the past 3 years at Full Governors and Resources. After an incredible 11 years of service, at first as a governor and then as Clerk and our resident 'fountain of knowledge', Linda Miller has also resigned to focus on her work supporting the Parish Council. None of us are sure how we will ever replace Linda, but the fact remains that it leaves a vacancy for the Clerk to the Governing Body, which is a critical role for us to fill.

To our departing year 6 pupils, who were denied all of their traditional end-of-year celebrations (and SATS), we wish them all a wonderful time at their Secondary Schools and promise that, as soon as we can, we will mark your departure with the celebration you all deserve.

Finally, I'd like to take the opportunity this year to record our appreciation for the calm and unwavering leadership of our Headteacher Mrs Norden, who has led the School and our wider community through these unprecedented times with strength and purpose. The School's values shone through this summer as the staff and teachers responded to the challenges with incredible loyalty and much innovation. Thank you to you all for your continued dedication to our school.

Colin Oakman, Chair of Governors
On behalf of the Full Governing Body

[2019 Ofsted Report](#)

** History, Geography, RE, Music, Art, Design Technology, PE, Computing*