

## **Chair of Governors report – 2020/21**

As the 2020/21 academic year draws to a close, 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.

In March 2020, in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic, the UK Government chose to close all schools (except for the children of keyworkers and vulnerable children), marking the start of an unprecedented time for our school and wider community.

The end of the 2019/20 academic year saw the school innovate and adjust our working practices to support our children with both on-line and classroom-based learning. The Governing Body were incredibly proud of how the staff across all our settings adjusted both professionally and personally - to provide our pupils with the support and materials that allowed them to continue their learning journey.

That hard work established the infrastructure and protocols that have allowed us to continue to safely support our pupils and wider community this school year, as we moved from classroom, to remote and then back into classroom teaching. So very close to making it through the whole year without a class-bubble closing, and due only to the local increase in cases, unfortunately we have needed to close classroom bubbles in this past week. The governing body and the local authority recognise and appreciate the strong safety measures in place, and the decisive action taken by the school in these circumstances.

With a DoE statement expected this week on the plans for schools from September 2021, we hope that we can safely return to the more active and interactive methods of teaching and learning that have served our school so well.

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 is guided by areas for improvement we identify ourselves, and those from our latest Ofsted visit in 2019 ([2019 Ofsted Report](#)).

This year we were particularly mindful of the need to balance the continued development and improvement of the school with the additional and unique challenges we faced. Reintegrating pupils for classroom teaching and recovering any gaps in learning from the previous year, managing through the uncertainty of Covid and looking after the well-being of staff and pupils who we knew would still be required to work in new ways for sustained periods.

Therefore this year our overarching priorities were: -

- *To secure and sustain high quality provision during and after the COVID pandemic.*
- *All leaders are effective in promoting high standards across the curriculum.*
- *The provision for pupils with SEND can meet the needs of a growing number of pupils.*

Despite all the changes and challenges across the academic year, staff have worked hard to ensure that both 'in school learning' and 'remote learning' have supported the children's progress, working hard to then identify and close any gaps that have arisen. The school received many positive comments from parents about our remote learning provision and how the varied circumstances of our families was considered within the organisation. That feedback was appreciated by all at the school - so many thanks to those who took the time to share their thoughts with us.

Whilst all leaders have continued to promote high standards across the curriculum, the work due to be undertaken by foundation subject leads has been hindered by the Covid safety measures / restrictions. Further development of monitoring and evaluation systems for these subjects will be continued in the new academic year when it is hoped that safety measures allow for these processes to recommence.

Despite the increase in numbers, and the restrictions created by those safety measures, staff have supported SEND children well, adapting where possible our supportive provisions. Unfortunately, safety systems have meant that not all interventions which may have previously been used to support learning have been possible but where they have been these have met the needs of the children. Additionally, government funding has supported us in providing tutoring sessions which have had a very good impact. Making changes to our administrative processes has meant that more time has been deployed to those for whom additional support can enable them to make better progress.

Financially, and for the first time since I have been supporting the school, we presented a balanced 2-year budget, which was also based on returning to a 10-class structure. The careful management of the school, EY&P and before/after-school club finances, in particular over the past 18 months, has meant we are in the enviable position of being able to do this. The boost to the school's budget has come from an increase in pupil numbers and the increase in per-pupil funding (the latter having worked against us for many years).

Whilst the Early Years and Play (EY&P) setting is formally part of the Schools' budget and governance, the before/after-school clubs are a self-financing charity which rely on revenue to survive. After a very difficult year in 2020, I'm pleased to say that with the support of the staffing team, and with very careful management, the clubs have managed to provide their much-needed support throughout the year. We hope that the new school year sees attendance levels increase again, allowing them to continue to prosper.

For those parents that may be new to the school, alongside our Full Governing Body (FGB) 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 and our policies, practices and standards are adhered to. The Annual reports from our Committee Chairs follow this report - please find the time to read through the excellent summaries of how those committees have fulfilled their governance duties and supported the school this year.

As a FGB committee, we have focussed on ensuring the Governor Team understand the role of strong governance, by looking at the Ofsted evaluation framework and where effective governance should be applied. We've also focussed on governor succession planning, to ensure the governing body continue to have the people and the skills needed to support and challenge the school effectively. We've also tried to take an active and supporting role in staff well-being, using the opportunities we have as governors through our interactions at committee meetings, school visits and focus meetings, to listen, understand and where possible respond to the many challenges and new demands placed on our staff. I'm pleased to say that we've made strong progress in all these areas and the governor team are a vital part of our successful school.

And our governor team has seen several changes this year. We welcomed Catherine Cannon and Steve Byfield who have both joined our Resources Committee to add their experience to the group,

which will be particularly important ahead of the upcoming changes to our Chair positions. Steve and Catherine replace Jason Dear and Nathan Keen who stood down this year.

We also welcomed Katie Tween from the CambsClerk service. Katie provides the incredibly valuable clerking support to our FGB and Resources Committees and replaces Linda Miller who had served as a Governor and then Clerk for over 11 years.

Last but by no means least we welcome Claire Daniels who joins as a staff governor and a Resources Committee member - who before joining the school as a Teaching Assistant previously served as a parent governor. Claire replaces Alyson Hart, who has made a huge contribution over the years as a staff governor, with her focus on our Safeguarding practices and compliance.

As alluded to earlier, we have changes to our Chair positions in FGB and Resources. As I stand down from my Governor role at the end of this term too, I am excited to hand over the Chair of Governors seat to Lynsey Fulcher, our current Chair of Resources. Lynsey has already served for 6 years and will bring her experience and leadership to the FGB. In Lynsey's stead, Catherine Cannon will take over as Chair of Resources.

And I'd like to end my final report by personally thanking Mrs Norden and all the staff across the Primary School, EY&P and pre/post-School clubs. I've loved my 8 years as a governor and I'm definitely going to miss being involved. The school has made incredible progress during that time which I feel fortunate to have witnessed first-hand. The openness and transparency that exists makes governance a fulfilling and constructive process to be a part of, and their talent and professionalism hold our standards high.

Thank you for your continued care and dedication to our school and community.

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