

## Annual Statement from the Governing Body of St Gregory's RC Primary School

2017/18

We, the Governing Body of St Gregory's RC Primary School, work alongside the Head Teacher and Staff at all levels to ensure that our school serves our Catholic and wider community well. We seek to promote and maintain high standards of educational achievement for all of our children regardless of the challenges they may face within a caring and supportive setting, where all know that they are valued and cherished.

### **Our Governors:**

The Governing Body has evolved across the year and our current Foundation Governors are:

- Mrs M Puech (Chair);
- Mrs W Horwood;
- Rev Father M Weymes;
- Mrs E. Little;
- Mr G T Moad;
- Mr P Scott;
- Mrs J Valente.

Two Parent Governors:

- Mrs J. McGinley;
- Mr I Farrar (Vice Chair).

One LA Representative:

Cllr. M Walsh

One Staff Governor: Ms K Wilson.

And the Head Teacher, Mr K J Smithson.

We wish to place on record our thanks for the service given by Mrs C Grabham, whose contribution has been invaluable in recent years. In addition we would like to particularly thank Mrs W Horwood for her selfless dedication to the school over many years as our long standing Chair of Governors. We salute her great contribution and are delighted that she has chosen to remain as a Foundation Governor. Our thanks to Mr M Puech for taking on the demanding role of Chair and to Mr I Farrar as Vice Chair and also to our newest governors, Mrs E Little and Mrs J, McGinley, your support for our school is much appreciated.

**The Core Functions of the Governing Body are encapsulated as follows:**

- Upholding and strengthening our *Catholic Mission*;
- Maintaining clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the Head Teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils and the performance of staff, plus;
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure that its budget is used wisely to benefit our children by providing the resources and experiences they need to succeed;
- We also seek to liaise effectively with parents and carers and work with everyone to ensure that our successful and happy school maintains its current "outstanding" status.

**Key areas of focus 2017/18 have included:**

We have worked in close partnership with the Head Teacher and the Senior Management Team in developing and monitoring the School Development Plan, a comprehensive living document that is regularly updated across the year as targets are progressed and sometimes amended to reflect priorities or strategic changes.

In our school we plan our SDP around the financial year as so much is budget driven. This means that the plan itself can bridge two academic years and therefore needs to be a flexible document.

The plan is organised into three sections:

- Firstly, the key pupil progress / teaching and learning priorities for the year;
- Secondly, the management elements of the school: Deployment of staff, Budget, Governance and Environment;
- Thirdly, a section covering individual subject coordinator targets;
- All within the context of our *Catholic Mission and Pastoral Vision*

Each section comprises of the target focus, resourcing and funding and a detailed section outlining the background behind why this area is to be a focus for the year. Clear goals are set out; tasks allocated and timetabled, alongside specific success criteria. We presented an overview of the plan on the school website in June, followed

by a progress report in the Autumn Term, outlining school performance in national tests and including any amendments to targets and foci, as a result.

As noted, the SDP is updated and annotated across the year with the HT taking the initiative in the first two sections, assisted by the SMT and Senior Governors, with individual coordinators taking full responsibility for progressing their own subject priorities as the year unfolds. The core subjects, English, Mathematics and Religious Education are always key foci with additional subjects taking precedence over time.

Across 2017/18 our main focus was on teaching and learning in Mathematics as we redoubled our efforts to build upon our Maths Mastery programme, with the aim of significantly improving attainment and progress for all children across the school. Embedding our successful Early Intervention and Support programmes by better utilising the skills of staff at all levels by creating more opportunities for meaningful in house and external CPD, in order that all pupils could maximise their potential. In simple terms, we wanted to see more opportunities for children to learn and improve their skills and thereby really enjoy school and learning as is their right. We know that our disadvantaged and SEN pupils require additional support and encouragement but they can and do make fantastic contributions to learning on a daily basis and to extend these opportunities we have introduced more mixed ability teaching and opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and groups on tasks and activities in all subjects. The concept of "the bottom table" is banned with all children encouraged to achieve and confident enough to make a real contribution every day. This we feel is working well and ties in with our Maths Mastery approach in particular.

In addition staff were tasked with maintaining our long established tradition of an exciting and innovative curriculum that offers so much more than a focus on the Core subjects of English Maths and RE. A key incentive in this area was the school's commitment to achieving the national recognised Arts Mark Initiative and the retention of our International School Award and the Healthy School Award.

Governors are delighted to report that excellent progress has been made in all of these key areas. The prestigious Arts Mark (silver) was achieved thanks to the efforts of staff whose creativity knows no bounds. In addition, the school retained the hard earned International School Award, with one of our Y6 children winning an international award herself - a fine feather in the cap. We also retained our Healthy School Award and can point to the range of sporting, health and fitness opportunities we provide for all of our children during and after school. We are also in the top three South Tyneside Schools with the least levels of obesity, retaining our 2017 status.

Our Maths initiative was rightly lauded by the Local Authority experts and inspectors in March 2018, after the Head Teacher requested external validation of the school's work to improve mathematics and this in depth report can be found on the school website. In addition the crucial End Key Stage 2 SATs results were fantastic across the board, with performance in Mathematics significantly improved in terms of progress and attainment at both Expected and Greater Depth Levels and well above the national average. The staff and Y6 children have combined to make this an excellent year and we salute their efforts.

In 2018/19, Maths, Pupil Progress in Maths and teaching and learning, particularly for our high achieving pupils remain priorities, as we look to build upon the successes of the past year. We are trialling the new Inspire Maths scheme in Y2 as well as Y1 and we are hoping that this will impact positively upon our Mastery ambitions and help to secure good early learning and understanding of the key mathematical concepts that underpin progress in this vital subject area. Writing across the curriculum remains a focus with an emphasis upon fluency and enhancing pupils' vocabulary, the latter being adopted as a new national priority but something that we have long recognised as a clear barrier to learning for our pupils' from challenging backgrounds. This of course ties in with reading and we hope to create more opportunities for pupils to access books and to read for pleasure. Our creative approaches to curriculum content and development recently endorsed by the Arts Mark award will be maintained and enhanced across the coming year.

### **Setting Targets:**

Pupil progress and the quality of teaching and learning across the school are constant areas to consolidate and improve. Careful analysis of school performance across a wide range of indicators pin point areas where we can do better. Performance in National Tests are an important driver and whilst any combination of cohort strength, aptitude and ability, allied to teaching quality across a pupil's primary schooling, will influence a year group outcomes, we are vigilant against any sort of pattern emerging, such as weaker performance in Reading when compared with Writing, or Boys fairing consistently less well than girls in Mathematics, or Looked After children not meeting national targets.

The HT keeps us fully informed as to progress against the SDP targets in his termly reports and there are opportunities taken to explore more deeply within the meetings and to take on board input from other key staff and governor colleagues. Within the Curriculum Working Party for example, we have a number of governors who work through the DFE's latest School Performance Summary (ASP) and the Inspection Data Summary Report from Ofsted documents with the Head Teacher every year. ASP is a

very detailed document that looks at all sorts of data and performance indicators relating to pupil progress, achievement and attainment across the school with a particular focus on performance in tests, attendance and how our children's progress compares against that made by children nationally. This was a particular challenge for Governors this year as the format changed again, though the consensus agreed that it was a slight improvement on the previous year. It is our job, as members of this committee to cascade this information to our fellow governors at our meetings and then to discuss the implications and future actions this analysis will generate, such as the increased emphasis on Maths across 2017/18 and reported on above.

Mr G Moad and Mr M Puech, more recently lead the way with this, but over time a series of governors, including the Mr P Scott, Mr I Farrar, Mrs Horwood and Mrs Valente have made effective contributions.

The progress we made against Specific Data Driven Targets identified in the previous year's Governor's Annual Statement and the School Development Plan (also on the website), are easily tracked via the school website within the document: **Target Analysis and Revisions September 2017** and we get an early update from the Head Teacher as soon as the results are released in July so we always have a good idea of how things stand.

Though every child's progress is a priority, there can be no denying that the performance of the Y6 children has the greatest impact. This document then clearly notes the progress the 2016/17 Y6 cohort and all others made and then reassesses targets set in May 2017 for the 2018 cohorts, with Y6 a key focus.

However, if, for example, End KS scores dipped unexpectedly in Spelling and Grammar, we may have to review our target focus to make sure that Spelling and Grammar is now on the improvement agenda, but usually we just have to fine tune targets, amending them if our data sets suggest that a cohort of pupils is capable of achieving more or retaining the original targets that were set. The school is always aspirational and we aim to see the children achieve well so challenging targets are the norm.

Similarly, progress made against specific Data Driven Targets for **2017/18**, can be found in the uploaded document: **Target Analysis and Revisions September 2018**, so the original targets do not need to be reproduced again here. Suffice to say that 2018 performance from an able Y6 cohort was excellent across the board, for all subjects, in terms of progress, attainment and achievement.

**We are very proud of this special group of children who excelled academically and exemplified good behaviour and thank our Head Teacher, Miss Carrahar and the**

**team for their outstanding commitment and continued good example across the year.**

In other aspects of school life and there are many, the governors and leadership prioritise the children's health, well-being and pastoral care, the latter being the highest priority for the school alongside our all-encompassing catholic mission. We know that St Gregory's is a happy school both to learn, play and to work in, because we visit regularly and children and staff tell us that this is so. Finally, we look to ensure that all of our policies and practice reflecting the crucial Safeguarding agenda are up to date and relevant. Cllr. Walsh keeps us up to date from the Local Authority perspective and also supports on Health and Safety. Key Governors have attended Child Protection Training, Safer Recruitment Training and the HT has attended higher level, specialist safeguarding CPD across the year, to support his role as Designated Person.

### **What was the impact of the Governing Body on the school across 2017/18?**

The governors met frequently across the year for all key meetings such as Finance and the Full GB Meetings that take place each term. Attendance is almost always, excellent. In addition, there were further meetings, for Admissions in particular, and the Curriculum Working Party, who scrutinise data and target setting meet in the Autumn and often the Spring Terms. The RE team meets termly and consists of two key governors, Mrs Horwood and Father Weymes alongside the HT, DHT, RE Coordinator and School /Parish Coordinator. The Team play a central and highly significant role in looking to retain and build upon our 2017 Outstanding Religious Education Inspection Result. Thanks to Father Weymes and Mrs Fenwick we have been able to offer parishioners as well as the school community, frequent opportunities to attend Mass in the school hall. This has helped immeasurably given the closure of the much loved Holy Rosary Church in 2017. The teams combined input, knowledge and expertise across all areas of RE and collective worship as well as promoting the school as a beacon of catholicity within our local community is so important and we thank them for their service in this area.

Staff Recruitment featured more significantly this year than it has for some time and the Staffing Sub Committee (Mr M Puech, Mrs W Horwood, Mrs J Valente, Mr I Farrah, with input from Mrs K Wilson and the Head Teacher met several times across the year to appoint staff. Our new caretaker, Mr P Peterson has been a good appointment and recent CA recruitment has seen promising candidates join the wider school team. Most importantly was the recent appointment of Miss L Rowe as our new

Y1 teacher to start this September and we wish her every success. Mrs Pickering's resignation has led to a reorganisation of staff / class responsibilities across the school and we fully endorse all of the decisions made by leadership. It may well be that recruitment is again on the agenda for this coming year after a long settled period and governors will be committed to making the right appointments for our school.

As well as coming together for official meetings, governors attend in their Class or Subject Link Governor roles once per term with the Chair, Parent Governors and Governors with children in the school, very regular visitors across the year. Disseminated feedback from Governor Visits is an integral feature of every FGB meeting and helps to widen the knowledge and understanding of all governors, who are effective in learning on each other's behalf. These well-established links enable Governors to liaise with staff to monitor pupil progress and well-being as well as subject health and development. Governors were very interested in curriculum coverage and how the relatively new National Curriculum was integrated alongside our creative approach, something that is ongoing this year as it seems to be a new Ofsted priority. Given this is the case, the governors were very pleased to see so many aspects of our school praised, including the quality of the curriculum, during the March Local Authority monitoring visit, which to all intents and purposes was like an inspection, particularly for Mathematics. A number of governors attended prior to and some visited during the LA review also, just to show their support and interest. The report made for very good reading and we were very happy to see this posted on the school website for all to see.

The soon to be embedded system of Early Intervention and the rapidly progressing Mastery approach in Mathematics has remained a key additional focus area for Mrs Valente who has continued to work very closely with Mrs Wilson over the years on Assessment and Reporting methods and more recently, the quality of feedback pupils are receiving to enable them to take the next steps in learning. Mr G Moad has also demonstrated a keen interest in data analysis and brings a very secure knowledge of transition between Y6 and Y7 which proves invaluable. Mr Moad has also taken a lead in monitoring the Geography curriculum as this is an area of expertise. Mr Faircloth, who is the school lead for Geography welcomes his support and advice. Mrs Horwood reported on all aspects of SEN and EYFS progress, including the narrowing the gap agenda and the performance of Disadvantaged Pupils. The Head Teacher and the Chair take care to see that these valuable interactions are minuted accurately by the clerk to the governors, as this provides clear evidence of the governors' monitoring, support and questioning role in school.

Across 2017 and prior to this date, the then Chair, Mrs Horwood and then Vice Chair Mr Michael Puech and Mr Ian Farrar accompanied the HT to several meetings to

explore the thorny question of Academy status. This year, the Diocese seem to be increasingly nudging schools towards joining a local Multi Academy Trust, though they have so far not articulated any good reason for doing so. There is no longer a national drive by the government to eventually force schools to become academies - they have their hands full floundering with other priorities, nor is there any real inclination for good and outstanding schools such as ours, to leave the Local Authority to become part of a Trust that would not be able to prioritise St Gregory's in the way that we do, as there would always be a group of schools' needs to consider.

Across 2017 / 18 further meetings have taken place where our school has been represented by the Head Teacher who has reported in detail as to the current situation. At the minute, governors remain very comfortable with the school as it is but understand that it is circumspect that we remain abreast of developments both now and in the future.

Governors are especially visible during School Masses and celebrations. Mr P Scott regularly plays the guitar at school Masses and celebrations at St Gregory's. A selection of governors visited school to attend morning Liturgies in Y1 and Reception and parent governors attended Class Assemblies across the year and were able to report back to colleagues as to how they had enjoyed these experiences. Several of our governors have extremely strong parish links and help our school to strengthen our role and place within the now combined parishes of Holy Rosary and St Gregory's. We saw this last year during the RE inspection and parish life is regularly discussed by the RE team at their termly meetings.

Governors have also joined in with the Maths Puzzles and Problem solving sessions that got off to a good start this year, building on their visits to the peer reading and mathematics initiatives across 2016/17..

Several have assisted on trips and visits. Mrs Valente was a member of the team that supervised the Y5 trip to Thurston in March 2017, following on from her trips with Y6 to Belgium and Edinburgh in previous years. Mrs Valente provides exceptional support on residential and is extremely knowledgeable on all aspects of safeguarding. Parent governors are in the yard on almost a daily basis and make every effort to be available for parents and carers - they offer a vital line of communication.

Talking of communication, our parent governor, Ian Farrah, continues to work closely with the school Information Technology team to maintain and develop the school website, which is an excellent window into the school. His advice on blogging and media use has been very helpful. We are looking to grow the school website and as well as looking to meet our statutory obligations we would like to better promote the school

and the learning that is taking place. There is a lot of content and some great day to day additions from the children and teachers that deserve a wider audience - make sure you take a look.

Several governors have strong links to the School and Parents Association (SAPA) especially Mr Farrar who is a devoted fundraiser and Mrs Little and Mrs McGinley have already made contributions in this area.

Governors on the Finance Sub Committee oversee all aspects of the school's finances and supported the Headteacher's successful bid to the Diocese for a new roof last year. The team also scrutinise spending and provision for our Special Needs and Disadvantaged children, particularly the good use of Pupil Premium funding and its impact. Careful note is always taken on the information received from the SFVS contacts at the LA, especially the three year budget forecast - something that is a concern given the impact of the government's austerity programme and the changes to staff NI etc. which have led to pressures we have not had to face before. Now, more than ever, Finance Committee members are looking to ensure best value in all financial and contractual areas and fully support the HT in pursuing this aim.

As a result of all of this interaction, governors are very familiar with our school and make every effort to keep our finger on the pulse as it were. By visiting school regularly we can help monitor the SDP, school attendance, pupil behaviour and behaviour and safety, assisted by updates from the HT, Senior Management Team and our designated partner teachers. We can also support the staff in monitoring and evaluating the school self-evaluation processes that take place across the year including the Head Teacher's performance management (two governors are assigned to this task). The latter is very robust and involves setting rigorous performance targets.

The Governors have provided support and challenge to ensure high standards in all aspects of education have been maintained throughout the school. We work with the HT to analyse key data to shine a light on school performance, highlighting our successes and those areas where we would like to improve.

We are especially proud of our high standing in the local community and indeed across the Diocese and Region. The recent Local Authority Review was outstanding, building on the recent Diocesan Inspection with further accolades for Arts Mark, Healthy Schools and the International School Award, the latter being confirmed at a ceremony at the Tyneside Cinema in September 2017.

Our governors attend relevant training provided by the school, the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and South Tyneside Council, ensuring that they keep up to date with all current developments in school governance.

We reluctantly accepted the resignation of Mrs Claire Grabham, after several years of service as a Parent Governor. Mrs Grabham and her husband were responsible for sourcing the brand new carpet due to be laid in our Reception classroom shortly. This is a great saving for the school and we know that staff and children are delighted. Mrs Grabham has also been an excellent servant to SAPA and a great help to the school at all of our big fundraising events. We are grateful for her hard work, commitment and enthusiasm and that's just for looking after her four children, who are always immaculately turned out, as well as all things St Gregory's and the governors wish her well for the future.

Talking of retirement we must give a collective vote of thanks to Mrs Pickering our long standing and much loved Reception Class teacher - thank you so much for your efforts on behalf of the children over the past seventeen years. We will miss you and always remember you fondly.

We are delighted with the recent appointments of Mrs Emma Little and Mrs J McGinley as noted earlier in this report and look forward to working with them over the coming years. The Governing Body is now up to full strength again after a very brief period earlier in the year as we followed the recruitment timetable.

Finally, we are here to serve and see ourselves as part of a thriving and vibrant school community where our children are cared for and supported to achieve their best. "We do so in partnership with parents, guardians and all those who have the best interests of the child at heart".

The Governing Body: July 2018.