

# Annual Governance Statement for the Governing Body of St Mary's Blackhill RCVA Primary School Academic Year 2016/17



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## School Vision/Mission Statement

*A Christian ethos lies at the heart of St Mary's School community, with particular emphasis being placed upon the nurturing in each child of a knowledge and love of the Catholic faith. We foster relationships which reflect our values and attitudes of care, respect and trust between children, staff, governors, parents and parishioners. We strive to enable each child to grow; aspiring to excellence and beyond the limits of potential.*

The Governing Body of St Mary's RCVA Primary School has a strong focus on its three core strategic functions:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
2. Holding the Head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent

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## Governance arrangements

The full Governing Body meets once each term and we also have a number of committees to consider different aspects of the school in detail:

- **Finance and Buildings**, which focuses on ensuring that the school sets and uses its budget appropriately, making sure that staffing levels meet the needs of the children, that the school premises are kept in good condition and the school grounds are developed to enhance the learning experiences of the children. Meets each half-term.
- **School**, this committee focuses on promoting opportunities for children within a broad and balanced curriculum, which encourages healthy life styles, achievement both academic and sporting and ensures that children are well supported in RE and PSHE. The committee also ensures that SEN provision is in place and vulnerable children are well supported and catered for. The committee monitors provision across the school, sets and agrees aspirational targets and ensures that reporting arrangements are met by the school. Meetings held each term.
- **Pay Review (first)**: Reflects on Pay and Performance and makes decisions under personnel procedures. Annual meeting.

- **Head Teacher Performance:** to agree and set the Head Teacher challenging but achievable targets, monitor performance and effectiveness, and review accomplishment.
  - Annual meeting.
  - **Admissions:** to ensure that new admissions comply with relevant legislation, school policy and diocese/county guidance. Annual meeting.
  - **Personnel:** The committee is responsible for Teaching staff and permanent non-teaching staff appointments. It also ensures that the performance Management Policy is in place and considers the staffing structure of the school. Meets on an infrequent basis as/when required, at least on an annual basis.
  - **Appeals:** This committee meets if required to consider pupil discipline and staffing matters.
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### **Governing Body Membership**

The Governing Body of St Mary's was re-constituted in 2015 and now consists of:

7 Foundation governors, appointed by the diocese  
 2 staff governors (including the Head Teacher)  
 2 elected Parent Governors      1 Local Authority Governor

The Chair of Governors for 2016/17 was Mr John Chirnside, Vice-Chairs were Mrs Dorothy Quinn and Mrs Anna Herdman.

The academic year saw a period of stability for Governing Body membership. During the year Mrs Collette Smith left the governing body and this Foundation Governor position was filled by Mrs Michelle Harris during the Spring 2016 term.

Further information regarding current governors, who appointed them and our Instrument of Governance is available elsewhere on the school website.

All governors are committed to following the NGA Code of Conduct.

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### **Governor Training Record**

During the year governors attended the following training courses:

School Complaints	Appraisal & Capability
Governor Monitoring by Visiting Classrooms	Budget Planning & Monitoring
Safeguarding	SEND Governor Responsibilities
Schools Financial Value Standard – The governors role	Understanding Raise online

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Towards the end of the academic years governors continued to succession plan for the known changes planned for the governing body membership. To allow a smooth transition a full skills audit was undertaken by all governors, together with a review of all training courses, qualifications and experiences of the governors. This will assist the recruiting of new governors next year, to fill any skills gaps and weakness in experience together with forming the basis of the 2017/18 training schedule.

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### **Attendance record of governors**

Governors attend our full Governing Body meetings and we have never cancelled a meeting because it was not 'quorate' (the number of governors needed to ensure that legal decisions can be made).

A full list of governor's attendance at meetings is available on the school website.

In addition, the Chair of Governors met with the Head Teacher on a weekly basis to discuss relevant matters and governors were involved across the school on an informal basis as and when required.

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### **Key Issues faced and addressed by the Governing Body**

During 2016/17 Mr Miller completed his first full academic year in charge of St Marys and the governing body have been involved in ensuring the process of moving to a new management team went as smoothly as possible.

There has been some disruption to the Senior Leadership Team which needed to be addressed. During the year both our Deputy Head Mrs Fleming and our Early Years Leader Mrs Davison have left on maternity leave, which has proved a challenge to deal with. The Deputy Heads roll had changed this year and both were teaching, so it was difficult to continue operating our original staffing structure and some changes and flexibility was required. Governors have worked closely with Mr Miller to ensure our pupils and parents suffered the minimum disruption possible but it was a difficult balancing act to maintain the same high standards with limited resources.

Other staffing issues have also been prominent this year, most noticeably the ongoing Teaching Assistant Terms & Conditions dispute. It is to the enormous credit of our staff that they continue to fulfil their roles and responsibilities to such a high standard, the uncertainty has been unsettling for them but their professionalism has shone through. Governors have continued to offer staff help and support if required.

The Chair of Governors and Head Teacher have attended meetings with the Diocese over proposals for the schools within Hexham & Newcastle Diocese to convert into Academies. The initial meeting led to a consultation that was open to all governors and staff, all contributed to a full and honest response saying we were not in agreement with the ideas. We attended a subsequent meeting that offered an alternative model, which has been debated by governors but has little support.

The governors have been working with the Head Teacher to monitor performance targets and implement strategies to resolve problem areas. This led to the school moving categories with the agreement of the local authority which allowed access to additional training and resources for staff. This approach by the head teacher has been communicated by the Head Teacher at all stages throughout the year and the action taken has had a positive end result, with extremely good results from the end of year assessments. Across KS1 and KS2 achievement was generally very good but some areas have been identified as requiring further development.

Governors have been aware of the financial/funding problems within the Education system and as a direct result have increased the frequency of our Finance meetings to each half-term. This allows governors to work with the Head Teacher and School Business Manager to identify any problems, take remedial or alternative action and ensure the funding we receive is used both efficiently and effectively. Through a careful approach to financial management St Marys managed to keep expenditure under budget for 2016/17, with the small surplus carried forward to meet a budget gap in the following year. Setting the budget for 2017/18 was challenging but governors, staff and the schools budget officer worked together to achieve the best possible outcome.

In addition to the major items detailed above, the normal day to day business of the school continued with as little disruption as possible.

The Governing Body has spent time this year reflecting on the school's provision for eligible children identified under 'Pupil Premium' from both an effectiveness and value for money perspective. There has been a strong emphasis on raising educational aspirations, access and achievement and Governors have closely monitored the impact of this on pupil performance via the School Improvement Plan.

Governors continue to focus on promoting a range of sports activities and competitive sports and to make good use of the 'Sports Premium' funding. Unfortunately we had to postpone plans to build a Multi-Use Games Area on our school field due to lack of suitable finance but it's hoped this project will be revisited next year.

Governors continue to monitor safeguarding and our nominated governor for Safeguarding has been highly active in school to ensure policies and procedures are up to date, relevant and adhered to. All adults working with our pupils have been subject to suitable DBS checked.

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### **Assessment of Impact**

The overall impact of the governors this year has been positive, we have continued to learn alongside the Senior Leadership team and plan the development of school life.

Governors have spent the year supporting the new Senior Leadership Structure and allowing the new Head Teacher to review school operations, implement new techniques & technologies and utilise the available staff to the best of their talents.

Performance has been a key theme to the year, with new tracking systems being introduced to enhance the data available to staff. This has led to changes in the way data has been used, parent's evenings and reporting has improved and the school is performing well.

The level of challenge and support to the Head Teacher and senior leaders has increased, with governors in a better position to make a positive impact. This is due to improving working relationships and an increased flow of information and knowledge between both sides.

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### **Future plans for the Governing Body**

The 2017/18 academic year will bring new challenges to the governing body and senior management of St Mary's.

From a staffing perspective two of our senior teaching staff have left, leaving vacancies in the school that, partly due to budget constraints, will be difficult to fill but this will allow opportunities for others to develop. Governors are confident in the abilities of the staff joining us for next year and expect them to complement the existing staff. Performance management will be crucial and will be subject to additional scrutiny and support going forward. To support this St Mary's governors will continue to develop best practice and improved working relationships with staff at all levels across the school.

The governing body membership will change, with both the Chair and one Vice-chair leaving and others terms of office expiring in late 2017. The recruitment and selection of governors, both parents and Foundation, has been discussed and the skills and experiences we require identified. The recruitment process will begin in Sept 2017 to allow the new governors to be given a full induction in Autumn 2017 term.

Governors are committed to working with and supporting the new chair in the Autumn term and developing new ideas to take St Marys forward. A new Chair of Governors will add fresh impetus to the schools governance, with support from the governing body. To facilitate that governors are considering refreshing the committee structure to allow their talents, experience and knowledge to be matched to be better aligned to the needs of the school. This will be developed in conjunction with School Governor Support Services to confirm we meet our legal obligations and we are operating in the most efficient manner.

The governors have met the schools newly appointed Education Development Partner and School Governor Support Officer; we are looking to building a strong working relationship with both of them and continue to develop links with the Local Authority.

To enhance the facilities available to our children St Mary's are currently planning to build an outdoor classroom facility on the school field which should be available during Autumn term 2017. Governors are committed to developing the schools infrastructure further and plan to continue looking at the MUGA unit proposal and options around extending the use of the school hall & fields outside of school hours.

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### **Contact Details**

The Governing Body welcomes suggestions, feedback and ideas from parents, carers or anyone within the parish and our local community. If you wish raise any issue please contact the governors c/o the school office.