

Annual Governance Statement for the Governing Body of St Mary's Blackhill RCVA Primary School Academic Year 2015/16



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

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.
- **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.
- **Pay Review (first)**: Reflects on Pay and Performance and makes decisions under personnel procedures.
- **Head Teacher Performance**: to agree and set the Head Teacher challenging but achievable targets, monitor performance and effectiveness, and review accomplishment.

- **Admissions:** to ensure that new admissions comply with relevant legislation, school policy and diocese/county guidance.
 - **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.
 - **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 2015/16 was Mr John Chirnside, Vice-Chairs were Dorothy Quinn and Anna Herdman.

The academic year saw some transitional changes in the Governing Body membership following the retirement of Mrs Lacey. The Head Teacher's position on the governing body was taken initially by our Acting Head Teachers Mrs Veitch and Mrs Fleming for the autumn 2015 term before Mr Miller took up post from January 2016 onwards.

In addition Mrs Amanda Bates left the governing body after many years of service and a new Parent Governor Mr Steve Watson was elected during the Spring 2016 term. During the year, two Foundation Governors, Mrs Dorothy Quinn and Mr Brian Roberts, both agreed to extend their terms of office.

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.

Governor Training Record

During the year governors attended the following training courses:

- The school hosted a governors training session on the topic "Governor Monitoring by Visiting Classrooms"
 - Emergency First Aid
 - New Governors Induction Programme
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- Awareness of Child Abuse & Neglect
 - Assessment of Risk & Pupils with Physical / Medical Needs Training
 - First Aid at Work
 - Safeguarding Adults – Prevent Training
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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.

Key Issues faced and addressed by the Governing Body

The 2015/16 academic year has been transitional for St Mary's, as we moved from losing an experienced Head Teacher to appointing a new leader for the school. The changes to the school Senior Leadership Team have been at the forefront of the Governing Body's activities this year, as we have been involved in ensuring the transition went as smoothly as possible.

The autumn 2015 term saw the school under the leadership of Mrs Fleming and Mrs Veitch as Acting Head Teachers, with Miss Hughes as Acting Deputy Head and it is to their great credit that this period was such a success. The new leadership team professionally and decisively took steps to not only maintain the high standards already embedded in school but looked at every opportunity to add their own ideas to develop policies, procedures and practices. The governing body was available to both support and act as a critical friend during this term, being involved in all major decisions.

In January 2016 Mr Miller took up his post as our permanent new Head Teacher. Prior to starting Mr Miller had attended a governing body meeting in November 2015 as an observer, which was an ideal chance to get to know governors and our set-up. In addition Mr Miller also met with the Chair of Governors both informally as part of his induction package and formally when taking part in the annual 2016/17 School Budget set.

From January 2016 onwards the new School Senior Leadership team began to take shape, with Mr Miller becoming more familiar with both the school itself and the governing committees. Governors have tried to be as supportive as possible by building a good working relationship with Mr Miller, being involved in his induction and closely working with him to identify solutions to any problems that arose.

The school faced a major issue when setting a budget for the 2016/17 financial year. A number of issues outside of the schools control meant a significant saving was needed to be able to set a balanced budget, which took a considerable amount of work to resolve. From first identifying the

problem in November 2015 to agreeing a final budget in April 2016 governors worked closely with the school leadership team and the Council's HR and Finance representatives to find a solution that was not only financially acceptable but would have a minimum impact on our pupils. Unfortunately this did mean changes to staffing levels, contracts and changing some of the services we provided; all difficult decisions taken with a great deal of discussion and debate. This was a period of great uncertainty for staff and lessons have been learnt if this situation arises again.

Governors have been fully informed of the ongoing issue regarding the employment terms and conditions of the schools Teaching Assistants and the implications it will have on both the individuals personally and on the school overall. In addition governors have been aware of the management of a long-term sickness incident and the successful return to work of the employee.

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 set and agree school targets and aspirations and closely monitor progress towards targets. They have a particular focus on Y1 Phonics screening, KS1 and KS2 SATs tests so that they can be sure that the school performance is on track to fulfil its ambitious targets for all pupils.

Governors are also instrumental in ensuring that intervention strategies are in place to support and promote pupils' performance.

Governors continue to focus on promoting a range of sports activities and competitive sports and to make good use of the 'Sports Premium' funding.

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.

Governors oversee that all adults working with children in our school have been DBS checked.

Assessment of Impact

The overall impact of the governors this year has been positive and difficult decisions have been taken.

It has been a slightly unusual year for St Mary's as the schools new leadership team became embedded and the implications of the budget reduction start to become a reality. The governors have taken a slightly different role this year compared to previous years, becoming more involved in the detail of the school's management and structure due to the circumstances described above. This has given governors a different perspective and a greater understanding of the different challenges St Mary's will be facing in the future.

Governors have provided the school with a considerable amount of support this year, setting challenging targets and ensuring data has been rigorously monitored. The introduction of the new primary curriculum and Assessment without Levels have seen changes but staff have adapted well and again the school produced an excellent set of results from the SATS tests in July 2016.

Future plans for the Governing Body

Governors are looking forward to the 2016/17 academic year and working with staff to provide the best possible environment for our pupils to continue their development. We will build on our relationship with the Senior Leaders to ensure challenging but achievable targets are set, offer the best support possible and continue to play an active part in the school's progress. During the year, the governing body will be particularly focussing on ensuring that the school is prepared for potential Ofsted inspection, which is due any time from January 2017.

We plan to increase the frequency of Finance committee meetings, to help alert us to any potential problems and provide greater reassurance that all resources are being fully utilised. Personnel will also be a high priority, as changes to the staffing structure introduced from September 2016 together with the Teaching Assistants ongoing dispute meaning more support may be required across the school.

The Governors' plan to increase the scope and frequency of Special Interest visits, to build a good working relationship with staff and gain a greater knowledge of the subjects and procedures within school.

Governors will be involved in any diocese-led developments regarding conversion to an academy.

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 Mr John Chirside, Chair of Governors c/o the school office.