

Governor Report - July 2017

Hello and welcome to the first Stratford St Mary Primary School Governor Report. This is an opportunity to bring you up to date with the latest work of the governing body and with matters we have discussed and considered.

It has been another busy year which seems to have flown by. There have been some fantastic achievements, a very successful Ofsted visit, another super sports day, which was really well supported by families and friends, some brilliant school trips and fantastic SATs results! Well done everyone and thank you to pupils, teachers and parents for all your hard work.

Governing Body

This year saw some changes to the governing body. Rev Rosalind Paul and Jolyon Martin both stood down after many years and we would like to extend our sincere thanks to them for their hard work and contributions to governance.

We are fortunate to have welcomed four new governors this year. Hilary Cairns, Karen Bland, Richard Halsall and Ben Surtees have all joined the governing body and bring with them a wealth of experience in various fields including teaching, management, estates and IT, as well as widening our links with the community. We look forward to continue working with them and hope they enjoy their terms of office.

For more information about the school governors please see the school website.

Ofsted

We were thrilled that the school maintained its Ofsted 'Good' rating following inspection in January. Some highlights from the report included:

"The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. When you took up post as headteacher in September 2015, you identified several improvements that were required to ensure that the school remained good when next inspected. Since this time, you and your staff have worked tirelessly to improve many aspects of the school".

"Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Standards at the end of the Reception year exceed the expected levels. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and when they leave at the end of Year 6 is well above average."

Well done and thank you to Mrs Bilner and all of the staff who worked so hard to achieve this fantastic result. We have already started to address the 'next steps' identified in the report and will continue to monitor these and other aspects of learning as well as continuing to improve. A link to the full Ofsted report can be found on the school website.

Learning and Achievement

The Learning and Achievement Committee meet termly and monitor the collective performance of pupils and are involved in creating and monitoring the progress of the school's development plan.

Raising attainment is a key focus and over the last year the governors have looked at how we can budget to achieve the best results. In the last year additional resources have been put into year groups 2 and 6 to provide extra intervention and support for pupils. We are really pleased with the progress made and credit goes to pupils and staff who have worked so hard to achieve fantastic results. Based on the success of this arrangement we have budgeted to continue with this additional support next year.

Communication and the Community

We are always pleased to hear from you about any aspects of the school you feel needs bringing to our attention. The governors can be contacted through the website, the school office or can often be seen around school including at drop-off and pick-up if you would like to have an informal chat or arrange a more formal meeting.

Good communication between the school, parents and the wider community is something that we feel strongly about. So much so that last year we set up a committee of governors to look specifically at these issues. Over the past two years you will have noticed a number of improvements. We have to balance carefully the time and resources of our small school but the feedback we have received has been very encouraging and we will continue work to maximise the engagement of parents and the local community.

Thank you to all those parents and carers who completed the ParentView online questionnaire. Obtaining your feedback on our school is hugely important and allows us the opportunity to consider your views and take action accordingly.

In order to continue to improve communication, the school website will be updated over the summer holidays. Thank you to all the parents who have recently completed the survey and

provided feedback. We will be doing our best to incorporate as many as possible of the ideas and hope that you will like the new look website.

We are also currently investigating the possibility of parents being able to make online payments for school dinners, clubs and trips etc. We will keep you updated on progress with this.

Finances

Many of you will be aware that in March this year the Department for Education outlined the new national funding formula for schools which aims to remove the school funding 'postcode lottery'. As a whole, Suffolk has historically been one of the most poorly funded authorities in terms of education. Although some schools in Suffolk stand to gain from the new formula, as a 'small' rural school, in an area of relatively low deprivation, we can anticipate that we are unlikely to benefit from these changes. It was forecast by the National Audit Office in December (in its report "Financial Sustainability of Schools"), that schools will have some tough financial decisions to make in the years ahead. It confirmed that mainstream schools will have faced an 8% real-term reduction in funding per pupil between 2014/15 and 2019/20.

Whilst as a school we are in a relatively secure position and are confident we have a financial plan to address the funding challenges we may face over the next few years, we do recognise that there may be further budget cuts ahead. The Governing body will continue to monitor the financial situation closely and as a school we will always prioritise educational outcomes when considering how best to spend our modest budget.

As a Governing body we value the small size and community feel of the school and know that parents do too. However, as a small school we already have to be very careful about our financial decisions because we do not benefit from the same economies of scale as some larger schools in Suffolk. The majority of our school budget (81%) is spent on paying for teachers, teaching support staff and other activities directly related to the classroom. As the majority of our income is based upon pupil numbers, there is a direct link between the number of pupils on role and the money that our school receives. It is therefore crucial that we optimise pupil numbers so that we are able to maintain the current staffing levels and ensure the financial sustainability of our school into the future.

There is no plan to become a bigger school or lose our small school identity, but we do need, as far as possible, to fill the spaces we have available. Word of mouth and recommendation are some of the best forms of advertising so please continue to like and share the school Facebook and website posts. If you are happy with what the school is doing then please tell your friends or post a review, and of course if you aren't happy then please tell us.

Academisation

There is a drive nationally for all schools to become academies by 2022. The government is no longer going to force schools to convert but as more schools make the change it will ultimately become the case that local authority provision is no longer viable. The majority of secondary schools and many primary schools in Suffolk have already become academies so it seems inevitable that we too will have to become an academy at some point. With this in mind we are keeping the school's options open by investigating the possibilities open to us.

In June this year a multi-academy trust called South Suffolk Learning Trust (SSLT) was formed. Currently it includes East Bergholt, Hadleigh and Claydon High Schools and they have invited local (Good) primary schools to join them. We will talk further with SSLT and other local primary schools to see if this is something that would be of benefit to our school. Realistically it will be the end of 2017 or early next year before we have a clearer idea of the benefits or implications of joining SSLT and be in a position to make an informed decision as to whether it is right for us. We will of course keep parents informed.

PTA

The PTA has been very busy again this year with several very successful and well attended events. We really appreciate all of their hard work and your support of the events. School social events are so important to our school community and the money raised is vital to support funding of school trips and resources. Keep up the hard work! The PTA is always keen to attract new members so please get in touch if you would like to get involved.

Finally, we would like to wish you all a happy and relaxing summer holiday and look forward to seeing you next school year!