

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: Update from the Governors

Now that Ruth and I have been in post as Chair and Deputy Chair of the governors at St Mary and All Saints for a little over a term, we thought it was important to provide you with an update on some of the work that has been undertaken in recent months. As governors we are keen to ensure that there is transparency and understanding of the work undertaken by the Governing Body. Therefore, going forwards we plan to provide parents and carers with a termly letter from the governors.

Following our appointments, we identified three key areas of focus for the Governing Body for the Spring and Summer Terms. We have detailed these below along with an update on progress that has been made to date.

1. Structure of the Governing Body

To ensure that the Governing Body can be as effective as possible and do the best for the children and the school, it is important we have dedicated, sharp and motivated individuals with the right skills serving as governors. A key priority has therefore been to ensure that the Governing Body is operating at full strength by the end of the Summer Term.

Within the 2022/23 academic year, several governors have stepped down from the role either because their term of appointment came to end or because they were no longer able to dedicate the time and focus that being a governor requires. As a result, we have been on a drive to recruit additional governors who will complement the School's Governing Body. We are pleased to announce that we have had two new governors join in the last few weeks and are expecting two more to be confirmed by the end of term. Once all appointments have been officially confirmed (with the necessary checks and authorisations complete), we will write again with details of all the governors and a short introduction from each one. We will also provide details of the role of the Governing Body as we know that not all individuals will be familiar with the important role that the governors of the school undertake.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank all past and present governors of SMAS for the dedication and commitment that they have provided or continue to provide.

2. Skills of the Governing Body

As well as being committed, asking lots of questions and being child focused, an effective Governing Body needs a range of skills and to undertake relevant training. In early 2023, all governors undertook a Skills Audit to identify their individual strengths and any areas where they might require additional training. The Skills Audit has helped with the recruitment of governors noted above, as it has ensured that new governors joining the Governing Body fully complement and enhance our existing team. All governors committed to addressing any training needs identified within the Skills Audit and our Development Governor is tracking Governor training to ensure we all undertake the appropriate training.

3. Getting to know the school and community better

As the new Chair it has been important for me to understand the school, meet the children and staff, and spend time getting to know the SMAS community better. This will help me understand the strengths of St Mary and All Saints, and areas of focus. Since my appointment I have had the chance speak to parents in the playground on Monday mornings as well as meet members of the Senior Leadership Team, class teachers, and LSAs, to understand the school better. I have also

been meeting with Mrs Barnett very regularly. I am quite sure she will be glad when the 'getting to know the school' phase comes to an end!

The whole Governing Body is keen to spend time in school and at school events, to better understand and track the experiences of children and staff, as well as to check key procedures are being followed. Governors have attended the Easter service, SEND coffee morning, St Michael's music concert, the Coronation concert, Science Day and have been in school to check Safeguarding procedures, Pupil premium spending, Health & Safety and much more. We have also been focused on understanding of the school's work towards its Ofsted and School Development priorities. Please see below some of the work we have done to this end.

Phonics A key priority coming out of Ofsted, and a focus of the school's Development Plan, was the introduction of a new Phonics scheme. At the start of this summer term all governors spent a fantastic morning in school, following different year groups across SMAS observing the teaching of Phonics and English, across all year groups. Our observation morning enabled governors to understand first-hand how the school teaches children to read, and, how well the introduction of the new phonics programme, Unlocking Letters and Sounds, has gone.

Curriculum Governors also had the opportunity to evaluate another key school and Ofsted priority, the school's Curriculum. This was exciting for us, as we have been seeing how SMAS is developing and rewriting parts of the taught curriculum in our Curriculum Committee meetings, so it was very interesting to see how these plans translate 'on the ground' and in the classroom, and how the children experience them. We saw children learning both core subjects, such as Maths, and foundation subjects. It allowed governors to observe and ask questions about whether knowledge and skills are being taught in a coherently, well sequenced way so that knowledge and skills are built up throughout a pupil's time at the school.

Our morning was thoroughly enjoyable, and we saw lots of outstanding teaching and learning in action. We were particularly impressed by the relationships we saw within the classrooms, as well as in assembly, corridors, and in the playground. There was a great deal of kindness, support, and respect between students, as well as between teachers and students, which made it a very special visit for us. We were hugely impressed with the learning that was going on across classrooms and the standard of work. Governors would like to thank all staff for warmly welcoming them into their classrooms. Each Governor wrote up detailed feedback on their visit, which was collated by the Governing Body, and our feedback has been shared and discussed with individual teachers and within the Leadership Team.

Parent Survey This May we jointly put out a parent survey, with the school, to better understand you and your child's experience of the school, as well as to evaluate progress since Ofsted, and help to determine priorities for next year. We want to thank all of you who completed these anonymous questionnaires. We had an excellent return rate, with around three quarters of families responding, and the results will be invaluable in helping us to shape next year's strategic priorities. We are dedicating a significant amount of time to carefully looking at what you have told us, and, along with the Senior Leadership Team, we are reading every single comment that came back to us and learning from what you have said.

We hope you have found our update helpful, and we look forwards to being in contact again to introduce our newly completed Governing Body and full list of governors! I will continue to be in the playground on Monday mornings, should you wish to come and say 'hello' or have a chat.

With very best wishes for a happy, and sunny, remainder of the summer term,

Caroline Davis-King

Ruth Guiler

Chair of Governors

Deputy Chair of Governors