

St Anthony's: Governors Review 2020 – 2021

This school year has again been overshadowed by the impact of COVID-19, lockdowns, partial lockdowns and providing the working arrangements for the safe re-opening of school. St. Anthony's remained open throughout for vulnerable children and the children of key workers, where alternative childcare arrangements were not in place. This totalled 140+ children. This involved a blend of remote learning, regular work sheets via our website and face-to-face learning. The amount of flexibility, planning, preparation and dedication to make this possible was immense and the governors would like to express our great thanks to all the staff who have made this work for the children and to the parents who have co-operated with the school during these challenging times. During the time when the school was fully re-opened attendance was very high and staff have endeavoured to assess the children and to identify gaps and best approaches to helping all the children to 'get back on track' on their individual educational journeys. The annual update of the School Development Plan is well advanced and will reflect the additional steps and priorities needed to ensure any remaining gaps in the children's development are progressively filled. Our overriding priority is the safety, education and wellbeing of the children and staff and provide reassurance and support to children and parents after this unprecedented break in the children's schooling.

As a result of the lockdowns some of the governors meetings were held online, using MS Teams. During the overall school year the full Governing Body met four times, two of these were online meetings; the Resources Committee (which deals with Finance, Premises and Personnel matters) met three times, one of these was online; the School Development Committee (which deals with the School Development Plan and curriculum matters) met three times; the Admissions committee held a policy review by email consultation and then met on two occasions to consider Nursery and Reception admissions.

The major news this year was the retirement of Pauline as headteacher in December. Pauline has been headteacher at St Anthony's for 20 years and has led the school into becoming the outstanding place that it is today. The governors would like to express a very special thank you to Pauline for her great service to the school and to Catholic education.

Assisted by advisers from County and Diocese governors advertised and followed the recruitment process for a new headteacher. Of necessity the whole process was online and the outcome was the unanimous decision to appoint Elaine as Headteacher. As a result of a review of staffing structure, Martin and Melanie have been appointed Assistant Heads. Governors are delighted at the way in which the senior management team, led by Elaine are working together, bringing St Anthony's into the next chapter of the school's history.

Governors and staff worked together on school development. The school development committee received a number of briefings from subject co-ordinators during the year. This included an analysis of the attendance and engagement of children across all groups and categories during lockdown and partial re-opening of the school. This allowed staff to identify children where follow-up action was required. This is a very important aspect of our strategic

and critical friend roles as governors. The committee has also worked on updating and reviewing policies in line with latest legislation and guidance on good practice. Governors have also been involved with, and briefed on, current judgements in our SEF and RE SEF.

Governor visits to school have, of necessity, been severely limited but we plan to re-start these on a more normal footing after the start of the new school year. Our SEN and RE Governors maintain close liaison with our INCO (Inclusion Co-ordinator) and RE co-ordinator. Prior to lockdown, Fr. Joseph, our school chaplain, was a regular visitor and celebrated Masses with the children, with the liturgy tailored to suit the occasion and the age range of the children. In July Fr Joseph was able to celebrate the Year 6 Leavers' Mass outdoors at school. Parents were also welcomed and attended a number of these celebrations, including class Masses. During lockdown, children in school were able to participate in streamed Masses and celebrations, including a special Mass led by Fr Chris Vipars.

The school roof has been replaced and the snagging works are virtually complete. We are now in the process of arranging the installation of electronic gates for the Willow Walk entrance. We are only able to fund improvements and our contribution to major premises related works such as these due to careful management of the school finances and the continuing generous support from parents and staff in many ways, including PFA and other fund-raising events. A number of other premises related improvements have been carried out as part of our normal asset management process.

Maintaining the fabric of our school buildings is one of our key responsibilities.

Our annual compliance return against the Schools Financial Value Standard was completed and returned to County. This is part of the process of demonstrating responsible use of all funding received by the school.

Performance management continues to work well and positively for all staff at St. Anthony's.

Our 2019 SATs results (the next results will not be until 2022) and value added clearly demonstrate the value we add to each and every child, and their progression, as they move through the school. The results are a credit to the children, staff and parents. The results also show that regardless of the various changes to curriculum and methods of assessment of the children's progress, we continue to successfully prioritise the children's education and development. By the end of KS2 our children are significantly above national and county in terms of progress and attainment. We received a letter in January 2020 from Nick Gibbs, Minister of State for School Standards, congratulating Pauline and the school on the very high level of progress children made between KS1 and KS2 in reading, writing and mathematics. The results place St Anthony's amongst the top 3% of primary schools in the country. In the absence of statutory testing the focus is on formative assessment of the children to gauge their progress and inform our teaching plans.

Governors have also benefitted from various training courses including new governor induction, Ofsted, safeguarding, schools financial value standard, effective governance and briefings for chairs and governors. In recent months all training courses and briefings have been delivered online.

Governors from St. Anthony's joined online the Annual Hertfordshire Governors' Conferences and Diocesan Conferences in March.

Governors have also joined discussions and meetings on school organisational structures and academies. These will continue during the next school year.

Our admissions policies are reviewed and revised annually. Any changes are subject to consultation with the Diocese, County and, in the event of any significant change, with the local community.

The Chair of Governors and Headteacher continue to foster and improve the profile of the school as part of the parishes we serve. Children from the school take an active part in a number of parish events and services. The children prepare church displays from time to time and spend retreat days at Holy Rood and St Bede's.

Links with St. Joan of Arc, St Michael's and other schools in the Deanery, specifically St. Josephs, and local area continue to work well.

We provide a considerable amount of support to help with their children's transition to school, their learning and behaviour. When not in lockdown we also provided a breakfast and after school club.