

Annual Statement from the Governing Body of St Gregory's RC Primary School

2018/19

We, the Governing Body of St Gregory's RC Primary School, work alongside the Head Teacher and Staff at all levels to ensure that our school serves our Catholic and wider community well. We seek to promote and maintain high standards of educational achievement for all of our children regardless of the challenges they may face within a caring and supportive setting, where all know that they are valued and cherished.

Our Governors:

The Governing Body has evolved across the year and our current Foundation Governors are:

- Mr M Puech (Chair);
- Mrs W Horwood;
- Rev Father M Weymes;
- Mrs E. Little;
- Mr G T Moad;
- Mr P Scott;
- Mrs J Valente.

Two Parent Governors:

- Mrs J. McGinley;
- Mr I Farrar (Vice Chair).

One LA Representative:

Cllr. M Walsh

One Staff Governor: Ms K Wilson.

And the Head Teacher, Mr K J Smithson.

We were delighted that our Vice Chair Mr I Farrar was re-elected unopposed as a Parent Governor on March 20th 2019. This enabled the current team to work together continuously across the year and build further upon the high levels of expertise and experience across the present board. Retaining Mrs W Horwood as a Foundation Governor was also a bonus, as no one has a better understanding of our school and our local community than her. We are all looking forward to working hard for St Gregory's across the coming year and in the future. Parents and Carers can be assured that our focus will always be upon our school and our children.

Mr M Puech has proved to be a very determined and active Chair, particularly so in supporting new colleagues and has been instrumental in sourcing training and representing the school's interests in dialogue with the Diocese and Local Authority. This was particularly to the fore during the recruitment programme and subsequent appointment of our new Deputy Head Teacher in February 2019. Mrs J Valente was also very instrumental across the recruitment process, attending Safer Recruitment Training and updating her accreditation. Also, Mr G Moad, who accompanied the HT to observe candidates teaching and presented reports to the FGB and wider recruitment panel. Governors were grateful for their input, guidance and support across the process.

The Core Functions of the Governing Body are encapsulated as follows:

- Upholding and strengthening our Catholic Mission;
- Maintaining clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the Head Teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils and the performance of staff, plus;
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure that its budget is used wisely to benefit our children by providing the resources and experiences they need to succeed;
- We also seek to liaise effectively with parents and carers and work with everyone to ensure that our successful and happy school maintains its current "outstanding" status.

Key areas of focus 2018/19 have included:

We have worked in close partnership with the Head Teacher and the Senior Management Team in developing and monitoring the School Development Plan, a comprehensive living document that is regularly updated across the year as targets are progressed and sometimes amended to reflect priorities or strategic changes.

In our school we plan our SDP around the financial year as so much is budget driven. This means that the plan itself can bridge two academic years and therefore needs to be a flexible document.

The plan is organised into three sections:

- Firstly, the key pupil progress / teaching and learning priorities for the year;
- Secondly, the management elements of the school: Deployment of staff, Budget, Governance and Environment;
- Thirdly, a section covering individual subject coordinator targets;
- All within the context of our Catholic Mission and Pastoral Vision

Each section comprises of the target focus, resourcing and funding and a detailed section outlining the background behind why this area is to be a focus for the year. Clear goals are set out; tasks allocated and timetabled, alongside specific success criteria. We presented an overview of the plan on the school website in June, followed by a progress report in the Autumn Term 2018, outlining school performance in national tests and including any amendments to targets and foci, as a result.

As noted, the SDP is updated and annotated across the year with the HT taking the initiative in the first two sections, assisted by the SMT and Senior Governors, with individual coordinators taking full responsibility for progressing their own subject priorities as the year unfolds. The core subjects, English, Mathematics and Religious Education are always key foci with additional subjects taking precedence over time.

Governors were determined to see the school build upon the fantastic progress made across 2017/18, in supporting pupils' progress and attainment in Mathematics. You may recall that End KS2 performance across all aspects of mathematics improved dramatically last year and the new whole school approach pioneered by Mrs K Wilson was highlighted as a significant strength, with standards noted as high in every class during the LA Whole School Review in March 2018. We are pleased to report that the innovative and inclusive approach that creatively enables both directed and mixed ability approaches to flourish, is now embedded. Our children enjoy Mathematics and look forward to the challenges the subject brings as almost every child feels able to make meaningful contributions and progress on a daily basis. Support is always provided for children who are especially challenged but the vast majority of children are engaged and motivated to learn mathematics and this is clearly reflected in the quality of work in books and by ongoing assessment. The "bottom table" stigma has been overturned and pupils of all abilities work together on challenging tasks and problem solving in this vital subject area and across the wider curriculum. End KS1 and especially End KS2 performance in mathematics improved again in 2019, with Maths the best performing subject for our Y6 pupils in with 56% achieving the higher standard, a superb achievement.

The Early Intervention approach we highlighted last year has been fully embraced by an increasingly well trained team of support staff who have been proactive in accessing CPD opportunities both during and after the school day. Better trained and more experienced support staff working in true partnership with class teachers has added a further dimension to the Early Intervention initiative. Guidance and encouragement can be offered to all pupils in a mixed ability exercise whilst maintaining our ambition to propel lower ability children to keep up, rather than catch up, with their peers.

In 2019 Y6 tests, 100% of the Low Attaining Pupils identified at End KS1 (Y2) four years ago, achieved the Expected KS2 standard in Reading / Writing and Mathematics combined, and also in Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Grammar, Punctuation / Spelling, individually.

Able pupils are actively demonstrating leadership skills and potential in paired and group work, keen to stretch themselves against more demanding targets, hence the 56% of Y6 children who achieved Greater Depth in mathematics. Some children scored 120/120 in the Y6 Maths test, with others only dropping one mark across all three papers - clear evidence of the expertise and aspiration that has been nurtured by expert teaching.

Furthermore, 100% of High Attaining Pupils at End KS1 (Y2), four years ago achieved the Expected KS2 Standard, in Reading / Writing and Mathematics combined and also in Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Grammar, Punctuation / Spelling, individually. Even better, 54% of our brightest children achieved the higher level in the full set of RWM with 54% achieving highly in Reading, 85% working at the higher level in Writing, and in Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling and a fantastic 92% achieving the higher score in Mathematics.

Added to this can be the progress made by our disadvantaged pupils, a long standing target area for the school and one that sees data analysis added to the school website and displayed every term in order that progress can be scrutinised. The latest table is on display now (Summer 2019) and shows that these children are making very good progress, especially the Non SEN Disadvantaged Pupils. SEN /Disadvantaged Pupils are also making steady progress each term but naturally, given the challenges the children face, these can be small steps but they are to be celebrated.

Governors are well aware of Ofsted's current focus on how schools organise curriculum planning and delivery, after the recent publication of the framework for inspection so we are pleased that leadership and staff have been reviewing our approach across the year. Staff were tasked with maintaining our long established tradition of an exciting and innovative curriculum that offers so much more than a focus on the Core subjects

of English Maths and RE. Securing the Arts Mark Silver Award, the retention of our International School Award and retaining our Lego League Award for the third consecutive year, are just three examples of wider curriculum initiatives we celebrate.

Further work has started across 2019 with leadership focusing on making clear what impact all of the creativity weeks with which we start every half term alongside additional pupil choice, creativity card and class swop days, actually have in terms of securing progress and attainment as well as fun and enjoyment. Every previous inspection, whether Full Ofsted, Section 48 (the Diocese) and including Local Authority Reviews, our curriculum has always been adjudged as "outstanding". This is something we are very proud of and naturally want to retain. At the minute, a template for History, showing what is to be covered and how teaching and learning is planned and delivered in every year group, is almost complete and is on the staff shared area. This will be the exemplar template for all other subject areas and we anticipate that they will all be completed and displayed on the website before 2020. Individual Coordinators are busy now with this task and Link Governors will be keen to liaise next term to discuss progress in order that this can be shared with the FGB at the Autumn Term meeting. This is a continuing focus therefore, but a good start has been made.

After our successful work in Mathematics, we are just about to begin a new whole school focus on Reading. This will be ongoing from September but progress has already been made in making sure that our SEN and Disadvantaged Pupils have opportunities to take many more books home from school, both fiction and non-fiction. This was successfully introduced across the year and though we may lose a few books in the process, this is far outweighed by the opportunities this creates for reading and enjoying books at home, especially in those households that are not book rich. The children are enjoying having extra choice and more visits to the school library. This builds upon additional work we covered in Writing across the year to enhance pupils' vocabulary, another area where we are looking to support our disadvantaged children as well as all pupils across the school. One way staff have promoted this objective is by an increased focus on mathematical, scientific and what we might call subject specialist language, introducing and reinforcing key words and vocabulary across all curriculum areas. You may have noticed how pupils are very confident in talking about grammatical terminology in English for example - what's an abstract noun or an adverbial phrase anyone? Ask your child, you might be surprised!

Setting Targets:

Pupil progress and the quality of teaching and learning across the school are constant areas to consolidate and improve. Careful analysis of school performance across a wide range of indicators pin point areas where we can do better. Performance in National

Tests are an important driver and whilst any combination of cohort strength, aptitude and ability, allied to teaching quality across a pupil's primary schooling, will influence a year group outcomes, we are vigilant against any sort of pattern emerging, such as weaker performance in Reading when compared with Writing, or Boys fairing consistently less well than girls in Mathematics, or Looked After children not meeting national targets.

The HT keeps us fully informed as to progress against the SDP targets in his termly reports and there are opportunities taken to explore more deeply within the meetings and to take on board input from other key staff and governor colleagues. Within the Curriculum Working Party for example, we have a number of governors who work through the DFE's latest School Performance Summary (ASP) and the Inspection Data Summary Report from Ofsted documents with the Head Teacher every year. ASP is a very detailed document that looks at all sorts of data and performance indicators relating to pupil progress, achievement and attainment across the school with a particular focus on performance in tests, attendance and how our children's progress compares against that made by children nationally. It is our job, as members of this committee to cascade this information to our fellow governors at our meetings and then to discuss the implications and future actions this analysis will generate, such as the increased emphasis on Maths across 2017/19 and reported on above.

Mr G Moad and Mr M Puech, more recently lead the way with this, but over time a series of governors, including the Mr P Scott, Mr I Farrar, Mrs Horwood and Mrs Valente have made effective contributions.

The progress we made against Specific Data Driven Targets identified in the previous year's Governor's Annual Statement and the School Development Plan (also on the website), are easily tracked via the school website within the document: **Target Analysis and Revisions September 2019** and we get an early update from the Head Teacher as soon as the results are released in July so we always have a good idea of how things stand.

Though every child's progress is a priority, there can be no denying that the performance of the Y6 children has the greatest impact. This document then clearly notes the progress the 2018/19 Y6 cohort and all others made and then reassesses targets set in May 2019 for the 2019 /20 cohorts, with Y6 a key focus.

However, if, for example, End KS scores dipped unexpectedly in Spelling and Grammar, we may have to review our target focus to make sure that Spelling and Grammar is now on the improvement agenda, but usually we just have to fine tune targets, amending them if our data sets suggest that a cohort of pupils is capable of achieving more or

retaining the original targets that were set. The school is always aspirational and we aim to see the children achieve well so challenging targets are the norm.

Suffice to say that 2019 performance from our Y6 cohort was excellent across the board, for all subjects, in terms of progress, attainment and achievement, almost matching 2018 data in some areas and surpassing it in others. We can reflect then, on two consecutive excellent years.

We are very proud of this hard working and talented group of children who achieved so well and exemplified good behaviour. We thank our Head Teacher, Mrs Wilson and the Y6 team for their outstanding commitment across this year and for the contribution made by all staff over time, in supporting these children to achieve so highly.

In other aspects of school life and there are many, the governors and leadership prioritise the children's health, well-being and pastoral care, the latter being the highest priority for the school alongside our all-encompassing catholic mission. We know that St Gregory's is a happy school both to learn, play and to work in, because we visit regularly and children and staff tell us that this is so. Finally, we look to ensure that all of our policies and practice reflecting the crucial Safeguarding agenda are up to date and relevant. Cllr. Walsh keeps us up to date from the Local Authority perspective and also supports on Health and Safety. Key Governors have attended Child Protection Training, Safer Recruitment Training and the HT has attended higher level, specialist safeguarding CPD across the year, to support his role as Designated Person.

What was the impact of the Governing Body on the school across 2018/19?

The governors met frequently across the year for all key meetings such as Finance and the Full GB Meetings that take place each term. Attendance is almost always, excellent. In addition, there were further meetings, for Admissions in particular, and the Curriculum Working Party, who scrutinise data and target setting meet in the Autumn and often the Spring Terms.

The Staffing Sub Committee and the FGB have been very active with recruitment across the past year and have worked closely with a range of partners to ensure that good appointments have been made. Miss L Rowe has enjoyed a very successful first year in teaching with our Y1 children and has proved to be an excellent appointment. The end of the Autumn Term saw the school bid a very fond and tearful farewell to our exemplary Deputy Head Teacher, Miss E M Carrahar after 31 years' service, 25 as DHT. This necessitated a rigorous recruitment programme, carefully planned and monitored by the FGB, resulting in the appointment of Mrs K Wilson as DHT. Mrs

Wilson had been acting DHT across part of the Spring Term. Again, this has been a first class appointment.

Mrs Wilson's role as DHT and Y6 teacher led to the further recruitment of a Y5 teacher with Mrs N Squares, an extremely experienced and former senior leader in her previous school, being successfully appointed, initially for two terms, later extended to a further year. Again, this has proved to be a very popular appointment with very good feedback from pupils, parents and carers. There have also been a number of CA appointments made as the school looks to support our SEN children.

Looking to September 2019, with staff returning from absence alongside our new appointments, we anticipate a much more settled period. Senior Governors have also been proactive in terms of succession planning as we look ahead to 2020 and beyond.

The RE team meets termly and consists of two key governors, Mrs Horwood and Father Weymes alongside the HT, DHT, RE Coordinator and School /Parish Coordinator. The Team play a central and highly significant role in looking to retain and build upon our 2017 Outstanding Religious Education Inspection Result. Thanks to Father Weymes and Mrs Fenwick we have been able to offer parishioners as well as the school community, frequent opportunities to attend Mass in the school hall. This has helped immeasurably and we have seen increased attendances at School Masses with parishioners from Holy Rosary Parish visiting regularly. Feedback from parishioners clearly endorses the view that they see the school as a welcoming alternative after the closure of their church in 2017. The teams combined input, knowledge and expertise across all areas of RE and collective worship as well as promoting the school as a beacon of catholicity within our local community is so important and we thank them for their service in this area.

As well as coming together for official meetings, governors attend in their Class or Subject Link Governor roles once per term with the Chair, Parent Governors and Governors with children in the school, very regular visitors across the year. Disseminated feedback from Governor Visits is an integral feature of every FGB meeting and helps to widen the knowledge and understanding of all governors, who are effective in learning on each other's behalf. These well-established links enable Governors to liaise with staff to monitor pupil progress and well-being as well as subject health and development. Governors were very interested in curriculum coverage and how the National Curriculum was integrated alongside our creative approach, something that is ongoing this year as it is most definitely an Ofsted priority.

The soon to be embedded system of Early Intervention and the rapidly progressing Mastery approach in Mathematics has remained a key additional focus area for Mrs Valente who has continued to work very closely with Mrs Wilson over the years on

Assessment and Reporting methods and more recently, the quality of feedback pupils are receiving to enable them to take the next steps in learning. Mr Puech visited Y6 and worked alongside the children on a writing task as they tackled a Y7 transition exercise. He noted that the children were very assured and obviously ready to embark on the next stage of their learning journeys.

Mr G Moad has also demonstrated a keen interest and understanding of data analysis during ASP meetings with the HT and senior governors and brings a very secure knowledge of transition between Y6 and Y7 which proves invaluable. Mr Moad has also taken a lead in monitoring the *Geography* curriculum as this is an area of expertise. Mr Faircloth, who is the school lead for *Geography* welcomes his support and advice.

Mrs Horwood reported on all aspects of SEN and EYFS progress, including the narrowing the gap agenda and the performance of Disadvantaged Pupils. The Head Teacher and the Chair take care to see that these valuable interactions are minuted accurately by the clerk to the governors, as this provides clear evidence of the governors' monitoring, support and questioning role in school.

Some time was spent in last year's report outlining the school's liaison with the Diocese around the increasingly divisive push to see all schools eventually becoming Academies. Senior Governors attended a number of meetings and took the opportunity to express their views. Not every school community is happy with the approach the Diocese has taken and there is a lot of disquiet. Our new Bishop, Bishop Robert, is currently reviewing the situation and we may expect some news as to how policy will hopefully, better reflect the views of school staff, governors and parents / carers across the Diocese, who care deeply about their schools.

At the minute, though this could change, there is no longer a national drive by the government to eventually force all schools to become academies, nor is there any real inclination for good and outstanding schools such as ours, to leave the Local Authority to become part of a Trust that would not be able to prioritise St Gregory's in the way that we do, as there would always be a group of schools' needs to consider.

For the moment then, Governors remain very comfortable with the school as it is but understand that it is circumspect to remain abreast of developments both now and in the future.

Governors are especially visible during School Masses and celebrations. Mr P Scott has provided musical accompaniments to school Masses and celebrations at St Gregory's. A selection of governors visited school to attend morning Liturgies in Y1 and Reception and parent governors attended Class Assemblies across the year and were able to report back to colleagues as to how they had enjoyed these experiences. Several of our

governors have extremely strong parish links and help our school to strengthen our role and place within the now combined parishes of Holy Rosary and St Gregory's. Mrs Horwood brings us all up to date with Parish news and events and liaises with Mrs Fenwick at RE Team meetings across the year.

Several governors have assisted on trips and visits. Mrs Valente was a member of the team that supervised the Y6 residential to Berwick/Edinburgh in June 2019. She is a veteran of trips to Thurston, Edinburgh and Belgium/ France, across the years. Mrs Valente provides exceptional support on residentials and is extremely knowledgeable on all aspects of safeguarding. Parent governors are in the yard on almost a daily basis and make every effort to be available for parents and carers - they offer a vital line of communication.

Talking of communication, our parent governor, Ian Farrah, continues to work closely with the school Information Technology team to maintain and develop the school website, which is an excellent window into the school. His advice on blogging and media use has been very helpful. We are looking to grow the school website and as well as looking to meet our statutory obligations we would like to better promote the school and the learning that is taking place. There is a lot of content and some great day to day additions from the children and teachers that deserve a wider audience - make sure you take a look.

Mr Farrah and Mr Puech worked closely with the HT and IT lead staff at the school to plan the recent update of the computer suite. Care was taken to make sure that the new lease hold arrangement provided good value for money and pupils and staff are currently enjoying having access to new computers and I Touch screens in every classroom. New hand held tablets are helping Early Years staff track and assess pupils' progress every day and provide a really colourful and celebratory account of what the children are achieving. This investment effectively future proofs our IT offer to the children and keeps staff fully up to date.

Several governors have strong links to the School and Parents Association (SAPA) especially Mr Farrar who is a devoted fundraiser and Mrs Little and Mrs McGinley, our newest governors, have already invested significant time in supporting school ventures. Both bring with them a raft of skills and expertise, thereby adding to the strength of the wider team.

Governors on the Finance Sub Committee oversee all aspects of the school's finances and supported the Head Teacher's successful bid for emergency funding to carry out substantial repairs and improvements to the Infant floors, wash and cloakrooms late in 2018. The team also scrutinise spending and provision for our Special Needs and

Disadvantaged children, particularly the good use of Pupil Premium funding and its impact. Careful note is always taken on the information received from the SFVS contacts at the LA, especially the three year budget forecast - something that is a concern given the impact of the government's austerity programme and the changes to staff NI etc. which have led to pressures we have not had to face before. Now, more than ever, Finance Committee members are looking to ensure best value in all financial and contractual areas and fully support the HT in pursuing this aim.

As a result of all of this interaction, governors are very familiar with our school and make every effort to keep our finger on the pulse as it were. By visiting school regularly we can help monitor the SDP, school attendance, pupil behaviour and behaviour and safety, assisted by updates from the HT, Senior Management Team and our designated partner teachers. We can also support the staff in monitoring and evaluating the school self-evaluation processes that take place across the year including the Head Teacher's performance management (two governors are assigned to this task). The latter is very robust and involves setting rigorous performance targets.

The Governors have provided support and challenge to ensure high standards in all aspects of education have been maintained throughout the school. We work with the HT to analyse key data to shine a light on school performance, highlighting our successes and those areas where we would like to improve.

We are especially proud of our high standing in the local community and indeed across the Diocese and Region. As a National Support School and with our Head Teacher as a longstanding National Leader in Education we have always tried to support but also to learn from any interaction we have with other schools.

Our governors attend relevant training provided by the school, the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and South Tyneside Council, ensuring that they keep up to date with all current developments in school governance.

Finally, we are here to serve and see ourselves as part of a thriving and vibrant school community where our children are cared for and supported to achieve their best. "We do so in partnership with parents, guardians and all those who have the best interests of the child at heart".

The Governing Body: July 2019.