

Governor Reflection & Impact Statement Summer 2021

The government has high expectations of governing bodies. They are the strategic leaders of our schools and have a vital role to play in making sure every child gets the best possible education. For schools such as ours this is reflected in the law, which states that the purpose of governing bodies is to *'conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement at the school'*.

In all types of schools, governing bodies should have a strong focus on three core strategic functions:

- Ensuring 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 management of staff.
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.



The governors bring a wide variety of experience and expertise to the school, and this helps ensure that our school is moving forward and standards are constantly raised in a way that is in line with the overarching ethos and vision of the school, along with the statutory directives from the Department of Education and the Diocese of Shrewsbury.

This impact statement summarises our role in the development of our school and its pupils over the past year, and provides an opportunity to be transparent about what we do.

Constitution

The governing body was re-constituted in July 2015.

Chair of Governors	Mr J Duncan
Vice Chair of Governors	Mrs N Povey
Foundation Governors	Rev Fr J Fagan
	Mrs C Fairhurst
	Vacancy
	Mr J Duncan
	Vacancy

LA Governor	Ms H Webster
Associate Governor	Mr F Lepisz
Head Teacher	Mrs S Fau-Goodwin
Teacher Governor (elect)	Mrs C Wright
Parent Governor (elect)	Mrs G Bailey
	Mr N Murdocco
Clerk to Governing Body	Dr K Rhodes

The standard term of office for a governor is four years. Parent and Staff governors serve a two-year term. The Chair and Vice-Chair are elected annually at the first meeting of the academic year.

In addition to the Full Governing Body meetings, we also have the following sub committees:

- Quality of Education
- Personal Development
- Personnel and Finance
- SFVS
- Admissions
- Appeals
- Pay

Link Governor Visits



Governors visit St Mary's school as part of their monitoring of the SIP (School Improvement Plan) and to monitor specific issues such as attendance and behaviour and attitudes to learning, as these underpin the ethos of the school. A Link Governor is a governor appointed by the governing body to act as the link or liaison between the governing body and a specific subject, curriculum area or aspect of the work of the school.

At St Mary's both the link governor and subject leader understand that their roles play a key part of the School Impact Plan, Self-Evaluation Cycle as well as a source of strategic information for the governing body. This has been a key piece of work for us over the past 18 months. We have worked to establish very clear guidance and expectations as outlined below:

The expectations of both the Subject Leaders and Link Governors at St Mary's are:

- 1) Subject leaders are committed to contact their subject link Governor each term and invite them into school at a mutually convenient time.
- 2) Link Governors are committed to meet with the subject/curriculum area leader each term to consider provision, lessons, performance and progress which may include book scrutiny and pupil conferences. Evidence and detail will form part of the subject leaders file.

- 3) Link Governors are committed to provide a written report of the visit and report back to the Governing body.
- 4) Subject Leaders are committed to invite Link Governors to attend Special Events/Theme days/Masses/Assemblies etc. of their curriculum area.
- 5) Whenever possible, Link Governors are committed to attend appropriate staff training sessions devoted to the subject/curriculum area.
- 6) Link Governors are committed to attend appropriate governor training for their particular subject/curriculum area.
- 7) Subject Leaders are expected to provide their link governor with a copy of the subject impact plan and a termly update report.

Feedback on all link Governor visits are shared with the Full Governing Body which allows all governors to be kept informed about the day to day life of the school and also to be aware of any concerns or challenges that need to be addressed. This has supported governors in knowing their school and improved their 'governance' as a result.

Governor Plans this year have included overseeing the embedding of a new maths scheme, Power Maths, the further development of Talk for Writing and the widening of subject leadership as well as the impact, response and recovery of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Governor Training



All members of the Governing Body receive training through Cheshire East Governance and attend events run by external bodies such as Shrewsbury Diocese. This allows us to keep up-to-date with our responsibilities with regards to the latest requirements and expectations, as well as local and national Best Practice. Detail of completed Governor training is recorded on the online system Governor Hub. All training has been virtual / online since March 2020

Policies

Governors review all relevant policies throughout the academic year to ensure that all guidance is current and up to date. During the summer term of 2020 we consulted parents regarding the content of the Relationships and Sex Education Policy and programme in readiness for implementation in Autumn 2020. Given that we have a comprehensive PHSE curriculum in place, we are aware that staff are working to ensure a seamless link. The resources used in school meet both the DFE and the Bishops requirements.



Financial Management

Governors with significant expertise in financial management meet regularly with the Head Teacher and School Business Manager. The Personnel & Finance Committee oversee the financial management of the school and ensures that the school is fully compliant with financial expectations. The impact of the Governors' role in this aspect of the school ensures that the budget is managed effectively and improvements are effective, continuous and contribute strongly to positive pupil outcomes. The SBM is skilful and knowledgeable, supporting governors to complete the annual SFVS return. We are delighted to receive a strong 'Good' accreditation this year.



Governing Body Actions



The Governing body continues to focus on school improvement. Detailed School Improvement Plans have been agreed for each subject area and progress is reviewed termly by the Quality of Education committee and at the full Governing board meeting. We are conscious this year that we are focussing not only on improvement but on recovery. This is clearly evident in the strategic plan and we expect this to be the case for quite some time to come. Governors monitor progress against

the development plan targets and are regular visitors in school and hold half-termly 'discovery days' to evaluate the schools practice against the OFSTED framework. This practice has been slightly curtailed since March 2020, but governors have been able to keep in touch with subject leads through email and virtual meetings.

The Governing body value democratic processes, such as the school's elected school council. In this way it ensures that pupils have a voice. The school council are invited to the Summer Term Full Governing Body to share their work and answer any questions put to them by Governors.

Particular attention is given to the progress of disadvantaged/ vulnerable pupils and we want to be assured that the Pupil Premium grant is spent effectively. Feedback on this area of our school life is received regularly from both the school and our link governor. We will also be keen to monitor the impact and outcomes in terms of Catch Up funding too which we all feel is tightly aligned to the Pupil Premium strategy. Our school has been involved in a 'Making the Difference' programme of CPD 20/21 which is based on the work and research of the EEF.



Following our Ofsted visit in December 2017 where the school was again rated “Good”, the school improvement plan has been continually updated to reflect areas where Ofsted offered suggestions for further improvement.

A strategic review process is underway for the Governing Board. This has included a skills audit and will result in establishing a longer term set of goals for St Mary’s. We have recruited 2 new governors since our last report and are keen for them to make a start.

Consultation has taken place this year around the number of pupils that we will be admitting to St Mary’s in the future. As the number of places needed has declined, we have decided that our Planned Admission Number will be reduced to 60 for September 2021. We hope that we will be able to offer places to all applicants and we can continue to operate as a three form entry school into 22/23.

Governors continue to work closely with the Leadership team and plans to ensure that all children achieve their potential.

COVID 19



It would be remiss for a Governor statement reporting on the period from March 2020 onwards for us not to consider as a governing body the impact of Coronavirus on the school community at St Mary’s. Despite the very unsettling and worrying time during the COVID 19 pandemic for everyone across the nation, St Mary’s has continued to make best efforts to provide continuity of education for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils from the outset.

School opening for Key Worker Children

Since 23rd March 2020, in line with Government and scientific advice, St Mary’s remained open to vulnerable children and children who had a parent who was a critical/ essential worker. The school was then required to close again on January 4th 2021. A second period of re-opening and recovery will again be monitored by the governing body.



Class Dojo System

The Online Class dojo system has been used as an effective communication tool for parents and pupils during COVID 19. This has included general communication and queries, sharing



work completed by pupils, photographs of learning experiences and celebrating special days such as VE day, Democracy Days, Chinese New Year, Internet Safety etc. On 10th July, individual pupil Learning Summaries were uploaded onto Class Dojo as an alternative to the usual annual school report as in its current format staff felt would not have provided parents with relevant information. In response, SLT devised an alternative, Learning Summary for this purpose.

During the Autumn term of 2020 the school made a full and successful return. COVID 19 remained a constant, and so staff continued to develop and receive CPD in order to improve Home learning / Remote Learning provision. The changes and developments proved to be

vital during the second school closure in Spring 2021. The offer was significantly improved as KS2 began to work through Teams and the school received 40 laptops from the government to help and support those without access to digital devices.

SMART CLUB



We are proud that our Before and after school provision remained in operation both during term time and throughout all holiday periods. A school staff rota operated during the holiday periods to supplement SMART staff.



However, the second school closure proved more problematic and we were financially unable to sustain the financial losses incurred in the first lockdown. In response, teaching staff catered for childcare from 8.30am to 4.30pm for critical workers and regular SMART Club users.

Safeguarding



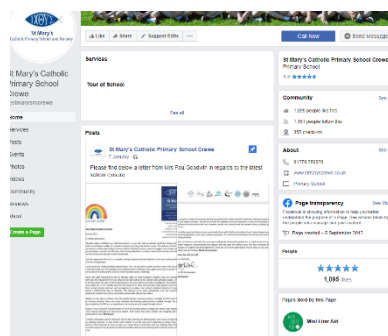
Governors have approved two addendums to the Safeguarding Policy in March and again in January to reflect the COVID 19 situation.

An addendum to the behaviour policy was also formulated and agreed by governors in Spring 2020. These documents have formed important strands of the Recovery Plan / Risk Assessment as St Mary's has re-opened twice.

During these unprecedented times, we are aware as governors that St Mary's has continued to support and safeguard vulnerable children and families and the processes and procedures have continued to be robust and effective.

Facebook

St Mary's Facebook has continued to be a source of information, school news, sign posting parents to Government and Local Authority information regarding both school closures and re-opening during the COVID 19 pandemic as well as other links to support parents. This continues to be a popular means of communication within our school community. Governors enjoy looking at the updates and information showcased on there as well as the Twitter feed. Governors are also aware of the information shared through Class dojo and Tapestry.



Free School Meals



Governors were aware that food support in the form of Free School Meal vouchers have been supplied to parents from the first week of the first lockdown. After some initial teething problems, the system has provided our families with weekly vouchers during both closures. On our phased return into school, children who were eligible for free school meals were provided with a school lunch. In addition, we are aware that FSM vouchers have been delivered directly to family homes

as some parents were unable to access them online as well as physical food boxes handed out from school. We were delighted as governors that it was confirmed that FSM vouchers would continue during the school holidays and through the second school closure.

Telephone Calls

Since March 2020 and again from January 2021 governors were aware that Staff have continued to make pastoral phone calls to all families in their classes to establish pupil well-being and engagement, pupil learning, mental health and any concerns. Any issues have continued to be logged and any necessary follow up has been recorded. In addition, the pastoral team have been making weekly phone calls to all in the 'vulnerable' category (those with SEN, social worker and family support worker). We are aware that Parents have been very grateful and pleased with the personal interface.



Bereavement Packs



For children who have experienced a bereavement (or multiple deaths in one case) a visit from the Learning Mentor has been undertaken and resources shared. Support has been given by telephone to grieving families. Governors are keen that this work continues. The child/ren involved have been welcomed into school as part of the wider opening programme or as part of the vulnerable pupils who were invited to attend school from January 2021.

Early Help/ CIN Meetings

We are also aware of the hard work and commitment of our staff to safeguarding and ensuring the health, wellbeing and safety of our children. Early Help, child in need and child protection meetings have continued online, either as zoom meetings or phone conferences since March.



Counselling Sessions

Zoom and/or telephone counselling sessions have been arranged for children who usually have counselling in school and that arrangements have been made for some face to face sessions to resume and continue following the schools COVID protocols.

Transition

In terms of transition both from St Mary's (Y6) and into (YR + YN) St Mary's this has been a particular challenge. Y6 staff were involved in zoom calls as well as completing paperwork required from the receiving High Schools. For YR and YN the EYFS team developed information packs for parents and were keen to focus on the return to school on 15th June 2020. Further transition planning started again in the Spring and Summer terms in readiness for Autumn 2021.

Additional Services



Staff have continued signposting parents to additional services for those struggling with children's challenging behaviour and emotional difficulties. As governors we are aware that this is a strength of our school and are proud of the pastoral strand of our provision here at St Mary's. We know our staff always go the extra mile to help and support the pupils and their families where they can.

Parent Communication & Information

Letters, booklets FAQ's and support materials have been created and shared with our parents and families over time. Governors appreciate the time and effort in producing these. They are always of a high standard and very professionally produced. We really liked the pupil booklets as they were age and stage appropriate. The information for the re-opening as well as the developments around Remote Learning have been very impressive. We are aware of lots of positive feedback about the Remote learning offer and how much it has developed in a very short space of time. We also know that our parents love their children to attend school and were grateful for the clear and strong safety messaging when we re-opened fully. Even the second school closure which happened without any notice, was handled safely, thoughtfully and clarity.

Recovery Plan & Risk Assessment



In the initial stages of lockdown, we were aware that staff had been consulted about their worries and concerns. These emails were collated into a document which formed the first Recovery and Risk Assessment. As part of this process, our SLT considered the guidance and how best we could as a school meet the requirements and expectations. The greatest challenge they faced was managing a changing landscape on an almost daily basis. The governors received a copy of the Risk Assessment in June which had also been shared with Cheshire East. We felt it was incredibly detailed and thorough and highlighted the complexities of the situation the school were dealing with. Since that time we have continued to see the Risk Assessment evolve-from focussing on re-opening safely, to managing protocols on a longer term basis to the closure of the school again in January 21. The Risk Assessments and rationale have been shared with us at every review. Again, we appreciate the hard work and effort that the school team have put into this as well as managing the closure of bubbles, the isolation disruption of staff and the introduction of regular testing for staff.

Leadership & Management

Governors are pleased that the LA have contacted school on a regular basis by telephone since week 1 during closure 1 and we have received regular email bulletins from Jacky Foster. We are also aware that all School Improvement activities have continued wherever possible but SATs and moderation activities have not taken place either in Summer 2020 or Summer 2021. We are aware as governors that we need to continue to review and consider our approach to monitoring from September 2020 onwards.



The Diocese of Shrewsbury have continued to send out a monthly newsletter to support governors and update them on any guidance needed. Meetings and briefings have been on line since March.



Additional policies have been written in response to COVID 19: Infection Control Policy + (appendix 1 COVID specific) & Safe Distancing Policy Statement as well as the additional appendices to the safeguarding and behaviour policies.

Throughout the crisis, work has continued to enable us as governors to update and upload policies in line with the review cycle and ensure compliancy. We are becoming familiar now with Governor Hub.

Governors are aware that staffing issues, individual risk assessments, HR issues, recruitment challenges, appraisal reviews, organising remote working as well as establishing and updating staff rotas together with managing pupil numbers have been on-going.

Governors know from the risk assessment reviews that many hours have been spent on considering and undertaking practical solutions for the site and buildings with the sole purpose of keeping everyone safe on a long term basis. We are also aware of the incredible hard work and contribution of the SBM.

Finance

During the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, it is understandable that we have concerns about financial implications.

St Mary's will continue to receive the budget for the coming year, as usual, so we can continue to pay staff and meet other regular financial commitments. We will continue to work with the school Business Manager and track any additional costs. We will be making an application for COVID-related costs but are aware that there will be other extraordinary costs due to the coronavirus outbreak which are not covered by the guidelines set out and cannot be covered by the existing budget. Governors will continue to monitor this during 2021/22



Governance Priorities – Autumn 2020 onwards



We are all currently working in a fast-changing, unprecedented situation. We have been required to organise provision in our school like never before. As Governors we have taken a temporary step back and allowed the Leadership Team and staff to focus on the immediate, operational priorities of providing care and support for our most vulnerable families and the families of key workers.

Governors appreciate that school life will get back to normal and we are confident that we will return to governance as we knew it but we all recognise that there is an important transition phase that will need care, consideration and planning. There is no one in our school and on our governing body who will not have been impacted upon through the coronavirus pandemic, and it is important to remember and acknowledge this when we are planning the recommencement of meetings.

The priority during this phase will be the health and emotional wellbeing of all our school staff and governors. Given the pressure both at home and at work for everyone, the expectations and approach to prioritise the health and emotional wellbeing of staff and governing body members is required.

Refocus



In line with the change in provision in school, we appreciate that the focus of our governing body meetings will need to change in the coming months. We will be focusing on 'must be done / needed to be done'. As always, we need to identify and maintain our legal responsibilities relating to health and safety, employment and equalities when exercising governance functions and decision making.

As governors in 2021 /22 we will be considering

Staff and Pupil wellbeing

- How the school has communicated and made changes to provision with staff and parents, sought their views throughout the planning process to open the school to more staff and pupils once restrictions are eased.



Health and safety – to include:

- School buildings –how the buildings/ site has been and will continue to be used to meet the identified control measures in the school's risk assessment until no longer required.
- Arrangements for additional cleaning and hygiene measures – including the availability of cleaning staff and supplies required to minimise risks identified in the school's risk assessment and protective measures
- The availability of staff to work in school from the different phases of opening to more pupils and during periods when staff and pupils have to self –isolate.

- The sizes of groups permitted within school to ensure as minimal contact as possible
- Robust consideration and review of the school's risk assessments and protective measures in relation to opening the school and sustaining high standards in health and safety for staff and pupils. This should include seeking confirmation and evaluating how school leaders have worked with the LA parents, staff and unions to determine the best approach to take.

Safeguarding – including pastoral issues



Coronavirus response overview - to include:

- Plans to reopen the school to more staff and pupils –including any necessary risk assessment and decision regarding extending the provision of breakfast and after school clubs to more pupils
- Teaching and learning update for pupils returning to school and those who remain at home
- Finance – with a focus on unusual or exceptional spending during the pandemic and reporting of any unavoidable breaches of financial procedures or challenges which have arisen and any time sensitive budget decisions
- Staff recruitment – with consideration of any impact on current or future staff recruitment and any supply required to support the return of pupils to school
- Governor reappointments and consideration of the impact of any vacancies
- Essential policies and policy review cycle

Remote Meetings



The DfE has recommended that, to comply with Public Health England guidance on non-essential contact, governing boards should cease face-to-face meetings and move to holding remote meetings until further notice. We began this arrangement in March 2020 and are keen to see how this way of working can be further developed in 2021/2022.

St Mary's Governing Body
Summer 2021