

Letter from the Board of Governors.

Welcome from the Board Governors at the start of 2019. Over the past 18 months the Board continued to engage with a variety of stakeholder activities. Our primary focus has been to work alongside the School Leadership Team and staff to ensure the school consolidates on its strengths, whilst striving for continual improvement in securing consistently good outcomes for all children. We recognise being consistently good across all aspects of our school provision will lead to an overall outstanding outcome.

With this ambition Governors continue to lead on quarterly performance reviews of progress against the School Development Plan. This includes assiduous attention to detail, analysis of the risks and providing challenge through the Governance structures of the Board and its sub-committee meetings.

Our sub-committee Chairs working alongside the designated Leadership member of staff regularly focuses on the quality and standards of pupil performance, staff performance and development, finance and the estate, faith and safeguarding. The Board considers the work of the sub-committees and overarching strategic direction of the school, ensuring all activity is aligned to our school values, is financially sustainable and delivers against our key performance targets. In addition every Governor links to and reports on all aspects of school activity from music and science through to literacy and well-being.

Whilst Governors are volunteers, they bring a wealth of experience from the private, public and third sectors including Education, Finance, Faith, Technology and Legal. The Board regularly reviews its members' skills sets, their contribution to the school and opportunities to refresh its membership to ensure currency and added value continues to drive the school forward.

During recent months Governors have also engaged with pupils, parents, fundraising events, politicians, the local authority and businesses to ensure the school is well placed as an exemplary provider within our community, where children are safe and learning flourishes.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2019, Governors spent the day in school, immersing themselves in school activity from the playground to school dinners, from visiting all year groups to extra-curricular clubs. The day was organised by the School Leadership Team and provided a wonderful insight into what makes our school truly amazing.

Governors provided the following feedback from the day:

*"What an encouraging and positive day. I found the lessons I viewed to be inclusive, informative and creative. Teachers used different styles and activities keeping the children engaged."*

*"All children were encouraged to participate at all levels. The lessons were interactive and everyone of all abilities were confident in answering questions and 'having a go' at the front of the class."*

*"If children made a mistake they were corrected in a positive way and shown/told what their answer related to and were encouraged so they tried again without feeling embarrassed."*

*"The atmosphere and feeling was that everyone cared and our ethos and strap line was felt throughout the day and just reinforced how proud I am to be part of St Matthews."*

*“Apart from the usual boisterousness of the playground, I was struck by the air of genuine friendship, confidence and happiness of the children. In the lessons I observed, they were fully engaged, respectful of the needs of their peers and clearly keen to learn. I was also struck by the sheer logistical achievement of moving the 400 strong pupil body around from lesson to lesson, lesson to creative worship and playground to lunch hall in a calm and controlled way. The teachers, support and administrative staff should take great credit for the way the school operates from both a teaching and non-teaching perspective.”*

*“Thank you to all of the children and staff for giving us a warm welcome on a cold January day! We saw some really good team work in Yellow class (Year 1), where the children used bead strings effectively to practise doubling. Green class (also year 1) had a very interesting discussion about what “suffering” means to help them prepare for their visit to a Buddhist temple, the children made thoughtful contributions and listened to each other well. Orange class (Y2) worked hard individually to make a passage from “Lila and the Secret of the Rain” more interesting, and gave each other helpful feedback on their work. Amethyst (Y6) worked very well in pairs to peer review their passages about the Northern Lights. The children’s enthusiasm came across throughout the day including in collective worship, where they gave us a fantastic demonstration of their actions for the school strapline “Believing Achieving Succeeding!”*

*“A day of inspiring creativity and energy from the teachers and TAs which sought to get the best out of each pupil. The traffic light behaviour system was used quietly but effectively to get pupils 'back to green' and give the children a fresh start. I also loved the way children were empowered to dictate aspects of their own learning - deciding how long the class should be given to complete a task, choosing who should answer a question next and even taking to the front and teaching a handy skill to the rest of their class. All made for a great learning environment.”*

*“There were some common themes that I witnessed throughout the day: the high level of involvement of the children, their positive behaviour, the way the teachers made good use of resources, the linkages during the lessons to events that had already happened or were about to take place and the clever way the teachers and teaching assistants ensured that all the children, whatever their capabilities, were appropriately challenged. The other thing that struck me was the growth that clearly takes place between the Year 1-2 and Year 6, both in terms of WHAT they are asked to do (given a story and asked to make some changes vs a blank sheet of paper where they are asked to compose a compelling story from scratch) and HOW they worked together (from struggling to work in pairs vs a very open and constructive process of peer editing/proof reading).”*

This feedback clearly provides an overwhelming sense of purpose, engagement, inclusivity and enjoyment of learning which would not be possible without our outstanding school staff, from the Caretaker to the Catering Assistants, from the Teachers and Volunteers to the School Office; we thank you for your professionalism and commitment to all that you do for our school and our children.

Robin Ghurbhurun

Chair of Governors, on behalf of the Board.