



Urchfont C. E. Primary School



Chair of Governors' Annual Report

Annual Governance Statement for the Governing Board Urchfont CoE Primary School September 2021

In accordance with the government's requirement for all governing bodies, the three core strategic functions of the Governing Board of Urchfont CoE Primary School remain as:

- **Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.**
- **Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school.**
- **Overseeing the financial performance and making sure money is well spent.**

The **Governing Board** currently consists of 13 members:

- Two Staff governors (including the Headteacher)
- One Foundation governor
- Two Parent governors
- One Local Authority governor
- Five Co-opted governors
- Two Associate governors

This year we welcomed a new Parent governor, elected to the Board.

The Governing Board monitors, challenges and supports in several areas:

Standards, attainment and progress of all year groups		
The School's Strategic Improvement Plan and Strategic Action/Impact Plan		
Support for children with special educational needs		
Pupil Premium allowance and its impact on pupils		
Safeguarding		Health & Safety
Attendance and punctuality	Budget & Finance monitoring	Staffing

We have governors with designated responsibilities who act on behalf of the Full Governing Board (FGB) but with particular knowledge or expertise for Safeguarding, Special Educational Needs, Collective Worship, Finance, Health and Safety, Wellbeing, Curriculum, Data and Data Protection.

A **Skills Audit** was undertaken this year and it clearly showed that, between us, we have all the designated Essential and Desirable skills and expertise necessary to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school. We also undertook a **Governance Audit**, through County, and whilst there were some minor issues to address, feedback was that the team is doing a great job. The areas where we can improve and develop further have been incorporated into the Governor's **Strategic Plan**.

The work that we have done in the Governing Board

The Full Governing Board has met three times each term; this year has, again, been exceptional and all meetings have been held virtually because of social distancing regulations. We have also held planning and strategy meetings, and ad hoc meetings to discuss issues that have arisen during the year needing urgent attention.

The FGB Agenda always includes a report from the Headteacher and finance reports; we also have reports from Governors with designated responsibilities (for example on curriculum issues, safeguarding, and pupils' performance data).

The return to school in September 2020 at the beginning of the school year by all children was welcomed but the need to maintain social distancing, the use of containment bubbles, and the ever-present threat of full or partial return to home learning meant that it was going to be a difficult year. In November we revised our 3-year strategic plan and agreed the key challenges to focus on as the COVID 19 regulations and recommendations evolved, revised, and changed. These included:

- Children continue to make good **progress**; any **negative** impact of COVID 19 is **measured and countered**.
- To **focus** and provide **support** on the **wellbeing of staff and pupils**.
- COVID 19 is seen as an **opportunity** not just a problem.

These provided a focus for the agenda of the regular FGB meetings.

- We were provided with regular updates on progress with the assessment of the children. Teaching would focus on reading and writing, which had slipped for some during the first lockdown. Teachers worked very hard to make up lost ground but were then faced with a second lockdown. The staff are a strong team and as a school we did not have to send staff or children home as a result of positive covid outbreaks. This gave us an advantage over many areas of the country and our pupil attendance was high. From the data and limited comparisons available it was clear that Year 6 had made extraordinary progress and that across the school, we were generally better than National performance in key subjects areas.
- A survey of staff wellbeing was undertaken by the Governors and the results showed that the staff were happy in their roles and generally felt well supported. It must be noted that work-life balance was difficult under the circumstances with greater demand on staff time during the Covid pandemic, having said that the staff coped exceptionally well and the Governors are grateful for their unerring support for the school and its children.
- The use of Google Classrooms and online learning was extended and improved, with more live interaction with staff. This has now been extended to parents' evenings, with very positive feedback from many of those taking part. Children who have had to isolate have also been able to access learning from home.

Finance

Finance issues continue to be a key priority and this year we were subjected to an in-depth **Finance Audit** by County. The summary conclusion was:

“There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place”

A few, low priority, areas for improvement were identified and these are being resolved. The school Finance Officer and the Finance Governor worked hard to provide information and answers during the audit and their efforts throughout the year are much appreciated. In June the school budget was reviewed and approved, with finances in a strong positive position and approval given to progress with the building extension.

School Extension Building Work

The extension to the school had been delayed pending the outcome of the Public Right of Way issue, and we were really pleased that it was possible to begin during the summer holiday. There have been a number of internal changes to create better use of the space and create new learning areas including a dedicated ELSA area, improved kitchen facilities and a teaching room that will be used for music. Reception and offices are also being improved together with new teaching and work spaces being built as an extension. The internal work was mostly finished during the summer and the building work should be completed by the end of 2021.

SafeGaurding

A key role for governors is ensuring the safety and well-being of the children. The nominated Governor for Safeguarding has made regular visits to the school, talked to staff, undertaken a safeguarding audit and reported to governors at every meeting. Governors undertake an annual update in their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding issues through online training and this is recorded.

Curriculum

For most of the year curriculum monitoring has focused on the provision of remote learning, ensuring that it meets the needs of all children. On returning to school the well-being of children has been of paramount importance and the governors have monitored the provision of Personal Social Health and Economic Education. The staff are currently reviewing the school curriculum in light of changes in Ofsted's expectations. The Curriculum governor attended a Training Day that focused on curriculum review and as Governors we will continue to monitor these changes and their impact.

Visits

Whilst the social distancing regulations and guidelines from DfE have severely restricted the ability of governors to make visits to the school, nevertheless specific visits on Safeguarding, Curriculum development and Health and Safety have been made. There has been regular contact with the Head, with weekly online meetings and ad hoc discussions with teachers and support staff.

Attendance

There is a very good level of commitment shown by all governors and FGB meeting attendance has been excellent; facilitated by online meetings that provide greater flexibility for individuals. A full list of governor attendance is available on the school's website.

The minutes of Governing Board meetings are public documents and you can ask at the school office if you would like to see any of the minutes of our meetings.

Future plans for the governors

The governors **Strategic Plan** includes continuing with the recovery from COVID, keeping a close eye on finances and the building work, extending the links with the community and attracting more children to the school.

How you can contact the governing board

We always welcome suggestions, feedback and ideas from parents. We are also looking for new Governors to join the team. You can contact the Chair of Governors, Ian Walker, through the school office.

You can see a full list of governors, their attendance at meetings and other information on the Governor's page of the school website.

Finally, I would like to thank all the Governors for their hard work and support to the school this year; Carol, the Head, for her leadership and commitment to the children and her staff; and to Rachael, Clerk to Governors, for her knowledge, support and unstinting effort that enables the FGB to function so well.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Walker', is centered on a light beige rectangular background.

Ian Walker
Chair of Governors
September 2021