

Message from the Chair of Governors of Our Blessed Saints

On behalf of the Governors of the Roman Catholic federated primary schools of St Luke's and St Peter & Paul, I am pleased to provide information on how Governors have discharged their statutory duties over the past academic year.

We have 3 core functions:

- Setting the vision and strategic direction of school
- Ensuring financial resources are well spent
- Holding the Headteacher to account for educational performance

The academic year: 2020 to 2021 was once again considerably disrupted by Covid 19: staff in both our schools continued working through extremely challenging circumstances. We were, as ever, grateful for their commitment and dedication to children in our care.

We also bade farewell to Mrs Stacey Beale who had been our Executive Headteacher since 2017 when our schools federated: we wished her well for her future career. She had done much to ensure our schools have begun to benefit from the experience and skills within the wider staff team: greater collaboration has been productive in recent years.

Governors had launched a recruitment campaign in the previous academic year in an effort to attract a candidate to replace Mrs Beale as our Executive Headteacher from September 2020. Despite interest, we were unable to appoint and once again advertised in the autumn term for a January 2021 start. When it became clear we would not be able to appoint to the Executive role, Governors (supported by the Shrewsbury Diocese and the Local Authority) created a temporary leadership structure of Acting Headteacher roles in each of our schools, supported by Teacher in Charge roles for the remainder of the academic year to July 2021. This ensured schools communities were able to benefit from stability in key leadership roles and teaching posts.

We are therefore extremely grateful to our Acting Headteachers (AHT) in each school – Miss Evans at St Luke's and Miss Staniforth at St Peter & St Paul who have stepped into the gap created Mrs Beale's departure. Each one has delivered their duties as Acting Headteacher with commitment and determination to overcome considerable challenges and ensure our children continued to enjoy first class teaching and educational opportunities. I as Chair, have worked far more closely with each AHT, meeting weekly late in the Autumn Term and gradually reducing involvement as each became familiar with their role. Governors also ensured expert external support was available to each AHT.

In the spring and summer terms Governors looked ahead and decided to seek wider views on the future of catholic education. It was therefore agreed that Governors would undertake a strategic review, including considering suitable leadership structures. We agreed a service level agreement with the St Francis & St Clare Multi Academy Company, based in Wolverhampton, to offer agreed support in the academic year 2021/2022.

We, as Governors, have played our part during Covid times, becoming familiar with technology; able to overcome the vagaries of virtual meetings to provide effective oversight in the midst of a pandemic. Membership of the Governing Body has remained stable, with each Governor holding a specific role and bearing responsibility for elements of either the curriculum, finance, safeguarding, special educational needs or health and safety. Additional duties as a result of Covid, have included considering and approving ongoing changes to Risk Management Plans; subject to Department of Education guidance. Governors also adopt, review and monitor a range of policies that govern the operation of the school including Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Behaviour and Curriculum.

Our twice termly, full Governing Body meetings have remained in place as follows: one in the early part of the term to agree our monitoring activities and later in the term to review school performance. At the first meeting of the academic year, we receive and comment upon the School's Annual Development Plan. With the departure of our EHT, at the final termly meeting we have received comprehensive Reports, from each of our Acting Headteachers. Each has reported on elements of the Plan which have been delivered, with amended actions for the term ahead. The reports from our AHTs are received prior to the meeting, enabling Governors to submit questions in advance of the meeting. If Governors are unable to attend meetings, apologies are submitted and fellow governors determine whether to accept or decline. In the spring and summer terms, this change to reporting formats have been welcomed by Governors: although our workload has increased, we believe we have greater insight and therefore a clearer overview of each school

Governors are dedicated in giving time freely to serve on our committees: both our Finance and Health & Safety Committees take their duties seriously and report back to full Governor Meetings on a termly basis. Members of the Health & Safety Committee conduct annual inspections. Our School Business Manager is a staff Governor and is a member of both Committees. We have experienced, Designated Safeguarding Lead Governors, for each school

We are pleased to say both schools are operating balanced budgets at financial year end. Both schools operate very popular and effective before and after school clubs. During this academic year, steps have been taken to bring the previously independent, out of school club at St Luke's, to within the school's remit and responsibility. This was in part due to Covid restrictions placed on the provider by DfE regulations..

The continuing impact of the pandemic meant no statutory tests were once again held this year in any English school. However, staff have continued to use effective assessment techniques together with Covid recovery funding where available, to ensure children continue to make progress

We strongly support partnership in its many forms and will continue to build links with other schools in both of our local areas and our Catholic primary schools across Shropshire. We will continue to develop our relationship with Holy Trinity Academy, plus other local secondary schools to enrich our curriculum. We do all we can to ensure the smooth transition of all pupils as they progress to the next stage of their education.

We will continue to fully support Miss Evans and Miss Staniforth in the highly effective leadership roles they play in both of our schools. We are also grateful for the skills and experience of Miss Russell in her role as our SENDCO. As ever, we very much appreciate, the time and effort of our Senior Leadership Team in making our schools, welcoming, caring, excellent places of learning.



Pauline Heffernan Chair: Our Blessed Saints School January 2022