

## **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

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 each School's Annual Development Plan, prepared by the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team in each school. Each Headteacher submits a comprehensive termly report to provide an update on progress in priority areas, on the termly plan. The reports from our HTs are received prior to the second termly meeting, enabling Governors to submit questions in advance of the meeting to ensure we are holding our HTs to account. If Governors are unable to attend meetings, apologies are submitted and fellow governors determine whether to accept or decline. We have introduced hybrid Governor meetings this year. Those of us who can meet in each school (with meeting venues rotating through the school year) do so. However, those joining at the end of a working day, find it far more convenient and an effective use of time, to log on by clicking a secure link.

We have had a number of changes within the Governing Body, bidding farewell to some experienced Governors whilst welcoming others willing to serve. At the close of the academic year, we have vacancies for Foundation Governors and will be seeking to fill these roles in the autumn term. Our longstanding clerk to Governors also retired: an experienced independent clerk has recently been appointed.

Covid has continued to have a limited impact in our schools: we have had staff absences whilst the levels of sickness of our children have remained relatively high. Given the removal of the requirement of mandatory covid testing for children, schools have been unaware of true level of infection. We have seen child absence due to taking of holidays increasing over the last year. Persistent absence has been kept under Governor review this year and been the subject of Governor challenge questions at termly meetings. Governors have been mindful of teacher union strike action this year and have been grateful to our staff teams at both schools: our children have not suffered as a result of this action.

Our Governor committees have remained active: Health & Safety Governors met with Local Authority representatives early in the academic year to undertake a premises audit and took action as necessary. Our Finance Committee met regularly throughout the academic year working with Miss Evans at St Luke's and Miss Staniforth at St Peter & St Paul, plus our Business Manager, Mrs Fisk, to agree spending and future budgets. Governors also adopt, review and monitor a range of policies that govern the operation of the schools including Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Behaviour and Curriculum.

Governors commissioned improvement and refurbishment works at St Luke's which we trust will be of benefit to all school pupils in the years ahead. This has been outstanding for a number of years due to delays with appointing of architects and commissioning of suitable contractors: covid inevitably was a factor too, all of which have been outside the control of the school.

Governors have continued to discharge their duties in a number of other ways: meeting parents at termly consultations, our staff as part of curriculum oversight and Miss Russell as our SENCO. We have a dedicated SEND Governor for each school denoting the importance placed on this area. We are fortunate to have a highly experienced and skilled Designated Safeguarding Lead Governor who gives time to each school as required.

Governors meet with our School Improvement Partner, who we have appointed to advise us on specific areas of school life. This includes assisting and advising us with Headteacher Performance Management and giving us advice as we ensure we keep abreast of Ofsted requirements.

We have also met our children as part of Pupil Voice. This always elicits many useful insights and is perhaps the most enjoyable part of the Governor role. Children at SSPP told us about Shield Children and Play Leaders – the purpose of both to assist children in keeping safe and having fun at break times. We also noticed that levels of child mobility – children who do not join at age 5 – are high: of the of the 8 children to whom we spoke, only 3 had been with our school since reception.

We met with members of the School Council at St Luke's. They told us how they had been democratically elected by children in their class. They felt they had improved the school lunch time menu – based on discussions they had had with representatives from the Local Authority. We also noticed St Luke's is a highly diverse school – attracting children from many different backgrounds.

Mini Vinnies (children who volunteer to take care of others and raise funds for good causes) have been reestablished in both our schools. Children respectfully marked the passing of the late Queen and celebrated the King's coronation. Governors are grateful to school staff in both schools who are dedicated to giving our children as many diverse opportunities for "learning for life" as possible. At St Peter & St Paul we have been grateful for the time given by Fr Lee Bennett. With his support, we have been able to reintroduce memorable ceremonies denoting important feasts in the Christian year. Governors are aware of and have joined activities where possible.

In March, we had a visit from the Catholic School's Inspection team at St Luke's. Governors played an active part in the inspection, meeting with and answering questions from the team. The resulting report confirmed St Luke's is a good school overall with Catholic life and mission of the school being graded as outstanding. We were really pleased the inspectors said that the *"Mini Vinnie team is an outstanding example of pupils' commitment to care for the most vulnerable"* and *"The community at St Luke's lives out its commitment to the gospel values that underpin the Catholic life and mission of the school. There is an overwhelming sense of welcome, witnessed by inspectors, and evidenced by the warmth parents from a diversity of cultures and faiths have experienced when joining the school."*

Children sat the Standard Assessment Tests for at both KS1 and KS2, with no allowance being made for any disruption to the child's education due to covid: Governors ensured tests were administered effectively. We have been pleased with the achievements seen in our schools: our children have tried their best and we are proud of them and we thank their teachers.

We have kept updated with Government and opposition plans for the future of primary education. We have also participated in seminars and information briefings hosted by Shrewsbury Diocese. This led us to invite the Chief Executive Officer of Our Lady Help of Christians Multi Academy Trust, based in Cheshire, to present to us in the summer term. Based on information we have assimilated, it is our intention to seek academy conversion for both our schools in the coming academic year. Consultations will be held with all stakeholders to enable opinions to be gathered and final decisions made.

We will continue to fully support Miss Evans and Miss Staniforth in the highly effective leadership they give to 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 all those within the Senior Leadership Teams in our schools to ensure they are welcoming, caring, excellent places of learning.



Pauline Heffernan Chair: Our Blessed Saints School September 2023