

The Royal School

Crown Aided & Church Aided

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Chair of Governors' Report 2021/22

The Royal School

'Loving to Learn, Learning to Love, Guided by God'

Dear Royal School Community,

We're almost at the end of another super busy year. We have learnt to live with Covid-19 and the impact still caused by illness and isolation. This year, staff have focused on rebuilding the children's resilience and independence which, for many, had diminished over the lockdown period. Behaviour for learning has also been a school focus point and will continue to be so next year. I hope that many of you have now been able to appreciate first-hand the many events and occasions that the children have celebrated and participated in over the past year. Sparkle week is always a favourite of mine. It's a joy to listen to the children speak excitedly about their learning and show their artwork/constructions and written work for the week. A year 4 child described it perfectly whilst reporting in a newsletter ".... the pupils enjoy making, writing, exploring and describing their learning".

Just a few weeks into the year, we had an Ofsted inspection. The outcome was GOOD. Being a one-day inspection, the report was short (available on the school website). Governors and staff were able to discuss in more detail and ask questions of the inspectors later in the day. My highlights from the report are:

Pupils are proud to belong to the Royal School ~ Pupils' behaviour reflects staff's high expectations ~ Staff are sensitive and patient when supporting pupils ~ Pupils experience a broad curriculum with a wide range of exciting experiences ~ Leaders make learning to read a priority ~ Pupils with SEND are supported well

This has been a year of change for the school. Bev Coombridge generously gave us nearly a year's notice of her wish to return to New Zealand at the end of this academic year. This gave us enough time to advertise, interview and employ the extremely competent and insightful Victoria Harrall. Victoria and her husband are very much looking forward to moving into the Great Park this summer. Victoria and Bev have been working closely together, to ensure a smooth transition into the next academic year. We are truly thankful for having the wonderful Bev as our Headteacher over the past six years. She has certainly made an imprint on the heart of our school, and helped to give a solid educational foundation to the children in her care. We must also say thank you to Rodney, Bev's husband, who has given so much of his time for the good of the school. His work in our Fantasy Garden and work with the children in the vegetable patch has been phenomenal, as is his legendary coffee! Thank you both and very good wishes for the next step in your lives.

We also sadly said goodbye this year to Kate Cronk – Bursar; Clare Marten – Yr1 Class Teacher and Susannah Fowler – Office Manager. We thank them for their tireless dedication and commitment to the school and send every good wish for the future. We have fortunately welcomed Gemma Garbutt – Bursar to the school. Gemma has already settled into the role and is working competently with our very limited budget! Our former KS1 LSA of many years, Anne Terry, has hit the ground running into the very busy Office Manager's role. She is also doing a fantastic job.

Govern and lead the school effectively to promote all that is right, pure, admirable and excellent

In accordance with the Oxford Diocese Board of Education and the Government's requirement for all governing bodies, the 3 core strategic functions of the governing board remain as:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
2. Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent

The structure of the governing board, along with individual governors' biographies, committee membership, strategic roles and subject responsibilities, are available on the school website. The governors' attendance at meetings this year has been good; this is also available on the website.

For most of this year, we have conducted our governing board meetings via Zoom. Thankfully, we are now back in school where possible, as well as holding blended meetings. During the later part of the year, our subject governors were able to visit the school once again. Our visits are linked closely with the School Development Plan, Subject policies and Vision. Within the visits, governors talk with children and staff and regard the children's work both in books and displays around the school. Following the visits, a detailed report is prepared. The report is shared with staff and governors and discussed further within the Full Governing Board meetings.

Thank you to my fellow governors for their commitment, support and dedication. The time you give to the school is remarkable. Sadly, for us we said goodbye to Sean Bui – Parent governor and Susan Calvert – Associate governor. We thank them for the tireless dedication to the school. We welcome Tom Brunner as parent governor to the FGB, whose enthusiasm is contagious. This year we have also welcomed Iona Palmer to the role of clerk to governors. Iona joined us in a particularly busy year. Iona was soon able to demonstrate her superb organisational skills whilst dealing with the enormous amount of work linked with the Headteacher recruitment process. Thank you for your assistance, Iona.

As always, we are thankful to Paul Sedgwick and the Crown Estate for their support and generosity throughout the year.

Thank you, PTA, you are simply the best! Your tireless dedication and hard work literally make our school a better place! All parents are PTA members. We are extremely fortunate that Sarah, Olly, Karen, Claudette, Liz and Sian have stepped forward to form the current PTA committee. We also thank Sharen Wealleans who volunteers to be PTA/School link. The organisation and pure hard work that goes into our biggest fundraisers, i.e. Ascot change, Christmas tree depot and Summer Fayre, is never taken for granted and very much appreciated by the whole school community. In the past, we have fortunately had parents whose employers were able to match fund some of the monies raised. If there is a chance that your employer offers this scheme, please contact your class rep for more information. The funds raised each year are an important part of the school budget. All state schools are funded by the government for the number of children on the roll at the October census. The ever-rising operational costs such as utilities, wages and pension mean that funds are extremely limited for other expenditure, more so for a school of 100 pupils. Five classes with small class sizes are a luxury, but one that the governing board has and will be working hard to maintain. However, without continued financial support from the PTA and parents, the chances of maintaining the small class sizes is looking to be unattainable long term.

Goodbye, good luck and farewell to our magnificent Swan (Y4) leavers. I've watched you grow and flourish throughout the years. Your confidence, resilience and wisdom will stand you in good stead for the next stage in your education.

Wishing you all a sunny, happy summer's break.

With very warm wishes

Vivien Benn – Chair of Governors