



IGHTHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Annual Governance Statement 2018/19

Welcome to the Governors' annual review of some of the key issues which have kept us busy in the last academic year. It is not intended to be a comprehensive report but rather picks up on key developments and matters of interest to the wider school community.

Introduction

On the face of it, 2018/19 was a relatively straightforward year, with the notable exception of the Forest School development, about which see below. In reality, it was a year which enabled staff, children, parents and Governors to build on earlier work for the benefit of all. Our wide-ranging interpretation of the national curriculum, our provision of many sports and other activities all underpinned our total commitment to the children at Ightham.

The Head's weekly newsletter amply demonstrated how busy our staff and children were. We have all worked together to make sure that the children are well equipped for the next stage in their education and we will continue to strive to achieve the best possible outcomes for all our children.

Governance and Management

The Governing Body includes four elected by parents who join a number of Co-opted and Staff Governors to make up the group to the required total. The current list of Governors can be found on the school website. At the beginning of the academic year, we ran an election to find two new elected Parent Governors and we already know that there are some changes to come early in this new academic year. The Governors take part in committee work and specific monitoring activities. In these ways they can bring to bear their own knowledge and expertise for the benefit of the School. The Full Governing Body meets at least six times per year and the subcommittees meet frequently throughout the year. In these and other ways the Governors fulfill their strategic role which can be summarized as:-

- Overseeing the School's budget, monitoring the financial performance and making sure that money is well spent;



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- Appointing the Head Teacher, holding him/her to account for all aspects of the School's management and educational performance;
- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.

The School benefits at present from a Governing Body with a wide range of experience which works well together. We are preparing for a number of changes as some Governors naturally reach the end of their allotted period of office or decide to concentrate on other things. At the first meeting in of the new academic year in September we will elect a new Chair as Hugh Stirk will be stepping down after eight years in this role. He will, however, remain on the Governing Body and therefore his vast experience will not be lost to the School. There will also be Parent Governor vacancies to fill in the new academic year.

The Governors are fortunate to have the expertise of a highly professional clerk who writes up the minutes of all key meetings, makes sure that our files are in good order and, not least, keeps her eye on relevant legislation.

A review of 2018/19 demonstrates that there two items which are regular items at all our meetings of the Full Governing Body. One is 'policies'. All schools have to publish statutory policies and keep them under review. They are included in our website for all to see.

The second regular item is 'Academies'. The key question is: 'Would our children be better off were the school to become part of an academy?' The Governors have made sure that they have a good understanding of the options. The ability of Kent County Council (KCC) to provide us with the specialist support which a school of our size requires is clearly diminishing as government funding reduces. We will continue to keep the matter under regular review but the decision to either stay fully in the KCC orbit or join up with like-minded schools in a multi-school academy remains a hot topic.

Finance

The School's Head and Bursar have the job of managing our finances within an agreed budget whilst the Governors keep a close eye on the School's financial progress and make sure that it is in line with our main strategic aims, largely through fixing the budget and monitoring it as the year progresses. The Finance Committee set a break-even budget for 2018/19 and that was delivered, no mean achievement given the continued funding squeeze which began in 2010 and shows no sign of ending soon. In fact, the position worsened during the year when KCC passed on to schools some significant and unexpected costs. Despite this, we still balanced the books and finished the year in a stronger financial place than many other schools in Kent.

Our capital budget is still suffering from the effects of the financial crash of 2010 which led KCC to reduce our capital grant from £30,000 per year to £6,200, at which wholly inadequate level it has stayed ever since. Our PSA, therefore, continues to be exceptionally



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important as their fundraising allows the school to make important purchases for the benefit of the children that otherwise wouldn't be possible. Yet again the PSA has come up trumps and their recent Summer Fayre was a rousing success. The Governors have decided to try and support the PSA with their fundraising efforts by introducing the Governors' 200 club which launches in September. In addition, we are looking at possible new sources of raising money to enable the school to continue with and extend its current high standards of provision.

School Performance

During the year, the Head and his colleagues took full advantage of opportunities to visit other schools and we welcomed several to Ightham. The objective was usually to learn from others and to measure our performance. The Governors always review this information and are pleased to note that we compare very favourably on all relevant measures.

We had a short visit from Ofsted in January 2019 which was extremely encouraging, and this report can be found on our website. We expect a full Ofsted inspection within the next eighteen months, and most probably in this academic year.

Academically, therefore, the Governors believe that the School is very much moving in the right direction in its quest to become 'outstanding' in Ofsted terms, a quest which is made more difficult by the frequent changes in the Ofsted key yardsticks – and, as if to make the point, revised expectations are in place with effect from September 2019 which are expected to make it harder for a school to achieve an 'outstanding' grading.

On the sporting front, the school has again had an excellent year in all major sports. We are the team to beat! In swimming we are frequent winners. Indeed, last year we recorded winning the Tonbridge & Malling District Swimming Gala for the fourth year running – well, we've just won it again!!

Unfortunately, rain hindered our cricketers, but we still managed to finish as runners up in the big Tonbridge and Malling kwik cricket competition despite losing some of our best players who could not play because of other school commitments.

Two other issues stand out when we review performance in 2018/19:-

1. The demands on our small SEN team increased markedly during the year and they will almost certainly have to be strengthened. This, of course, has considerable cost implications to the School.
2. The Forest School development is going along very well and is already making a significant difference to our children. Well done to all those who have worked so hard. With the benefit of hindsight, we probably underestimated how much



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work we were taking on but we did it. We are very proud of Mrs Gray and Mrs Parkinson who have worked exceptionally hard to provide something incredibly worthwhile for our children.

Premises

Although there was no major project this year, there was plenty to do led by the Governor Premises Committee and supported by Mr Payne who continues to do a great job given the limited funds available and the age of our buildings. To put into context the £6200 capital funding the school receives, the school had to pay £1100 at the end of the academic year to remove a tree that had become dangerous, £1500 to simply maintain the school boilers in good working order, and £1300 to replace a freezer in the kitchen.

Finally, the Governing Body would like to welcome all the new families and children to Ightham Primary School. We very much hope you enjoy a positive and happy experience at our school.

August 2019



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