



# IGHTHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Annual Governance Statement 2021/2022

This is the Governors' annual review of the 2021 / 2022 academic year. It was a year which was once again far from normal as the school worked through difficulties presented by the ongoing pandemic. As governors, we observed how these challenges were made all the more difficult because of an assumed return to normality. Governors decided to keep a focus on wellbeing, safeguarding, academic achievement and health and safety as priorities whilst carrying out our three core functions of:

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

Due to the persisting high number of Covid cases and concerns for health and safety we continued to carry out the majority of meetings via Zoom. We met once each term as a Full Governing Body. In addition to this our three sub-committees – focusing on Performance and Strategy, Premises, and Finance – also met several times throughout the year.

The membership of the governing body remained stable. I, Paula Freeman, was re-elected as Chair and Rodney Chartres as Vice-Chair. All other governors continued to serve their terms of office in their roles. One associate member, Tina Freedman, left us and we thanked her for her valued contribution over the past year. We were grateful that Lee Kennet continued to stay with us as another highly valued associate member. Happily I can also say again this year that we were grateful and fortunate to have our professional clerk, Yolanda Tredoux, with us to help us carry out our roles whilst ensuring we were well informed and compliant in our work.

### Vision, ethos, strategic direction

At the beginning of each new academic year staff and governors revisit the aims and vision of the school. As governors we are able to contribute a different perspective from those who are more involved with the day to day running of the school. Together, we agreed that whilst still navigating the particular issues and uncertainties presented by the continued pandemic, it was important that 'pupils should leave Ightham Primary School with their understanding deepened, their minds enriched, and their hearts inspired, so that they love learning and embrace the challenges of the future'. We are incredibly fortunate to have a dedicated staff team who have not lost sight of the aims the school holds for its pupils and once again governors have witnessed the tireless efforts of the team to keep the school a happy place to be where pupils want to come and feel safe and want to learn even in spite of the virus. I am very proud that we have a strong School/Governor partnership working together to remain focused on achieving the very best for all our pupils at Ightham Primary School.



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## Performance

Over the year governors reviewed progress reports from the teaching staff and were alert to any effects that the pandemic may have had on performance across the school, whether that be curriculum areas or pupil groups. Where appropriate and able, governors returned to our pre-pandemic normality of making visits into school to monitor practices and progress on the ground. Reports from these visits were fed back to the Full Governing Body who then considered and discussed any necessary follow-up actions or recommendations. This process was particularly important this year when considering the best strategy for the use of Catch-up funding for example. As mentioned previously, safeguarding the wellbeing of both pupils and staff was a high priority and governors were careful to ensure that efforts to address any issues were not at the detriment of the health and safety of our community.

National tests returned this year and governors were extremely pleased to see that these results still indicated a high level of achievement across the school. There were many successes to be celebrated across the curriculum too: sporting victories, school trips, Forest School, the school choir returning to external performances, swimming lessons and school plays to name a few.

As usual, we also reviewed our own performance as Governors. We considered our strengths and weaknesses by carrying out an annual skills audit and governors attended online training and briefings in order to stay abreast of national and local issues and to enable us to continue to carry out our roles to the best of our abilities.

## Finance

Balancing the budget was once again a hard task with the school still facing many extra costs of the pandemic (cleaning equipment and staff absences for example) and the usual costs associated with the maintenance of the buildings and premises too (it is worth reiterating here that the Capital Funding allowance from KCC of just over £6,300 has not been increased for many years now).

However, by making savings wherever possible, capitalising on helpful contacts and connections and with much handywork from our caretaker Mr Payne, the School broke even at the end of the financial year.

KCC carried out a financial and governance compliance inspection in January 2021 and I am pleased to report this was very positive.

We are extremely fortunate to have an active and successful PSA whose funds continue to be so important to the running of the school and also mean that the children are able to benefit from a wide range of activities and resources that could not be afforded by government funding alone.

In addition, donations from the Friends of Ightham School charity have enabled the school to employ the Family Liaison Officer and subsidise other costs which have undoubtedly helped to improve the school experience for many, if not all, of the families in our school community.

The Parish Council also continues to be extremely supportive of the school and the governors would once again like to express their thanks for this.

## In summary

There is no doubt that 2021 /2022 was another year heavily affected by the pandemic. Governors, once again, were careful to strike the right balance of challenge and support whilst carrying out their core functions.



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The successes of the school are in no small part down to the unfaltering dedication and teamwork of the staff who have managed to triumph over the endurance test that the pandemic has seemed to become. The community is extremely fortunate to have such a committed and selfless staff team at the school. In amongst governors' usual business of reviewing policies, scrutinising the budget and evaluating strategies it was extremely uplifting to be able to host a staff celebration event in May – a belated congratulations in recognition of the school's awarding of Ofsted Outstanding in March 2020.

Moving forward, governors will support and challenge the school as it endeavours to provide a rich and varied curriculum for its pupils. We will enjoy working together to overcome the remaining issues of the pandemic and look forward to more sporting success, academic achievement and engagement with the community too.



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