

Local Governing Body Annual Impact Report 2020-21

Summary of Achievements During the Year

- The outstanding achievement of 2020-21 was the continued provision of safe and high-quality teaching and learning in school, during a year of public and social disruption related to the global Covid 19 pandemic
- At the end of the 2020-21 school year, the school budget was showing an in-year deficit of around £14,000, with a cumulative surplus of around £77,000, but this is projected to decrease in future years. Governors continue to explore with the school leadership how to make the best use of all funds, including those raised by Friends of Smarden Primary School (FOSP, our PTA).
- Governors drafted, discussed and approved a new homework policy for the school, in consultation with staff, children, and parents.
- Appointment of new Deputy Head to increase leadership and monitoring capacity within the school.
- There was no Ofsted inspection this year

Local Governing Body (LGB) Membership, Meetings and Activities

- Four LGB meetings were held online in September, January, March and July.
- Governors supported the school in maintaining crucial links with family and the community – including via an online parent consultation about home learning during lockdown.
- Thomas Dixon was elected to serve again as Chair for 20-21, and Matt Hardwick continued as Deputy Chair. Matt is also our safeguarding, and health and safety governor and his professional experience monitoring hospitals for NHS England has been invaluable for us since the start of the pandemic.
- Mrs Laura Pickard continued as our Clerk to the Governors. In addition to co-ordinating and documenting the activities of the LGB, Mrs Pickard acts as valuable liaison between TKAT and the LGB
- One of our stated priorities for this year was the appointment of new governors to improve our community links and our coverage of pre-school and early years areas.
- We now have a full complement of eight governors as set out in our constitution (as revised and adopted in October 2019).
- Governors took part in training (including the safeguarding training at the start of each school year), attend LGB meetings, and undertook monitoring of specified areas. This continued, largely online, in the second half of the school year.
- Governors also have provided challenge to the school and to the head teacher in key areas such as safeguarding, health and safety and educational attainment scores via the Headteacher's report

Governance functions

The core functions of governance in publicly funded schools are:

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, and the performance management of staff
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

In MATs these functions must be carried out at board level, and in some cases aspects of these functions will be delegated to LGBs.

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction

- Smarden School embraces TKAT's vision: Inspiring Learners, Changing Lives.
- Our school motto is "Enjoying, Learning and Achieving Together" and our school values and governance ethos are set out on the Governors page of our school website: <https://www.smardenprimaryschool.co.uk/governors/>
- The Governor's Mission statement is available online via the above link
- This ethos underpins the support and challenges that governors offer to the SLT.
- This academic year provided an opportunity for us to make sure that enjoyment, learning, and achievement were pursued in a safe and reassuring learning environment (whether online or in school) in especially challenging circumstances.
- This experience refocussed the minds of governors and staff on questions of wellbeing which will shape our future work.
- The Chair of Governors, as part of his work at Queen Mary University of London, worked with Smarden and other schools on the pilot "Developing Emotions" lessons, emphasising the importance of putting emotional wellbeing at the heart of the curriculum.

- **Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff**
- The priority areas on which the school was challenged by governors included stretching more able pupils, and achieving greater depth in maths and other subjects.
- A new Deputy Head Mrs Hannah Taylor was successfully appointed in January 2021 and has helped to increase leadership and monitoring capacity within the school.
- Governors supported Mrs Miller in her view that the wider curriculum needs to be deepened and enriched.
- Governors challenged the school on spending, value for money, and getting the most out of the budget.
- Governors asked what could be done to support good behaviour at the school, especially in break-times, and to reduce adverse incidents in the playground. We have improved

behaviour at playtimes by a consistent behaviour policy adopted by all throughout the school.

- Governors adapted to the new situation created by Covid-19, meeting online, supporting the provision and monitoring of online learning resources, and of in-school health and safety, focusing on the wellbeing of children, families and staff.
- The Chair of Governors helped produce a page of recommended online learning resources for Smarden children and their families:
<https://www.smardenprimaryschool.co.uk/home-learning/>
- Vice Chair, Matt Hardwick, was instrumental in supporting the school's approach to health and safety in this unprecedented context.
- Staff and governor online surveys were used to provide the SLT with accurate snapshots of parental and community concerns.
- The Chair of Governors participated in performance management of the Headteacher, and supported the HT in dealing with the extended absence and eventual departure of the Head of School.
- Governors supported the appointment of a Play Therapist at Smarden as part of the drive towards improved emotional wellbeing.
- Governors were pleased to welcome Sophie Young to the LGB as part of the ongoing integration of the school and pre-school settings at Smarden.

2. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

- At the end of the 2019-20 school year, the school budget was showing an in-year surplus of around £18,000 surplus and a healthy cumulative surplus of around £148,000, with this projected to increase in future years.
- Governors continue to explore with the school leadership how to make the best use of all funds, including those raised by Friends of Smarden Primary School (FOSP, our PTA).
- Financial and budgetary matters are monitored throughout the year by Thomas Dixon as chair of governors and by Phil Jennings, who is our lead finance governor, as well as by the full LGB meetings.
- This year, as in previous years, the headteacher, business manager and governors have done all they can to ensure that every penny of the budget is spent wisely and any surplus, where possible, is redirected towards supporting the safety, wellbeing and academic progress of children.
- Financial topics discussed during 2020-21 included the possibility of saving money through the installation of solar panels, and the spend per pupil in relation to staffing.
- Governors have sometimes struggled to understand why more of the large surplus the school is running (both in-year, and cumulatively) is not available for expenditure, and our Business Manager, Liz Rice, has been helpful in explaining this and supporting the aims of the SLT within the constraints of budgetary rules.

Summary of Local Governing Body effectiveness:

- We now have all posts filled in our LGB and the balance between staff, parents, community and other areas is good.
- Governors are familiar with their particular areas and have a good understanding of the role of governor monitoring.
- We are a relatively inexperienced LGB but we are all learning and improving in our roles.
- Mrs Miller has successfully instilled a rigorous attitude in the LGB, encouraging all governors to ask difficult questions and to demand high standards in all areas of school life, and supporting an ethos of transparency and of ambition for all our children.
- In a difficult and disrupted eighteen months, relationships between school, parents and community have been strengthened and despite the challenges posed by the learning loss in 2020, the school is well placed to make further progress.

Review of progress on stated goals in last year's impact statement:

Aiming for greater depth and a broader curriculum: This remains a work in progress. Hal Bedford Cooper is leading on Maths Mastery and staff and governors are all involved in providing a rich 'Discover, Explore, Create' wider curriculum.

New homework policy: This was developed and adopted successfully, and has provided clarity of expectations for staff and parents.

Recruit two new governors (community and early years): Successfully achieved – James Aylott and Sophie Young.

Monitoring progress of AMA and SEND: This remains a focus for this year after the disruptions of lockdown.

Piloting materials promoting emotional literacy: This took place through the "Developing Emotions" lessons – and a further pilot is taking place this year.

Future plans: Priorities for 2021-22

We will continue to meet remotely until national policies change to make in-person meetings possible again. Priority areas which governors will be supporting and challenging the SLT on are:

- Maintaining health and safety at the highest level throughout the continued pandemic.
- Monitoring whether we have embedded higher expectations for all so that the more able are always challenged
- Embedding Maths Mastery throughout the school.
- Making wellbeing a priority area for Smarden – improving provision for children and staff – and enriching the curriculum through improved teaching and resources in PSHE, RSE, and emotional literacy.
- Supporting and extending the wider curriculum.
- Developing and reviewing key policies in collaboration with the SLT, including a new Teaching and Learning Policy and a new Vision for Smarden Primary and Preschool.

Chair of Governors: **Matt Hardwick**

Date: **December 2021**