

CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Governance

Governors' attendance was excellent – only 2 absences, 1 with apologies, during the whole year. We were sorry to say goodbye to Ed Coode, after many years of service to the board and Terence Bourton who resigned due to pressure of work and family demands. We welcomed two new governors. Sarah Hawkey, the new parent governor, has a valuable background in education and Michael Rabone, co-opted to the board, brings a wealth of experience from the personnel and staff development sector. Both, having completed skills audits and attended training sessions have already been very active on behalf of the school. The Safeguarding lead was handed over to Kate Messenger who has useful experience in this field. With a view to succession planning a number of changes took place. The current Chair and partnership governor who is also Chair of Standards and Curriculum is retiring after the end of term. Earlier this term Richard Fenwick was unanimously elected to take on the role of Chair in September, enabling him this term to familiarise himself with the work of the Chair. We now have an associate governor, Nik Coultas, who has started attending meetings. This will allow him to ease into the role of partnership governor. Elizabeth Lawrenson agreed to join Standards and Curriculum Committee to get some experience of the work of the group before she takes over as Chair in September.

St Wenn has a healthy financial situation. Finance committee and the Head have been closely monitoring the budget with the result that the school ended the financial year with total reserves of £33,911. The reserves are down on last year's due to Covid 19 spending. The Head in consultation with the Chair decided to dip into reserves to spend on the catch-up sessions that were needed by the children when they returned to school after lockdown. It was thought that the progress of the children was of paramount importance and since resources were well above our minimum required level it was worth using some of this money. However the in-year budget shows a deficit and staff costs are generally high mainly due to teachers being at the tops of their salary scales so this will need to be monitored in the future.

Training

The training available was very limited during Lockdown but recently online training has become available.

The Chair has attended useful NGA Webinar sessions.

Safeguarding responsibilities of the governing body March 8 – Sarah Hawkey (SH) and Kate messenger (KM)

Induction for new governors Part 2 March 29 – Richard Fenwick (RF) and KM

Induction for new governors Part 1 May 5 – SH and Michael Rabone (MR)

New Chairs of governors May 12 – RF

Induction for new governors Part 2 May 24 – SH and MR

Safer Recruitment training recap training – Elizabeth Lawrenson (EL) and Naomi Mathers (NM)

Safeguarding

- Safeguarding policies are in place
- Governors are aware of Safeguarding leads
- Health & Safety inspections take place termly
- The single Central Record is monitored termly
- Governors have benefitted from safeguarding training

Impact of the Governing Board

NEW HEAD

One of the major activities a board of governors can undertake is to appoint a new Head. This is something we achieved this year and in conditions of lockdown. As our outstanding and highly valued Head is retiring at the end of the year we began the process of recruitment for a new Head last November. The response to the advert was surprising and impressive. We received applications from abroad as well as other parts of the country such as London and Hampshire and mostly from teachers on salary levels higher than we were offering. The applicants were narrowed down to a shortlist of 6, 3 of whom dropped out when they received our expectations of them at the next stage. To make up for the lack of personal contact our procedures were very rigorous which seems to have deterred some, but we felt we only wanted someone who was prepared to take on the challenge. After making videos to show staff and children and doing finance and curriculum exercises by email the number was whittled down to 2. We interviewed them via TEAMS and after two hours of discussion we agreed to appoint Grace Smith.

CHALLENGES TO SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The governors actively challenge the Head at FGB meetings where the clerk records them in red to be easily identifiable. Action points are also recorded and followed up at the following meeting. Challenges are similarly recorded in minutes of committee meetings.

The governor monitoring planner is another way in which we examine school management. The planner is tailored to the objectives in the School Development Plan. Governors, according to their specific responsibilities visit school or meet the relevant member of staff to check how far objectives are being achieved. With lockdown this had to be carried out virtually. Much was achieved but the full programme could not be completed and the planner had to be modified. The new planner was adapted to cover monitoring of the Covid situation itself as well as finding new ways to carry out the original aims.

COVID-19

The governors have regularly monitored the school's response to the pandemic in the following ways

- Discuss return strategies
- Monitor risk assessments
- Ensure remote learning is in place
- Ensure plans are in place for vulnerable staff
- Review policies (safeguarding, wellbeing and behaviour, video conferencing)
- Monitor catch-up programme
- Consult feedback from staff and parent surveys

ENSURE CATCH-UP PROGRAMME IS EFFECTIVE

The catch-up programme was assisted by the local community as the school was given free use of the church and the village hall during the pandemic for which we are extremely grateful. This allowed a member of staff who was shielding to take catch-up sessions in the church where children with specific learning needs could meet and at the same time the teacher was protected. Monitoring and reports show that gaps in learning have been identified and in most cases addressed satisfactorily.

FGB has addressed Catch up at every meeting this year.

Objectives for the Coming Year

A review of the strategy has not been feasible during the pandemic. Modifications were made to accommodate Covid as mentioned in the discussion of the monitoring planner but a full review is now due. As there will be a new Chair and Head next term it seems wise to leave this issue until the beginning of the next academic year.

Conclusion

The best way to conclude this report is to use the words of the external adviser when he carried out a mock Ofsted visit of the school and said in a positive report on the governors 'The governing body are a clear strength of this school.'

Thanks

We have been lucky to benefit from Sally Berry's headship over the last four years. We are so grateful for her inspiring leadership especially during this latest difficult period. She has worked tirelessly to ensure a safe learning environment for all the children, with the result that great progress has been achieved. A huge thanks to all the staff at St Wenn who have worked so hard and thoughtfully to help the children. I have been impressed by the teachers' commitment and imagination in gaining the children's enthusiasm for learning. I am particularly grateful to the excellent board of governors and the clerk for all their work and support. During the process of appointing the new Head their varying skills meshed well together to provide a rigorous process in the face of considerable challenges. They have been a brilliant team to work with, making the job of Chair a happy one.

Tessa Cubitt

Chair of Governors

