To: Parents at St Nicholas School

**Governor update – Autumn 2017**

Welcome to this term’s Governor update, which aims to keep you informed about the main issues the Governors are considering each term.

Among the best news for Governors this term was the outcome of our SIAMS inspection; that is, the “Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools”. This inspection, carried out by a church-appointed inspector, is principally concerned with the way the school’s Christian character informs learning and ethos, and with the effectiveness of school leadership. We were delighted to see that the school was given an ‘Outstanding’ rating on all four of the criteria examined. You can find a copy of the full report on the school website at [http://www.stnicholas-shepperton.co.uk/inspection-reports/](http://www.stnicholas-shepperton.co.uk/inspection-reports/).

Governing body vacancies have proven hard to fill of late, so I am pleased to say we have some movement on that front. At our end of term meeting, we were pleased to hear that the St Nicholas Church Parochial Council has filled two long-standing Foundation Governor vacancies, bringing the PCC representation up to full strength. One of these was due to a change of appointment for one of our two elected parent governors; as a result, the Governing body now has a new vacancy for an Elected Parent Governor. This means that we expect to issue a request for nominations – and, if there are several nominations, a vote - for a new Parent Governor in the New Year.

Parent Governors chiefly bring a parental perspective to Governing Body decisions, rather than particular professional experience. Nonetheless, additional insight from professional experience is always welcome, and at the moment we would particularly like to add to the experience of buildings management, law or financial management among the Governing Body. If you have experience in any of those areas, I’d particularly encourage you to think about seeking nominations. The main attribute of a parent governor, however, is a commitment to the good of the whole school, so if you feel you can contribute – whatever your background – to the school’s Governance, please watch out for the nomination request in the new year and get a nomination in.

Turning to the Governors’ regular business for this term, the most important item Governors look at is the educational achievement of children at the school. In the autumn term, we look at attainment and progress data for our school compared to other schools, using the latest national data. Our Standards committee looks at the data in great detail and the whole Governing body sees summary data. As the provisional figures in the summer suggested, schools nationally have started to catch up with the large changes in SATS in 2016, so published progress (based on comparison to other schools with high key stage 1 attainment) does not stand out as much as in 2016. Nonetheless, there’s plenty to be pleased
Early years did very well this year with more children than ever passing the Phonics tests; Attainment was broadly similar to last year’s strong year 6, and significantly above National performance for reading, spelling and grammar; and the number of children exceeding the ‘expected’ attainment was higher than last year. We were also pleased to see that some of our children who were struggling at Key Stage 1 (ages 5-7) scored ‘well above average’ in reading compared with similar children nationally. It was also good to hear that our in-year progress data – collected regularly for children in all year groups – looks promising for next year.

Governors also see regular reports on behaviour at the school, which is always a concern for parents and children alike. We are pleased to say that our children’s good behaviour is still one of the greatest strengths of the school. The main indicator that Governors see is the number of behaviour incidents that are serious enough to warrant a formal letter to parents. 2016-17 was one of our best years to date, and so far 2017-18 is looking equally good; it seems as if the initiatives taken in 2015 and 2016 – for example, clearer behaviour management policies and changes to playground timing and management - have led to a lasting improvement.

More broadly, we monitor ‘safeguarding’ at the school; that is, the broad set of procedures the school puts in place to keep children safe. These are audited regularly by our Safeguarding governor, as well as checked by OFSTED and other inspectors; we’re pleased to see that the procedures are all in place and all the necessary checks are diligently made.

Governors also pay close attention to the quality of teaching at the school. Teaching quality is reviewed regularly by the senior leadership team; this term, Governors visited to observe the review process. We were pleased to hear that teaching remains consistently Good or better at the school, and that teacher expectations are high, resulting in good and often exceptional achievement. A particularly pleasing comment from a visiting Governor – also a secondary teacher - was that some St Nicholas Year 6 pupils were on a par with some Year 7/8 pupils at secondary school; a testament to the high expectations of our staff and to the children’s capability and hard work.

Finally, some seasonal ‘thank you’s. Christmas may be an exciting time, but it means lots of hard work. The school is full of decorations made by the children, and the children have all worked incredibly hard to put on the many Christmas and Nativity events. So thank you to all of the children for their wonderful Christmas events and to the staff and parents who have helped them.

The sound educational attainment results for last year come from hard work by our staff and our leadership team as they make sure that every one of our children does as well as they can; our thanks go to all the staff who worked so hard during the year.

Last, but not least: Thank you for all your support, as parents, during the year. You have helped us as classroom assistants, as PTA members and with financial support through our Building Maintenance Fund, and your interest in your children’s education makes a huge difference. Thank you all for your support for the children and the school over the year.

I wish you all a joyful Christmas and a happy New Year,

Yours sincerely,

Dr S Ellison
Chair of Governors
St Nicholas Church of England School