To: Parents at St Nicholas School

It is mid-July, and we have reached the end of another school year. I hope you have enjoyed some of the many end-of-year events and that you were able to get to the celebration evening. I did; it was, as always, great to see so much evidence of the children’s progress through the year, across so many subjects.

This term’s Governing Body meetings primarily covered Standards (progress and attainment and behaviour), Finance and Resources, and Staffing matters. The other main item for Governors, school Admissions, picks up in the Autumn and Spring terms.

Our Standards Committee looks after the school curriculum and helps to make sure that our progress tracking is robust and up to date, and makes sure that the school does everything it can to help children progress well. This year our Standards Committee has been keeping a close eye on maths, which has been a focus area for the school; we also looked at History and Geography and took a closer look at the Forest School initiative. The latest on SATS results shows that the school has broadly met or exceeded expectations in most areas, especially for Year 2 who seem to have done exceptionally well this year.

History and Geography are not SATS topics and are assessed internally, but while the progress is good, the really strong feature of these topics is the great range of external visits and project activities that the children undertake during the year. You may have noticed, at the Celebration Evening, that almost every class was running rolling displays of the day trips and residential visits; the really nice feature is that children enjoy these visits so much at the same time as learning from them. The Forest Schools initiative has also spread further through the school, and we have been particularly pleased to see the school making good use of the space acquired from the former nursery area.

We also receive regular reports on behaviour. We know from our visits to the school that children at St Nicholas are very well behaved, work well in class and are exceptionally polite and helpful. However, we still ask for reports on the small number of notifiable incidents (the fearsome ‘Form B’ sent to parents). Although the numbers are never very high and can vary considerably, we have been pleased to see that the general trend seems to be strongly downward over the last four years.
Our Resources and Staffing Committees monitor the school Budget, Buildings and Staff. The school has again kept the books balanced; a considerable achievement given the recent news confirming that "per-pupil" funding has indeed fallen by some 8% in real terms since 2010. There is little sign of change on the funding front, so it will remain challenging to keep to budget and still deliver a great education. Still, the school is clearly keeping a tight rein on finances.

St Nicholas is also maintaining strong relationships with other schools. For example, we have been given funding again this year to support eight other local schools in introducing Maths Mastery principles; we will be supporting a London school with recruitment and retention issues (funded by the DfE) and we have engaged much more effectively with the Surrey Teaching Schools Network (Teaching Schools and National Leader group). This gives St Nicholas a leading role in supporting other schools, and says a lot for our Senior Staff, who are increasingly seen as effective leaders with something to contribute to other schools.

Finally, the end of the school year means that the Governors have a lot of people to thank for their contributions to the school. All of the staff – teaching staff, support staff and the office and maintenance team - have worked hard this year, improving maths teaching, developing the new outdoor learning opportunities, and planning and supporting all of the great out-of-school trips and events. Our parents have again been hugely supportive; we’re grateful for all your help as parent helpers, your attendance at school events, your support for your children's learning at home and your kind support of our building maintenance fund, which allows us to keep the building in good condition. We’re also grateful for the support of the PTA, and particularly impressed at the new climbing frame the PTA have funded, which is a great new play resource. And of course, all of the children at St Nicholas have worked really hard all year, and their behaviour is a delight and a credit to the school.

Thank you for all of your support and hard work during the year.
I wish all of you a relaxing summer break, and look forward to seeing you again next year.

Yours sincerely,

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