

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Isleworth

Notes of an informal meeting of Governors Held on 30 September 2020 at 6pm via MS Teams To discuss the External Review of Governance report

Present: Emma Dawson, Catalina Giglio, Simon Hogg,
Mary Hooper, Farley Marsh, Mary Martin, Mo O'Donoghue,
Jim Park, Clare Raffet

In attendance: Seb Cobbold

Note taker: Irene Bowles

Apologies: Fr Nico Labo Ratu, Ania Mason

1. Welcome and opening prayer

- JP welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.
- JP reminded Governors that it was important to have a spirit of positivity, including relationships with the whole school community, recognising the contributions made by everyone.
- JP opened in prayer.
- JP thanked those Governors who had been interviewed by the external reviewer, Sian Mathias (SM). SM had commended all those she had seen – including staff members and the Clerk – making the important point that they were a good team.

2. Governor comments on report

- The report was an honest reflection of the Governing Body.
- It contained no surprises for Governors; it highlighted the good and the not so good, showing where there was room for improvement. These were areas on which Governors had been trying to improve.
- It highlighted that Governors acted collectively as a team, all pulling in the same direction.
- There had appeared to have been some complaints to the Diocese, which had led to the suggestion of an external governance review. It was clear that the process on receipt of those complaints had not been correctly followed – the complainants had not been re-directed to the school as envisaged in the complaints policy.
- SM had been thorough in the process of the review, and had weaved her questions through the interviews, picking up areas of interest throughout the day.
- It was important to accept the recommendations made by SM and to prepare an action plan that would be implemented and closely monitored. Governors agreed that the Action Plan would be an agenda item at every full Governing Body and Committee meeting.
- Two ex-Parent Governors had been interviewed by SM. SM had taken all evidence into account when compiling her report.

- SM was a person of standing in carrying out Governance Reviews, and had been accepted as an impartial, competent person by both the Diocese and the LA.
- Governors agreed that they needed to look forward, building a stronger partnership between themselves, the school community, the Diocese and LA. The Chair would share the report with the Diocese and LA, and assure them that Governors wanted to improve the partnership with them.
- It was agreed that the full report should be shared as soon as possible with parents and staff, as well as with the Diocese and LA. A covering letter to parents - explaining the context and that Governors were committed to working through the recommendations - would accompany the report; Governors recognised that many parents would not be aware that a review had taken place. Parents and staff would also be informed that the action plan would be shared with them when it was finalised.

3. Action Plan – next steps

Governors spent a significant amount of time compiling an action plan to address the recommendations made by SM. The initial plan is at the end of these notes; it will be updated as actions are completed.

4. Note about the cost of the review

An initial fee had been agreed for the review. However, there had been a requirement for additional meetings, including with the Diocese and LA, so this fee had been revised. Governors agreed to the fee, which would be paid from the Governors' Fund, as the Review had been commissioned by the Governing Body. Governors acknowledged that this external review of governance had been a valuable piece of work; the process had been fruitful and had given Governors food for thought and consequent action in many areas. It had been an interesting, if difficult process.

5. Closing prayer

The Headteacher closed the meeting in prayer at 8.36pm

These notes were agreed as a true and accurate record by Governors at an MS Teams meeting on 18 November 2020. They would be signed by the Chair at the next physical meeting.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

External Governance Review- Action Points

Action Point

Activity	Action	Lead Governor	Timeframe
Share Action Plan with stakeholders	Publish Action Plan – inform parents, staff, Diocese, LA	Jim Park	By end November 2020

Recommendation 1

That the board collates the work it has started on listening to parents and staff and then takes some time to review the mission statement to ensure that it is clear and still fit for purpose. It may well be that governors are satisfied but they would want to consider how it reflects the school's strong inclusive ethos, takes into account the views of the school community and puts learning as its core purpose. Once governors are confident that the vision and values in the statement are clear and appropriate these principles should be reflected in all school and board strategic planning.

Activity	Action	Lead Governor	Timeframe
Review vision and values in mission statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open consultation with pupils, staff and parents• Governors to consider engaging an external adviser to help develop a vision and mission statement	Clare Raffet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Timeframe for consultation and further work to be confirmed

Recommendation 2

The governing board is in the process of preparing a governance strategy document that will guide and inform their work. It is suggested that this is completed alongside the review of the 2019 – 2020 School Development Plan (SDP) and the signing off of the new SDP for 2020 – 2021. The governance plan should reflect the key development areas and the wider risks the school is likely to face. These might include; continuing to build positive relationships with stakeholders, promotion of the school with the aim of supporting admission numbers, implementation of the new curriculum and the support for pupil's mental health and return to learning post lockdown.

Activity	Action	Lead Governor	Timeframe
To review and update Governor Strategy Document	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review document in light of the external review, COVID outbreak, etc• Link the document to the current School Evaluation Framework (SEF) and School Development Plan (SDP) cycle• Include aspects identified in external review	Mo O'Donoghue, assisted by Simon Hogg and SLT member	Update to be discussed by Governors on 18 November 2020, then next steps to be agreed

Recommendation 3

That school management and those responsible for governance take the opportunity to consider how to promote the school locally with a view to increasing pupil numbers.

Activity	Action	Lead Governor	Timeframe
Promote the school locally to endeavour to increase pupil numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review demographic changes locally• Adopt aspirational outlook• Ensure Catholicity remains at the centre of school life• Headteacher to attend LA place planning meetings	Admissions Committee, plus Simon Hogg and Mary Martin	Committee meeting on 20 October 2020 and ongoing to agree action plan

Recommendation 4

That governors agree to increase their visibility to parents by including pen portraits and photographs on the school website and on the wall in reception and by ensuring that, when governors attend school events and celebrations, they signal who they are. They may also wish to consider short informative governor pieces in school newsletters.

Activity	Action	Lead Governor	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governors to increase visibility to parents 	<p>All Governors, plus the Clerk, to submit a photo and pen picture for publication on the website and on a notice board in the Reception area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Catalina Giglio to collect and collate. ❖ Headteacher to upload to website and arrange for display in Reception area 	Catalina Giglio	By end of November 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governors to increase visibility to their linked year groups 	Linked Governors to consider sending photo and introductory note to their year groups.	All Linked Governors	When possible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governors to be more visible when visiting the school 	Attend school events and celebrations when appropriate under COVID restrictions	All Governors	

Management of complaints

The Diocese's role is one of advisor and it offers its schools a model complaints policy based on law and DfE guidance. The school publishes the Diocesan model policy on the school's website but it is not given a school heading and has not been adapted to fit the school circumstances. Paragraphs refer to academies and opportunities to add the school name have not been taken. It is understandable that parents may mistakenly think that they should complain to the Diocese, particularly if they do not read the substance of a long policy. Governors may wish to consider giving the policy the school branding whilst acknowledging the Diocese input and putting a simple flow chart showing the ladder of how complaints are handled namely: headteacher; chair of governors; governor complaints panel; secretary of state.

Activity	Action	Lead Governor	Timeframe
Review the school's Complaints Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customise policy so that it is specific to St Mary's, including branding• Remove paragraphs that are not relevant, eg applicable to Academies• Construct a flow chart, to be part of the policy, that shows how complaints should be made and escalated	Simon Hogg, in conjunction with the Headteacher	Report on progress to Governors at the full Governing Body meeting on 18 November 2020