**Governors’ Report to Parents 2017-18**

2017-18 has been another busy year for both the school and the Board of Governors, yet again it has flown by!

Once again, I am pleased to report that Russell Lower continues to thrive thanks to a great team effort by all involved with the school, staff, pupils, parents, PTA and governors. These successes will be detailed in more detail below.

At the end of each year the Governors set priorities for the school to work towards over the course of the forthcoming academic year. For 2017-18 each of the three challenging objectives set were met by the school. This year the objectives have focused around the teaching, learning and assessment, raising the standard of writing across the school and also increasing the role of the middle leadership team and support structures.

Work is now ongoing to finalise the objectives for 2018-19.

At the end of the academic year I will be stepping down as Chair of Governors. I have been ‘in post’ for three years and it is now time to hand over the baton. In those three years we have achieved a great deal.

* Re-structuring the Governing Board and creating terms of reference and delegated powers for each of the sub-committees.
* A Vision has been created and implemented which now acts as the driver for all our strategic activity.
* Ensuring that the Board has a positive impact on the school, and the outcomes for children. This is reflected in our latest review of governance.
* Delivering a balanced budget that allows for the school to develop

I would also like to thank Mark Tiana, our Vice-Chair, who is also stepping down at the end of the academic year. Mark has been instrumental in helping me drive the governing board forward over the last three years.

Caroline Ingram has also stepped down from the Board. Caroline has had a great impact on the work of the Governors, and amongst other achievements has set up and run the Parent Governor Forum. I would like to thank Caroline for all her effort and wish her well.

Andrew Allison

Chair of Governors

**Finance and Premises Committee:**

This is the 3rd annual report to parents from the Governor committees. As a reminder the purpose of this committee is to provide focused attention on all funding and cost items required to run the school; as well as ensuring we invest appropriately in the school infrastructure and learning facilities required to continually improve and develop the school’s capability. The overall objective is to always ensure a balanced budget looking at pupil number projections over a 3 to 5 year period. In addition this committee has a focus to ensure the grounds and buildings are safe and secure for the children.

During the 2017/18 school year both this committee and the full Governors board have continued to look at the budgets for this year and subsequent years. Many schools are under increasing financial strain from reduced funding and Russell Lower School is not immune from these pressures however I am pleased to report that during the 2017/2018 academic year we have been able to run a balanced budget and therefore continue to invest in the school which will ensure we are well placed for this year and the future.  This year’s investments have included the following: an additional teacher to extend Year 3 to a three form entry, additional support staff (a new midday supervisor and Aviary staff), 7 new shelters for the field (thank you PTA), along with a dining area. We have been able to remodel Nathan's Garden to extend the KS1 play area and to make a 'natural' environment open to the children A new 'Server' has been installed to ensure school can maintain an excellent level of IT capability within the school.  Other new technology has included class sets of Flurrish tablets for times tables and division practise in Year 3 and Year 2 (Thank you PTA money), Clevertouch boards and Ipads for Starling Class (the new Year 4 class) so that it is ready for September 18 when the school will all be 3 form entry. There is more to come this year including the Foundation stage trim-trail to complete the school set and support development of gross motor skills and a re-surfaced area next to the KS1 playground (around trim-trail) so that the playground is further extended and usable all year round.

As we move into the 2018/2019 academic year the committee will continue to focus on how best to use the budget we have available. We will again have to pay special attention to pupil numbers and consider how the new housing in Ampthill will affect the school. As the number one choice for parents we have seen total school numbers at levels slightly higher than originally budgeted, however, we will continue to take a conservative approach to budgeting. This approach has enabled us to ensure we continue to meet the school’s SDP and is reflected in increased teacher numbers to run single year classes rather than having to integrate years and introduce phase leaders into the school.

Finally the committee would formally like to thank all parents, and in particular the efforts of the PTA in supporting the school’s ongoing improvements. The work you all do to support fundraising initiatives is invaluable and is truly appreciated. We have seen some excellent PTA events through 2017/2018 which help both the sense of community spirit and the funding for the school. All PTA funds are used directly on spending related to your children. Without this additional income we would not be able to offer some of the facilities which make us such a great school for our children.

Paul Birley

Chair – Finance and Premises

**Leadership and Management Committee:**

This is my third year as the Chair of the Leadership and Management Committee and every year seems to go quicker! Amongst other things we discuss leadership and management, staffing, pay and safeguarding. We met in September, January and May.

During the last academic year, teacher recruitment has been an important focus with one member of staff retiring and 3 going on maternity cover! We have successfully recruited for each of the classes affected and welcomed several new members of staff to the school. From September we will be 3 form entry across every year group.

At every meeting we discuss safeguarding, a priority for all schools. Our safeguarding governor reports to the committee, detailing his visits into school where he works with Mrs Walker to ensure all our safeguarding procedures are up to date, robust, and fit for purpose.

The work of the Parent Governor Forum has, yet again been extremely useful. This year the topics covered were E safety, mental health/well being and the school’s Vision. Mrs. Walker and governors have attended each meeting, where they have listened to your views and feedback on the relevant topics. They have also been extremely informative, for example, the mental health/well being session was attended by the school’s play therapist and CHUMS. We will be reviewing the format of the Parent Governor Forum next year.

I am sure you have all been inundated with requests from businesses to check your personal data in line with the new General Data Protection Regulation. This committee is responsible for ensuring the school similarly complies with the new regulation.

I hope you all have a great summer.

Nicolette Ford

Chair – Leadership and Management

**Teaching, Learning and Standards Committee:**

It has been another busy year for the Teaching, Learning and Standards Committee. This year we met termly, in November 2017, March 2018 and July 2018. As a committee our main purpose is to consider matters relating to curriculum, assessment and progress. At each termly meeting we continue to monitor assessment data and ensure that children are making or exceeding expected progress and attainment. We look at gaps in progress and attainment between boys, girls, summer born children, Pupil Premium children and SEN children. We ensure the school has strategies in place to address these gaps and we monitor the effectiveness of these strategies.

This year, phase leaders for Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, have been attending the meetings, they inform governors of the progress of children in their areas and the actions being taken. This change has been very positive, in allowing us to really understand the detail of what is being done to support the children. Some examples have included new inspiring topics, focus on phonics, small group work and the introduction of iPad apps to help with Maths and times-tables.

This year we have particularly concentrated on writing, phonics and pupil premium children. These were areas flagged from the previous year’s performance. In the meetings we have looked at the progress children have made in these areas, and discussed interventions and strategies used to improve this progress. We have also carried out visits in school, and seen first-hand the positive impacts these strategies are having. For example, we observed inspiring teaching of phonics that really captured the children’s interest, using a combination of group learning, outdoor activities, practical activities (pancake making) and written tasks. It has been rewarding to review the data and see the excellent progress the children have made over the year in all these areas. We were particularly impressed by the excellent attainment of the children in phonics.

We have also reviewed several policies during the year, including the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural policy which allows opportunities for the personal development of all pupils, the anti-bullying policy and Marking and Feedback Policy.

Catherine Norris

Chair – Teaching, Learning and Standards