**Governors’ Report to Parents 2016-17**

This academic year has been another busy, and challenging, time for all those involved in Russell Lower.

We have welcomed a number of new staff to the school, and lots of new children, through all year groups.

As governors our most pressing matter at the start of the year was Ofsted, we knew this would be in the first term, and this gave us an opportunity to prepare thoroughly. The result of the inspection was nothing short of excellent, the report written by the inspector praising the school and the senior leadership team. It is a credit to everyone within the school, and a report that all should be proud of. If you have not read the report yet I would urge you to do so.

Our own self -evaluation continues to be corroborated by other external moderators and our own consultant. It is wonderful to see that some areas included in this document are now being evaluated as Grade 1, or outstanding.

One of our biggest challenges this year has been to produce a balanced budget moving forward. Pupil numbers are set to decline over the next 3-5 years in the area, and as governors we must be mindful as to how this impact on funding will affect the school and, most importantly, the children.

In the following paragraphs you will be able to read reports from each of the sub-committees, which highlight the key areas that governors have focused on this year.

I am sure you will join me in thanking Mrs Walker, the senior leadership team, and all members of staff at Russell Lower for another fantastic year. I wish you all a wonderful summer break and look forward to seeing you in the Autumn term. To those children leaving us at the end of this year I wish you all the best, work hard and succeed!

Andrew Allison

Chair – Governing Board

**Teaching, Learning and Standards Committee**

The year got off to a busy start, as it did for all committees, with the Ofsted visit in November. Amongst other topics the governors were asked about progress and attainment of the children at Russell and about the curriculum. Both areas pertinent to this committee. We were delighted that Ofsted were extremely positive about the children’s learning, achievement and behaviour.

As a committee our main purpose is to consider matters relating to curriculum, assessment and progress. This year we met in November 2016, March 2017 and July 2017. At each termly meeting we continue to monitor assessment data and ensure that children are making or exceeding expected progress and attainment. We are in the second year of the new national assessment framework and have been able to embed our understanding of the data to effectively monitor progress against last year. 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.

At each meeting governors are provided with a Special Educational Needs (SEN) update by Miss Watton, Russell’s Special Education Needs Coordinator. Governors monitor the area of SEN in the school and the progress of children with SEN. As a committee we review and agree the school’s priorities for spending within the SEN budget with the overall aim that all children receive the support they need to make progress.

This year we have reviewed and agreed the curriculum, to confirm that it meets statutory requirements. We have also discussed the approach, challenge and techniques used, to ensure the curriculum is accessible, challenging and exciting. We have reviewed several policies, one of the key policies being the Behaviour Policy which was introduced by Mrs Walker in the last academic year. This has had a really positive impact on the children’s conduct, attitudes and progress within school. When I talk to the children in school, it is lovely to hear their enthusiasm when they talk about their rights, the behaviour expected of them and why this is important.

Catherine Norris

Chair – Teaching, Learning and Standards

**Finance and Premises Committee**

This is the 2nd 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 2016/2017 school year both this committee and the full Governors board have had to take a special look at the budgets for this year and subsequent years. You may have seen in the news that many schools are struggling to balance the books and are feeling the strain of budgetary pressures. Russell Lower School is not immune from these pressures but I am pleased to report that during the 2016/2017 academic year we have been able to prioritise funds for both school investments for the future, and most importantly, funding for your children in this year. This includes investments in the children’s toilets, the sports field and the library.

As we move into the 2017/2018 academic year the committee will continue to focus on how best to use the budget we have available. We will have to pay special attention to pupil numbers as the reality of the extra new housing in Ampthill has not flowed into the school at the pace initially anticipated (which is consistent with other schools in the town). This will mean closely monitoring class sizes to make sure additional teacher requirements are considered and class sizes adjusted.

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 2016/2017 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.

Stuart Price

Chair – Finance & Premises

**Leadership & Management**

It is hard to believe that a year has passed since I last reported to you. And what a busy year! For those of you new to the school, I am the Chair of the Leadership and Management Committee. We primarily consider matters relating to the leadership and management of the school, staffing, staff training, performance management and safeguarding.

As you will probably be aware, last November the school was subject to an Ofsted Inspection. We were delighted that the school successfully maintained its “good” judgment. A large part of our time had been spent preparing for the inspection and we are now ensuring that we follow the advice given to us by Ofsted as we continue on our journey to become an “outstanding” school.

It has been an extremely productive year for the Parent/Governor Forum. This year’s topics have been “more able children” and “transition”. Next term we will deal with the important subject of the E-safety. This forum is immensely valuable as concerns, issues and views raised by parents are having a direct impact on the way the school does things. For example, following the meeting on transition, the school has introduced a system whereby classes will be mixed as children move

from KS1 to KS2 (subject to the need to make any other changes). I am sure as parents and carers it is reassuring to know what to expect as your child(ren) move through the school.

Following on from the school’s new Vision introduced last year, we have reviewed the school’s branding. The “Rebranding” group has done some fantastic work reviewing the schools logo, letterhead, uniform and website. I am sure you will agree the changes introduced make the school look more professional and now match our wonderful new building and refurbished classrooms.

An ongoing consideration for us is to review the staffing structure as our school continues to grow (almost on a weekly basis!) Our phase leaders are now firmly in post and from September 2017 all year groups (apart from Y4) will be 3 form entry. As a result a new teacher, Miss

Rachel Walker, will be joining the team. We will continue to review the staffing structure over the coming year.

All in all a productive and successful year!

Nicolette Ford – Chair, Leadership & Management