**RUSSELL LOWER SCHOOL**

**GOVERNORS’ REPORT TO PARENTS**

Welcome to the 2019 Report to parents from the governors. This was my first year as Chair of Governors and writing this has given me time to reflect on the year at Russell. It has been a challenging year with tight school budgets and managing continued growing pupil numbers but also a very successful year for the children, staff and governors.

Each year, the governing board together with the leadership team set targets for the school to work towards. This year we particularly focused on 3 objectives;

1. continued improvement of pupil progress and outstanding teaching;

2. writing standards,

3. further development of the senior leadership team.

I am delighted to report that the school has been successful in relation to each of these objectives and we are now working on the objectives for the next academic year. As part of this we will also be reviewing the school’s Vision which sets the strategic direction for the school.

I am incredibly proud of the staff and children at RLS. The school has continued to grow and has delivered a rich, varied and exciting curriculum to the children. There have been many visitors to the school who have captivated and inspired the children, such as visits from the BMX academy, a Paralympian, and theatre companies. In addition, the children have been on trips out and participated in local sports festivals (with particular success at the Kwick Cricket Festival where a group of year 4 pupils came 3rd in the county!) and the school achieved PSQM in Primary Science at outreach level.

Thank you to the many parents/carers who filled in the questionnaires we sent home. We were thrilled by the positive responses you gave. It is so encouraging to read that so many of you are happy with the school and the work we do.

We asked for your input into what you think the school should focus on next year and many of you mentioned mental well-being. Work has already started on this with staff training in Lego Therapy, the Triple P parent workshops, daily mindful time for the children and work to further embed the pastoral support team. In addition, mental well-being will be an important priority/objective for the school next year. You also told us that you want us to "keep doing what we already do" as the school continues to grow and again this is something we are keen to do!

As with all schools, it is only as good as its staff, children, parents/carers and stakeholders. I want to take this opportunity to thank Mrs Walker and her dedicated team who work incredibly hard to keep Russell the fantastic school that it is, the PTA for the amazing work they do, my fellow governors who give their time so generously and you, the parents and carers whose continued support are very much part of the success of the school.

I hope you all have a great Summer.

Nicolette Ford

**Financial Review 2018/19**

The last year could be described as one of prudency. In the face of reduced central funding and increased costs the school has emerged financially in a strong position because the school during the year has managed limited resources very well.

The Governors appreciate the pressures this has placed on the school and would like to thank all staff for rising to these challenges and for their additional work. We saw both the Head Teacher and her deputy return to classroom duties for part of the week and teachers have seen less LSA support however this has meant we now have some flexibility for the forthcoming year.

The school has also continued to spend and highlights during the year include the following:

* Further Astro turf in Nathan’s Garden to make this useable all year around
* The drainage issue and ‘smell’ in the Year 3 corridor which have now been rectified
* Increased numbers of tablets and Clevertouch Boards to keep technology up-to-date and working
* The Pond has been replanted and re-lined
* The Foundation terrace and playground has had significant investment in new toys and equipment

We have been able to keep year classes without the need to vertically integrate – something we know parents appreciate. We have also retained our teaching staff quota which has helped the school maintain its academic standards and become the first-choice school for many parents in the area – this year we have record numbers joining in September.

We have significant further plans for 2019/20 which includes the addition of 3 LSAs, updating the wireless infrastructure in school, further expenditure on the school grounds, equipment and resources which demonstrates our continued commitment to put the children at Russell Lower at the heart of all our actions.

We would also like to formally acknowledge and thank the PTA for their fantastic support whose donations are even more important in these challenging times. Without the PTA we would not be able to achieve many of the initiatives we now have in place and which we plan to introduce in the coming years.

Paul Birley

Chair – Finance and Premises Committee

**Teaching, Learning and Standards**

As always, it has been another busy year for the Teaching, Learning and Standards Committee. This year we met termly, in November 2018, March 2019 and July 2019. 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.

Last year, phase leaders for Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, started attending the meetings. This has continued this year and is proving to be a very positive change. It allows us to really understand the detail of the children’s progress and attainment, alongside what is being done to support the children.

This year we have looked at progress in all areas, but particularly concentrated on writing, pupil premium children and children with special educational needs. As well as monitoring these areas in our meetings, we also carry out visits in school. For example, we carried out a visit to observe the teaching of phonics, and another to look at strategies used in writing. These visits enabled us to see first-hand specific techniques used to teach phonics, observe the use of an improved Foundation Stage outdoor learning area, and see the impact of other techniques such as drama, fine motor skills practice and structured writing. We were shown children’s books and were able to clearly see the progress of children through using these different strategies. As we near the end of the school year, it is rewarding to see that Russell has achieved another year of excellent progress and attainment.

We have reviewed and discussed the new school curriculum policy and the link to the new Ofsted framework. Of particular interest was the new Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum and the protection of time every Tuesday afternoon to teach PSHE.

Mrs Knight has taken over the role of Special Educational Needs (SEN) Coordinator in school this year and has reported at all meetings on funding, status of plans for SEN children and strategies and resources being used. We also carried out a very informative visit to school in the spring term to see some of this first-hand and better understand the role.

We have recently appointed Rob Cullis to oversee Pupil Premium and Nikki Murphy Sports Premium so they can look at the resources and strategies in place under these initiatives to help the Governing Board ensure the funding is being used effectively to achieve maximum impact.

Catherine Norris

Chair – Teaching, Learning and Standards