

Governing Body Annual Report

Little Gaddesden C. of E. Primary School May 2021

Introduction

I recognise whilst writing this annual report that many people may be much more interested in looking forwards than backwards as we emerge from lockdown into summer!

Nevertheless, the role of any governing body is very much about standing back and reflecting on what has been done in order to plan for the future. You'll find a look back at the year as a whole on **Page 4**. In July, we will revisit the school's vision and consider whether it is still on the right track, given the experience of the pandemic.

Understanding other people's views and perspectives is also part of reflecting and we are grateful to everyone who completed the parent survey before the Easter break. You'll find more information about it on **Page 2**.

The school's financial position at the end of March 2021 (**Page 3**) shows that despite the many uncertainties of the

year, the financial position is healthy. We also thank the Friends of the School for their hard work and creativity in raising funds this year.

Governors have spent a considerable amount of time this year reviewing risk assessments to provide assurance that the guidelines on Covid-19 (that changed frequently) were put into operation and the school was able to provide a safe environment for pupils and staff alike. Thank you to all the governors for their commitment and dedication over the last year in particular.

The school owes a great deal to its Headteacher, Lorna Elkes, who took up the role in April 2020 in the early days of the first national lockdown.

We are equally grateful to all the staff at the school for their energy, commitment and professionalism in supporting the pupils.

Briony Sutcliffe

Chair—Governing Body

Welcome to our

Governing Body Annual Report

School Governors form the largest volunteer force in the country, but it's not always apparent what the role involves. The detail may vary from one school to another, depending on its type and size, but schools have the following core roles in common;

- Making sure the school's vision is on the right track
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school
- Asking the Head searching questions about the school
- Ensuring the voices of stakeholders (parents, pupils and staff) are heard
- Ensuring Safeguarding and other statutory requirements are met

You can read more about what this means in practice at in this newsletter.

Funding follows pupils

All schools experience a certain amount of fluctuation in their pupil numbers within the year and from one year to the next. This can be a for a number of reasons; e.g. as families relocate to a new area or perhaps opt for a different educational path for their children.

Little Gaddesden is no different to any other school in this respect. However, for small schools in particular, this can have a significant impact on their budgets, due to the way that "funding follows pupils".

In very broad terms, Little Gaddesden receives a "lump-sum" of around £200,000 each year. It also receives funding of about £3,000 for every pupil attending the school in a year.

So, if we assume the school is full to capacity at 105 pupils, the pupil funding received is £315,000. Conversely, if total pupil numbers dip to 95, the pupil funding falls to £285,000. Overall, this is a difference of some **£30,000**, potential funding that could pay for a member of staff for the year.

For any school, the ability to forecast pupil numbers for the year ahead is fun-

damental. We need to plan staffing effectively, and early information is the key.

If, for any reason, you are thinking of changing school for your child, please do talk to Lorna Elkes, Headteacher as **early as possible**.

It's much easier to plan ahead on the basis of possible changes; the school can get in touch with pupils on its waiting list if sufficient notice is given.

Feedback from the Parent Survey

Thank you to everyone who completed the Parent Survey in February 2021. There was a good response from over 41 families (59%) with many insightful and constructive comments.

Governors have reviewed and discussed the results and compared them to the 2019 parent survey where the same questions were asked. These are summarised below and the 2019 percentages are reported in brackets as a comparison. The results indicated positive improvements in parental responses, compared to the 2019 responses, in all but one of the questions - the extent to which people felt part of the community. Few people elaborated on this and it is possible it can be attributed to being in lockdown at the time. In addition, several new questions related to educational provision during the pandemic.

- 88% of parents felt that the school had kept them informed about plans related to Covid-19,
- 80% felt that the school communicated its remote learning offer clearly
- 55% of parents thought they have had all the support they needed at this time.

Parents also responded to open ended questions relating to well-being, how remote learning could be improved going forward and anything else they wanted to communicate.

Some common themes emerged from the comments, including:

- How the quality of provision for pupils improved as the pandemic progressed.

- Some concerns over the potential impact of too much screen time on well-being and how technological issues caused complications with accessing and submitting the lessons.

A wide range of comments were also received on how remote learning had worked for individual children and their own family circumstances. Whilst a few families expressed a preference for all live lessons, most felt that pre-recorded videos and learning packs that could be accessed at any time best met their own family's needs.

Governors' reflections on the feedback

From the start of the pandemic, we had been aware that a range of factors mean that every family is different e.g. having parents working full-time, number of siblings receiving remote learning, access to Wi-Fi, laptops and devices, the age of the children and how much individual support they need.

We were also aware that Ofsted published its own research to support schools. This set out to define the forms that remote learning can take and debunk some unhelpful myths e.g. the best forms of remote education are digital and the best way to deliver remote education is always through live lessons. You can read it here: [What's working well in remote education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/research-data-and-analysis/what-works-well-in-remote-education)

We concluded that in the event of another lockdown, (which we hope will not be needed) the school's priority would be to continue to ensure that remote learning remains inclusive, safe and accessible to pupils. In practice, this means a mixed approach of pre-recorded videos, learning materials that can be downloaded and weekly live shared story times.

% of parents who agreed/strongly agreed with each statement (2019 in brackets)

- ◆ 80% (66%) I am made to feel welcome when I come into school.
- ◆ 78% (55%) It is easy to approach the school with questions or problems.
- ◆ 64% (83%) I feel part of the community.
- ◆ 88% (65%) Communication is effective.
- ◆ 73% (50%) I understand what my child is learning and how they are being taught.
- ◆ 88% (64%) I know how to support my child's learning.
- ◆ 79% (79%) The school helps me to support my child.
- ◆ 81% (75%) I have a good relationship with the school.
- ◆ 60% (44%) The school asks for my opinion.

Governors Visits to School in 2020/21

Governors make regular visits to school to see it working on a day-to-day basis and discuss specific areas of the curriculum with subject leaders. This gives governors insight and understanding that are vital if they are to fulfil their strategic role and to be able to ask searching questions at meetings. This year, it hasn't always been possible for governors to visit the school in person, so a number of visits have been done "remotely" using i-pads.

The focus of visits completed so far this year has included; English, Science, SEND, Wellbeing, the Big Draw, the Suffragettes workshop, the Healthy Life workshop, the school at lunchtime. We also have a number of visits planned for the remainder of the summer term.

Overseeing school finances

An important part of a governing body role is to ensure that the school's financial position remains healthy, so that it can continue to provide an excellent education for its pupils.

This involves agreeing a budget at the start of the year and monitoring it regularly to ensure it remains on track. Last week we agreed a budget for the new (now current) financial year.

Schools are required to publish a summary of the year-end financial position. The figures for the end of the last financial year (2020/21) show that the school is in a healthy position and are summarised on the attached table and pie chart.

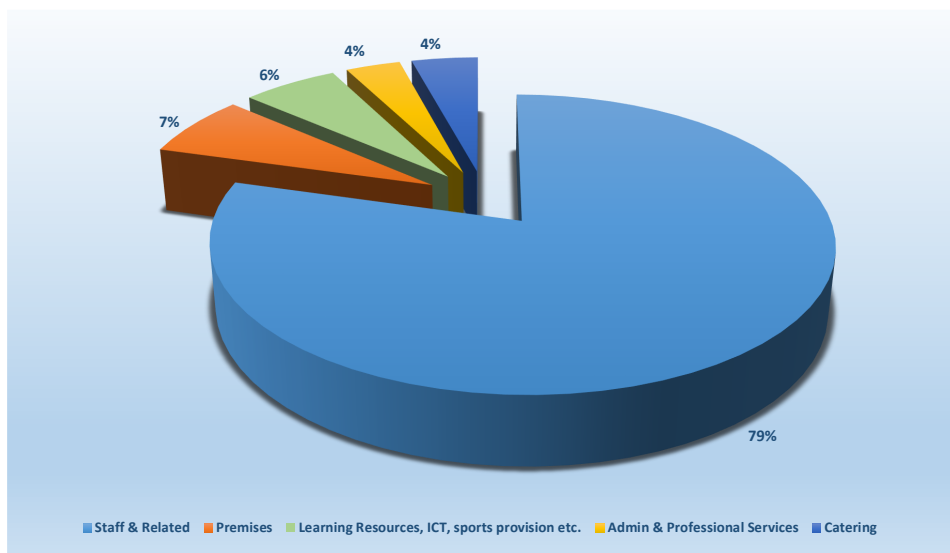
You will see that both income and staff costs have both risen against the budget (due to additional COVID funding and additional staff). The Professional Services (Curriculum) expenditure dropped. This relates to government PE funding that couldn't be spent in lockdown and will be carried forward to this year.

We are particularly fortunate to have the ongoing support of the Friends of Little Gaddesden School

who do so much throughout the year to raise additional funds. They have continued to be extremely

supportive and successful, by developing innovative and creative ways to raise funds even under lockdown.

2020-21 FINAL BUDGET POSITION			
Budget Area	Budget 2020-21	Actual Spend 2020-21	% of total expenditure
Staff & Related	£417,885	£442,948	79%
Premises	£37,414	£38,845	7%
Learning Resources, ICT, sports provision etc.	£54,646	£33,465	6%
<i>Comprising:</i>			
Learning Resources	£10,040	£12,612	2%
ICT	£11,245	£11,673	2%
Professional Services (Curriculum)	£33,361	£9,180	2%
Admin & Professional Services	£18,762	£19,202	3%
Catering	£24,779	£23,314	4%
Total Expenditure	£553,486	£557,774	100%
Revenue Income	£553,389	£576,528	
Revenue Balances	£67,242	£85,996	



A look back at 2020/21

The role of the Headteacher is always a demanding one; all the more so to take it on when you are yet to meet the pupils, staff, parents and governors and there are reams of guidance on making a Covid safe environment (that are frequently updated) to assimilate and put into action. We are grateful to Lorna Elkes for taking up her new role as Headteacher in April 2020.

Summer Term 2020

The school re-opened at the start of the summer term in 2020 for a small number of eligible pupils and remained open throughout the pandemic for those meeting the appropriate Department for Education criteria. A new Google Education Platform, supported by government funding, was installed to facilitate remote learning for the majority of pupils and allow for creative ways to engage with them. Remote learning created a number of challenges initially which needed to be addressed.

- Adapting planning and resources for families to share and creating individual learning packs for every child.
- Recording learning guidance for parents to support them in delivering learning for younger pupils in particular.
- Ensuring all pupils had access to an appropriate IT device for remote learning, by lending them where needed.
- Giving additional support where

pupils found it more difficult to engage with remote learning.

At the same time, normality was maintained wherever possible: pupils' birthdays continued to be celebrated and a COVID safe book loan system was set up.

The school was in a position to re-open to all pupils (with the exception of those shielding) in June 2020, making it possible to say an important farewell to those pupils in Year 6 moving on to secondary school.

Autumn Term 2020

The school remained open throughout the Autumn Term and continued to provide in-school education until December 2020. It was a hugely busy term and highlights (all delivered in a Covid-safe way) included;

- Drama workshops on the Greeks and the Suffragettes,
- Dance workshop,
- The "Big Draw" supported by a local artist and volunteers
- Remembrance at village memorial with Class 4 and Revd John Russell,
- Remote interaction with a violinist from the BBC orchestra,
- Stargazing activities,
- Wellbeing activities
- Peter Pan pantomime for all pupils to watch,
- The traditional Christmas school production for all pupils (filmed and shared with parents)

Spring Term 2021

Unfortunately, January to March saw another national lockdown, where the school was only open to a limited number of eligible pupils. Pupils returned for 3 weeks in March before the Easter break. The school welcomed being able to use the church to record parts of their Easter Service. The focus at the time was very much on pupils' wellbeing and enabling them to reconnect with their peers, to interact, socialise and re-establish the routines, expectations and structure of the school day.

Summer Term 2021

The school is resuming a wide range of activities that will support pupils' wellbeing and enhance their learning across the curriculum by being very hands-on and active.

- Animal workshop
- BMX workshop
- A-life healthy workshop
- Iron Age day
- College Lakes Visit
- Invictus Games Athlete visit
- Visiting poet
- PGL
- Circus workshop
- Music workshop

It is once again possible to gather together in the hall as a whole school for Collective Worship. We very much hope, restrictions permitting, that the traditional end-of-year Leaver's Service will take place in Church and that we are on the route back to normality.

Welcome to New Governors

We are delighted to welcome three new members of the governing body this summer-term. Helen Sewell, Linda Buchanan-Barrow and Hayley McKenna all live in the village and bring with them a fantastic range of experience from education, finance & banking.

Thank you all for stepping forward and we are very much looking forward to working with you.

Little Gaddesden School
Church Road
Little Gaddesden
Berkhamsted
Herts HP4 1NX

Phone: 01442 842464
Email: admin@littlegaddesden.herts.sch.uk
www.littlegaddesden.herts.sch.uk/