

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GOVERNING BODY 2023-24

Little Gaddesden Church of England Primary School

Together in Community

Our new vision, based on the parable of the Good Samaritan and built on our Christian values, was extensively discussed and consulted with pupils, parents, governors and others connected with the school. We felt that it embodied everything that we strive for in our school, of pupils working, learning and playing together in community, and displaying our values of **kindness**, **endeavour** and **understanding**. It is our hope and aim that everyone in our community shares and personifies those values.

Governors

It has been a privilege for us as governors to be a part of Little Gaddesden School over the past year. In many cases, governors have served for over ten years, and have seen the school develop, as successive groups of children join in reception or elsewhere in year groups, progress through the years, and eventually move on to their next educational settings.

Current governors are Linda Buchanan-Barrow, Victoria Dingle, Lorna Elkes (as Head Teacher), Simon Emmett (parent governor), Laura Gill, Laurie Maclaren, Hayley McKenna, Rev. John Russell (as vicar), Briony Sutcliffe, Izzi Wheeler (staff governor) and me.

I am very grateful to all my fellow governors for their hard work over the past year. It has been a pleasure to work alongside such a capable and dedicated team.

Staff

Our privilege is in seeing the hard work of the staff and school leaders in developing and implementing an exciting, varied, fulfilling curriculum. In the care they take for each child and in seeing the children develop, make progress and fulfil their potential, and as they leave our school, well prepared for that next stage. There are, of course, a multitude of hurdles to be overcome along the way, and it is impressive to see the continual staff professional development in the many varied aspects of their role. We congratulate all staff on their dedication, whether they have undertaken new professional training in the past year or have maintained and implemented previous training.

We remain impressed by the professionalism of our staff at Little Gaddesden School, and by the impact they have on the progress and achievements of the children. On behalf of all governors, and perhaps on behalf of parents and children, may I say a huge 'thank you' to our wonderful staff.

The Friends of Little Gaddesden School

I would also like to highlight and celebrate the hard work, dedication and impact of the Friends of Little Gaddesden School. The activities they organise and the funds they raise to support the school make a huge difference to the lives of the children throughout the school, as well as helping to maintain links with the wider community. Thank you to the committee and also to all the parents and friends who support their work, volunteering at events, as well as to everyone who attends and gets involved in the activities. If you think that you might be able to work as part of the team, please step up and volunteer to join the committee. The work you do will have such a huge impact on the lives of your children and all those in the school now and those yet to come. As a school, we are so fortunate to have the support of the Friends!

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OFSTED inspection

When I wrote to review last year, we anticipated an imminent OFSTED inspection, and it is now the case that we expect this early in the new academic year.

As I mentioned last year, it is apparent that far fewer schools are rated 'Outstanding', following changes to the criteria and focus of inspections, with some 80% of those previously rated 'Outstanding' being rated as 'Good' in more recent inspections. You will also have seen recent changes to the OFSTED reporting, and it seems clear that we will be among the first schools to receive a new-style report.

There is more emphasis on the intent, implementation and impact of the school's curriculum, and you can find information about ours on the school website.

School finances

At the beginning of each financial year, which runs from April, the school leaders set a budget, forecasting the school's finances for five years. Each year, I am impressed by how ambitious the budget is in achieving the best possible outcomes for our pupils. Each year, however, the school's finances are under pressure, as costs rise faster than the funding the school receives. It is greatly to the credit of Mrs Elkes and the school office, and all staff members, that the school is able to achieve the high standards for our pupils, despite the constant financial pressures.

The funding for next year is set based on pupil numbers this October. The following section addresses the way in which 'funding follows pupils'.

The outturn for the most recent complete year, 2023-24, is as shown in the data and the pie chart opposite. In addition to reviewing the school's finances every half term, governors compare our finances with those of comparable local schools, to ensure that our finances are well run and achieve the best outcome for our pupils in relation to funds spent.

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 for a number of reasons, for example as families relocate to a new area or perhaps opt for a different educational path for their children. Little Gaddesden School 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 the child'. In very broad terms, Little Gaddesden School receives a 'lump-sum' of around £195,000 each year. It also receives funding of about £3,600 for every pupil on roll in October. So, if we assume the school is full to capacity at 105 pupils, the pupil funding received is £380,000. Conversely, if total pupil numbers dip to 95, the pupil funding falls to £344,000. Overall, this is a difference of some £36,000, 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 fundamental. The school's leaders need to plan staffing effectively, and early information is key. If, for any reason, you are thinking of changing school for your child, please do talk to Lorna Elkes 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.

Parent survey

In addition to our time spent in school, liaising with staff and attending lessons, trips, assemblies and events, governors value the feedback from parents in occasional surveys, one of which was undertaken this year. Thank you to all parents who responded to this survey. Your answers help to complete our picture of the school, in conjunction with reports from external advisers, results and our observations on governor visits.

Your responses to the questions and the additional comments you make were all seen by the governors and discussed thoroughly, both at a full meeting of the governing body and additionally at a sub-group convened just for the purpose of reviewing and agreeing actions based on this survey.

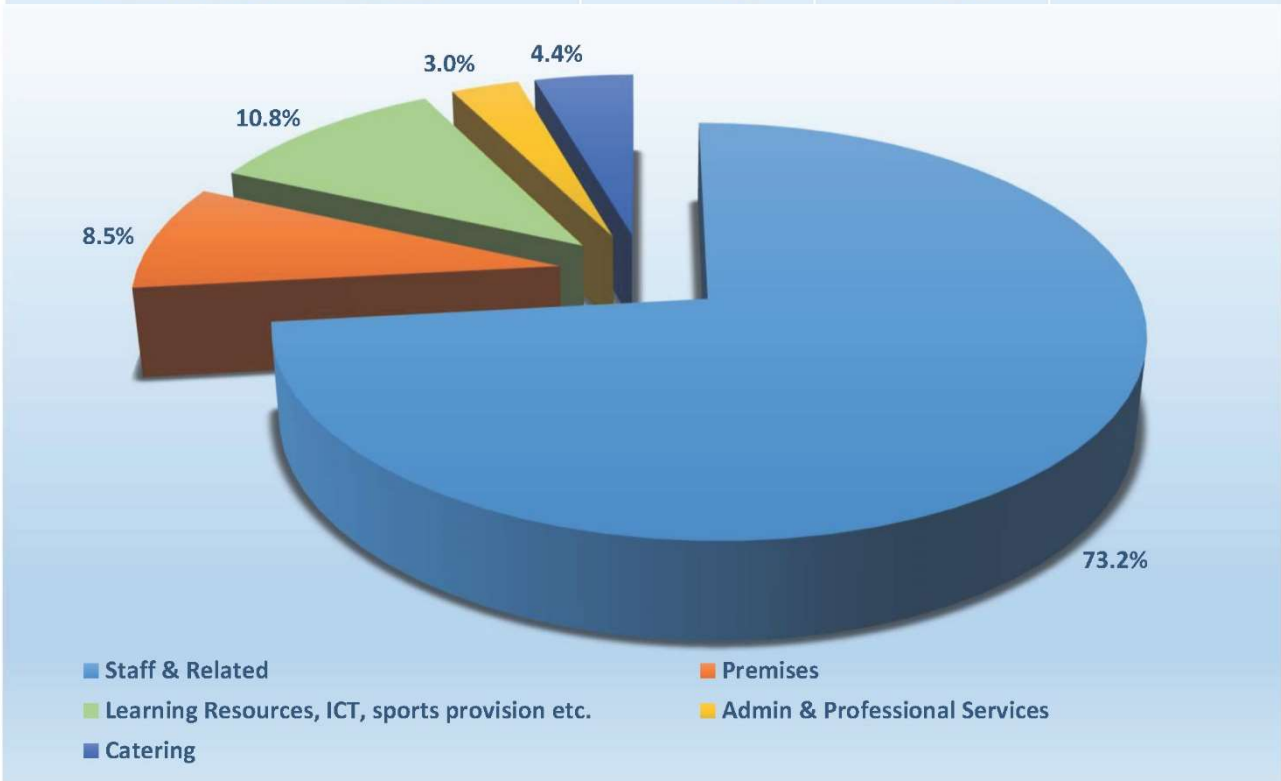
Please be assured that we value your opinions, whether the scores or comments are positive, or reflect concerns or issues. All views matter to us and to the school's leaders and are reviewed and acted upon, as appropriate.



Together in Community
Built on our Christian values, rooted in the parable of the Good Samaritan

2023-24 FINAL BUDGET POSITION

Budget Area	Budget 2023-24	Actual Spend 2023-24	% of total expenditure
Staff & Related	£486,258	£496,913	73.2%
Premises	£52,094	£57,784	8.5%
Learning Resources, ICT, sports provision etc.	£57,206	£72,945	10.8%
<i>Comprising:</i>			
<i>Learning Resources</i>	£24,933	£42,480	6.3%
<i>ICT</i>	£8,769	£7,098	1.0%
<i>Professional Services (Curriculum)</i>	£23,504	£23,367	3.4%
Admin & Professional Services	£20,027	£20,679	3.0%
Catering	£28,447	£30,076	4.4%
Total Expenditure	£644,032	£678,397	100.0%
Revenue Income	£623,734	£666,899	
Committed Revenue Balances (incl unspent Sports Premium)			
Uncommitted Revenue Balances (Reserves) c/f	£48,429	£57,229	
<i>Reserves c/f as % of School Budget Share</i>	9.1%	10.7%	



The role of governors

Governors provide vital support to the school, as well as setting the framework and standards which the school is expected to achieve. We work collaboratively with the school leaders and staff, as well as holding the school to account. We act as critical friends in this role.

The three core functions of a governing body are:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff;
- Overseeing financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

All governors are volunteers, collectively making up the largest volunteer force in the country. Whilst being voluntary, the role requires dedication and commitment, and a strong sense of what is in the best interests of the children.

Changes to the governing body

We said goodbye to Stuart Owen during 2023-24, who stepped down as a governor. Stuart had been enormously effective during his time on the governing body, including many excellent visits to the school and contributions at governing body meetings, and we are very grateful for his hard work.

Also stepping down at the end of the summer term, Hannah Jarvis left us after two years as a parent governor. Hannah brought the same energy, hard work and commitment to her role as a governor as she had to her work as part of the Friends of the school. Latterly, a joint vice chair of governors, and lead on Learning matters, Hannah has been a pleasure to work alongside.

Joining us as new members of the governing body at the end of the academic year were Victoria Dingle and Laurie Maclaren, who bring their own skills, expertise and experience to our team, for which we are very grateful. Victoria will be taking on the work as lead on Learning matters.

We also said goodbye to our clerk, Louise Farrow, who has been a wonderful help and support to the governors, and especially to the chairs of governors. I am pleased to say that Louise remains on the staff in the school office, where she continues to be a vital and capable part of everyday school life!

Election of a new parent governor

We will be holding an election this term for the vacancy for a parent governor. If you would like to stand or would like further information on the work of school governors generally, please contact the school office, or contact me via email at chair@littlegaddesden.herts.sch.uk. You may also wish to speak to Simon Emmett, who can give you an idea of the work over his time as a parent governor.

Phil Heaphy

Chair of Governors

September 2024