



## **GOVERNING BOARD IMPACT STATEMENT 2022 -23**

The Governing Board at St Martin's Primary School continued to fulfil its three key responsibilities during the academic year 2022 – 23, of ensuring:

1. The school has a clear vision and strategic plan,
2. Amy Hardinge, as Acting Headteacher, is held to account for the educational performance of the school and the performance management of the staff and,
3. The financial performance of the school, including how well money is spent, is overseen

The purpose of this statement is to outline the structure of and summarise the overall effectiveness of the Governing Board. To give additional context, areas of particular significance are explained in more detail through the document.

Over the year the Governing Board has met both virtually and face-to-face. As the year has progressed the Governing Board has met face-to-face more frequently and although some meetings are likely to be virtual in the future, more will see the board meeting in school. It is felt the face-to-face meetings are more suitable for discussing complex issues.

This year has allowed the governors to act in a more traditional way after a couple of disrupted years during and following the pandemic. The governors have met staff and children, reviewed books, observed activity and met people external to the school, i.e., Ofsted Inspector.

At an early stage of the Spring Term the school's Headteacher stepped down suddenly and without notice. Fortunately, the Deputy Headteacher stepped forward and became our Acting Headteacher. She has done a great job in providing stability, consistency and continuity. The Governing Board thank Steph Harvey for all that she did whilst at St Martin's, as a teacher, Deputy Headteacher, Acting Headteacher and Headteacher.

Amy Hardinge, our Acting Headteacher, has performed well and the governors have provided her with support, encouragement, validation and appreciation.

The Governing Board undertook one significant piece of work together and that was to consider whether the school should join a management partnership with a multi-academy trust (MAT) with a view of joining the MAT permanently. The governors worked closely with the School's Senior Leadership Team (SLT), conducting research, holding interviews, visiting schools and debating the different options. The Governing Board decided to enter into a management partnership with the Ventrus MAT, at the end of the Summer Term. It will be interesting to see how this relationship develops. The governors feel this will be a step forward, allowing the school to develop, be resilient and be connected to a broader set of 'colleagues'.

## **Composition and Attendance**

The structure of the Governing Board is as follows:

- One staff governor – elected by the staff
- The Headteacher – appointed automatically
- Two parent governors – elected by parents and carers
- One Local Authority governor – approved by the Local Authority and appointed by the Governing Board
- Seven Foundation governors – appointed by the Diocese of Exeter, Cranbrook Management Group and Churches Together in Devon.

Details of our current governors can be found on pages 10 – 11.

Our school has one Associate Member who is available to support the Board through being a panel member if required for formal hearings (e.g., exclusions, complaints, staff matters etc.). Beyond that he does not play an active role in the Governing Board.

Foundation governors have particular responsibility to uphold the Christian ethos of the school. All our governors have, in the opinion of the Governing Board, the skills and experience required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school.

The Governing Board maintained the way of working that was adopted last year with lead governors reporting directly into the Full Governing Board meetings, of which there are four each term. A range of business is managed each term with consistency and continuity across all three terms.

There are two specific and separate committees that meet in addition to the Full Governing Board:

- Leadership and Teachers' Pay (meets twice a year)
- Admissions (meets as required)

Committees to consider pupil discipline and staffing matters are set up as and when needed.

St Martin's School is a well-established school in our town and a key part of our community. The school continues to experience high levels of mobility, with children joining all years throughout the school between September and July. We have a stable core of children who spend their entire primary school education with us.

The school has been over capacity, student wise, for most of the school year. We recently opened our doors to a number of children from families of refugees who are accommodated nearby. The school being over capacity does create some difficulties with having enough space but brings also, financial security. Despite budgetary pressures the school remains in a strong position financially.

There are concerns about maintaining this in future years but the school is in a better place than many other schools. We have a full school for the next 12 months and a full nursery, with the hope that most, if not all of the nursery children, will join our Reception classes in September 2024.

The school remains a challenging and demanding place to work and the school has been inventive, inventive and flexible in how it supports our children and families.

The 'Hub' has been an area of much debate over the school year. It is clear there have been different approaches from our two 'headteachers' and the Governing Board has done its best to understand which is best. The school supported children with the 'Hub' but most of the children are now being taught in their mainstream classes. The 'Hub' now the 'Holly Room' continues to be a valuable resource, providing support to those children who need extra support. Some children remain in the 'Holly Room' fulltime whilst others access it as and when they need it. *(N.b. September 2023 amendment: The Hub/Holly Room was a resource in place during 2022-23 for children who needed a higher level of support but is no longer in use from September 2023.)*

All children with additional needs are supported by a wide range of responses. The school continues to be a caring, nurturing place for children.

The Governing Board has maintained its focus on all children and supported the school in developing approaches to stimulate and inspire all abilities. From tasks to enrich children's lives to tasks that push and challenge our more-able children there have been many separate pieces of work that have added to the educational experience of every child. One aspect of particular note has been the development of conscious and caring citizens. The school has considered a range of topics including the Taliban taking over Afghanistan and the effect on the education of girls. This has allowed children to better understand important subjects, learn discussion skills and develop their own standards.

The school has maintained oversight of the progress children are making in all subjects. Statutory testing for Phonics, Key Stage 1 SATS, numerical testing in Year Four and Key Stage 2 SATS have all taken place as well as the newly introduced Reception baseline. The school has regularly undertaken its own assessments of individual children at regular stages throughout the school year. The Governing Board has scrutinised the results, acting as a critical friend to the school. The Governing Board has liaised with independent school improvement officers to compare progress at St Martin's with elsewhere. The indications are that children at St Martin's are making good progress in most years, especially in relation to their behaviours. There are children and year groups where we know additional support is required and we have agreed with the measures put in place for 2023/24 to address the identified challenges.

As ever the school has done its best to provide good continuity of teachers across all classes. This has proven to be extremely difficult this year with a large number of teachers on maternity leave. Through flexibility, a lot of leadership time and committed staff, the school has kept disruption to a minimum and most classes have had the same teachers throughout the whole year.

During the year the school implemented the 'Model of Great Teaching' a scheme designed to raise teaching standards, create greater consistency and make better use of teaching time available. This is felt to have been a key success over the school year, with a cultural shift being evident. Staff have responded positively to the challenge and there have been some excellent examples of outstanding teaching. A number of children who, in previous years, were below their potential, have made great progress and are now where they should be or even better.

One stand-out achievement during the school year was the outcome of the Ofsted Ungraded Inspection in March. The inspector was impressed by what she saw at the school and provided us with positive feedback. She recognised, as we did, there is still work to do, but acknowledged our understanding of our position and agreed with our plans. The governors played their part in the inspection, supporting the SLT and the school, whilst participating in the inspection activity.

Throughout the year the governors have visited the school on numerous occasions. There is a good relationship between the staff at St Martin's and the governors, which means it is easy to visit the school and undertake our work. Staff are open, flexible, engaging and supportive which gives the governors the best opportunity of conducting their work effectively.

At the start of 2022-23 the numbers of governors had dwindled and for much of the school year we operated with limited numbers. Fortunately, over the last few months, the situation is much improved and there is a strong and effective Governing Board. The governors are highly motivated and have been ready and willing to volunteer for new tasks. Meetings have been well-attended and individual contributions are good. There are still vacancies but as the school moves into a management partnership governance is likely to change.

**See Appendix 1** for details of all of our current Governors.

**See Appendix 2** for the summary of meetings attendance by governors during 2022-23.

### **Summary of Governor Activity**

#### **Governance Development Action Plan**

In order for the Governing Board to be "the best we can be for ourselves, for each other and for God's world", we have objectives that sit within the School Improvement Plan under Leadership and Management.

#### **1: Membership, recruitment and training**

During the year we recruited four new governors, but we have lost three. The board is in a good position. Thanks go to Russ Green and Steph Harvey, both of whom contributed significantly to the operation of the Governing Board.

The Governing Board was fortunate to have the local Minister, Jon Holder, join our ranks. There is a strong foundation of committed Christians on the Governing Board, this supported our Christian distinctiveness.

Our governors have a wide set of skills with a range of confidence in their understanding of the key issues facing the school. Our more experienced have good levels of confidence and our less experienced are developing well with growing levels of confidence. A mentoring and induction process is used for each new governor. The quality of work undertaken by governors is good and although we are short of numbers this is made up by the amount of work completed. Governors have demonstrated the ability to ask searching questions at board meetings to determine if the right actions are happening.

In school, governor training has been face-to-face. Other opportunities are both online and in person. In house sessions regarding the 'Model of Great Teaching' and safeguarding have been provided. Governors take advantage of numerous opportunities and there is good sharing, across the Governing Board, of lessons learned and information gathered at these sessions. Our training attendance has increased over the past twelve months.

The Governing Board is confident that we have a committed group of governors who are competent in what they do.

## **2: Leadership**

The Chair of the Board has been in role for the past five years and over the past year has worked closely with the Acting Headteacher and the School Leadership Team to ensure the school has continued to operate well, through the change in headteacher.

He has been able to focus the energies of the Governing Board on key issues whilst making sure that basic governance roles, e.g., finance, staffing, premises, safeguarding and SEND have been fulfilled.

## **3: Strategy, support and challenge**

The School Improvement is a key part of the Governing Board's Cycle of Work and with a detailed plan this year there was plenty of oversight and scrutiny. Key leads from the school were identified for the SIP and governors linked in with those members of staff to understand what progress was being made. Good meetings were held throughout the year and progress was tracked closely. During July the Governing Board held a face-to-face meeting where the key issues were discussed, and recommendations made. The findings and recommendations were passed to the School Leadership Team who have incorporated them into the draft School Improvement Plan for 2023- 24.

The approach to supporting children with Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) has remained an area of focus for the Governing Board. The ethos of the school remains very inclusive with both school and governing board striving to provide the best outcomes for our children. Progress has been made in the completion and management of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and this has ensured additional funding is received sooner, enabling the school to provide better support. The school has continued to make improvements in this area.

Curriculums have developed over the school year. The School Leadership Team has supported subject leaders in developing the curriculums, making sure they are relevant for all school years and complement each other where there are overlaps. During the year a number of subject leaders have changed due to staff leaving or going on leave. Where this has happened, the new staff have been supported to get up to speed.

The budget has been well-managed for the school year and the financial position has greatly improved. The school is in a secure position. The Lead Governor for Finance has continued his relationship with the School Business Manager. The budget is closely overseen, well understood with good discussions over efficiency and effectiveness. The Lead Governor is one of our departing governors and he will be replaced straight away, this illustrating the value placed on this key role.

## **4: Ensuring accountability**

Governing Board engagement with parents and the local community has improved over the last twelve months with the school capitalising on the relationships developed during the pandemic. School Spider has replaced Class Dojo with all children having at least one parent with access. Regular newsletters have been circulated which have included sections from the Governing Board. A survey was conducted that showed high rates of parental satisfaction.

The Headteacher's annual appraisal was undertaken by a panel of governors and an external advisor during the Autumn Term to review previous and set new objectives. The new objectives related to the academic year ahead. The objective setting was followed up each term by meetings where progress was reviewed, personal development considered, and work-life balance discussed. The objectives focused on the development of the

curriculums, the development of subject leaders, the support of children with SEND and building links with the local community and partners.

New objectives were set for the Acting Headteacher and these have been monitored throughout the time she has been in role.

### **Other Governor Impacts**

#### **1: Health and Safety**

The school continues to be well managed leaving it a safe environment for children, staff and visitors, even with obvious health and safety risks such as the Forest School and the pond. There are a surprisingly low number of incidents due to the vigilance of the School Business Manager. The Lead Governor for Health and Safety and Premises has a good relationship with the School Business Manager, this allowing the Governing Board to have a good understanding of what is happening at the school.

#### **2: Policies and budget review**

The lead governors review all policies on a regular basis. This is not a tick box exercise; rather each policy is given careful scrutiny and updated as needed. In all our work, but particularly in this area, our impact has been all the greater thanks to having an excellent Clerk to the Governors, Jacqueline Brooks, whose record keeping, and reminders enable us to function as a Governing Board.

#### **3: Financial management and care for buildings**

The School Business Manager, Brigid Thompson, provides succinct financial reports that allows the Governing Board to monitor the budget at regular points during the financial year. As already reported the Lead Governor for Finance manages this specifically for the board but this is an area where this is reinforced by Full Governing Board oversight. The School Business Manager regularly attends Full Governing Board meetings to answer questions and discuss financial matters.

The buildings continue to be well looked after and set a wonderful example for our children. Repairs are completed promptly with nothing allowed to dull a brilliant learning environment. Space at the school is limited, especially with the school being full, and strategically there has been much discussion over best use of space, extensions and stand-alone additional facilities. These continue to be explored with the Governing Board fully involved through the Lead Governor and the full board.

#### **4: Governor visits and input to the school**

Governor visits continued during the year with many visits taking place. Governors were a regular feature of the school day and staff became increasingly familiar with all of the governors.

The blend of skills provided by a small group of governors is impressive. This supports the Governing Board being open-minded, receptive to new ideas, motivated and constructive.

#### **5: School Christian Ethos**

As a Voluntary Aided (VA) school the Board, and in particular the Foundation governors, are responsible for upholding and contributing to the Christian ethos of the school. Every Governing Board meeting and committee begins with prayer and ends with the question "How has this meeting benefited our children and contributed to the Christian distinctiveness of the school?". Having to answer this question reminds the Governors of their particular role in improving this.

Responses recorded in recent Governing Boards are set out below and help to demonstrate the impact of the Board with regards to Christian distinctiveness;

#### September 2022

- The questioning, scrutiny and challenge from governors was a strength during this meeting. It helps SH have clarity in explaining reasoning and current issues.
- The focus on discussing the SIP and the approval from the GB is all underpinned by the improvement governors seek for children. There is ambition but it is child focused.
- The discussions around the spending of the Pupil Premium felt inclusive of all year groups as well as on the development of staff.
- The meeting demonstrated a clear, forward-thinking, and holistic approach.
- The discussion around SATs and how the school is child-development orientated as opposed to focused only on testing, felt very Christian.
- There is a real sense of flow and of governors really understanding what has been and what the intent is for the future of the school. There is connection and coherence between the GB and the school.

#### October 2022

- There are significant concerns for the school at the moment and the GB is showing it understands this and is not shying away from meeting these challenges so that children can still benefit.
- Reflections on the budget were taken with a focus on the best impacts for children.
- Active governance is happening as governors continue to fulfil their roles and spend time in school.

#### November 2022

- Governors support the provision in the Hub and understand how it positively helps not just those children in the Hub but also has a positive impact for children in other classes.
- Governors demonstrated their wish to support and acknowledge staff.
- It was felt that discussions have had depth and included frankness about the dips in staff morale.
- Governors recognize and support how school staff go 'above and beyond' e.g., SEND support, supporting community groups, providing a wide range of afterschool clubs.

#### December 2022

- The meeting has heard lots of questioning, and checking that actions are being taken. It had been a very active meeting with questions answered well.
- The level of commitment from governors is evident, from external training to sharing learning points. This is very valuable.
- The depth of discussion at this meeting shows openness and honesty, which benefits all.
- The detailed discussion around the Hub provision and the passion around supporting all children was at the heart of the meeting.

#### January 2023

- Gaining this understanding of the model allows governors to ask better questions and better understand/assess the quality of teaching.
- Governors have gained a better understanding of strategies and resources in place in Year 3.
- Governors have received clarification that teachers are in a strong position to accelerate progress in Year 3

#### February 2023

- Discussions around next steps demonstrate that governors wish to maintain the existing Christian ethos and values and ensure that decisions are made for the best for the children.
- Agreed that discussions held were focused on what would benefit the children, and that retaining the Christian ethos was key. Learning of SEND innovations within EY has developed the GB's understanding of current needs in school and how provision is being developed to support them.
- From this meeting, feels that the Christian values have been upheld, and hopes that decisions taken will help staff grow and benefit the children.
- Development of safeguarding training within the GB will increase knowledge and awareness and benefit the children by having a better-informed board.

#### February 2023

- Plans for JH to support the welfare of the staff team are very Christian.
- The focus on staff well-being and ensuring all children with additional needs are supported in the right way is very much in line with the school's ethos.
- The GB's support of developing residential trips and encouraging as many as possible to attend will benefit the children.
- Understanding the work that Ali H has been doing in refining the SEND register and creating lists of children to be monitored means the GB is better informed about SEND provision in school.

#### March 2023

- Discussion around MATs demonstrated governors' commitment to ensuring that decisions taken are right for the children.
- Governors' understanding has been developed through learning about and discussing the curriculum.
- The GB self-evaluation has shown the GB's main priority is the children.
- GB approval of the SHINE behaviour principles is very positive

#### April 2023

- Celebrating progress and attainment is in line with the Christian ethos of the school.
- Understanding use of data is beneficial. Valuing individual children is very Christian.
- Discussions have shown safeguarding is at the heart of what governors can do – this is also very Christian.
- Questions asked, have covered all different groups of pupils equally. Governors discussing progress being made, and impacts being seen from the Great Model of Teaching, is beneficial in developing understanding of current data.

#### May 2023



- The focus of the meeting has been on what benefits the children (as also noted in the OfSTED report recently).
- Governors are ensuring in their research into MAT options that the school's Christian ethos will be upheld if they do join a MAT.
- Discussing impacts from the asylum-seeking children joining reinforces the school's positive approach to welcoming and supporting the children.

#### June 2023

- Governor attendance and visibility in school has been high – this allows governors to see how the Christian ethos is reflected throughout the school.
- Children have been the key focus of all discussions e.g., when there have been staffing decisions/discussions these have been made with the priority being ensuring that there is a positive impact for the children.
- The discussion on suspensions showed a focus on keeping children safe and it being a learning experience.
- Pupil Premium discussions were also focused on how it can be used to impact the most children.
- The focus of the GB echoes the focus of the SLT, showing consistency in priorities.

#### July 2022

- The focus throughout this meeting has been on what will create the best school for the children, and what will maintain the school's Christian ethos. It was noted that through the sharing of practice within next year's management partnership, the Christian distinctiveness at St. Martin's will potentially benefit/impact other children in the local area.

#### **Conclusion**

St Martin's continues to be an amazing school for our children and despite the pressures that face education, the children are always at the centre of what the school is about. The staff are committed, hard-working and enthusiastic. The senior leaders do a wonderful job in creating an environment where our staff, and through that, our children can flourish.

**Appendix 1 - Current GB Membership (July 2023)**

Acting Headteacher	Amy Hardinge
Staff Governor	Vacant
Chair	John Clements (standing down)
Lead Governor for Finance	John Clements (standing down)
Lead Governor for Staffing	Ruth Marsh
Lead Governor for SEND	Brian Gravenor (due to become Chair)
Lead Governor for Parent and CC Links	Phil Wales
Lead Governor for Early Years	Jennifer Elliott
Lead Governor for Safeguarding	Jon Holder
Lead Governor for Premise/H&S	John Clements (standing down)
Lead Governor for Data/Curriculum	Gemma Tozer-Howe

**Appendix 2: Governor Attendance at 2022-23 Meetings**

	Full Governing Board		Leadership & Teachers' Pay	
	Possible	Attended	Possible	Attended
<b>Amy Hardinge</b>	8	8		
<b>John Clements</b>	13	13	2	2
<b>Gemma Tozer-Howe</b>	13	12	2	2
<b>Liz Kane</b>	4	4	1	1
<b>Jennifer Elliott</b>	13	13	1	1
<b>Russ Green</b>	8	8		
<b>Anna Wade</b>	2	2		
<b>Jon Holder</b>	10	8		
<b>Brian Gravenor</b>	7	7	1	1
<b>Ruth Marsh</b>	6	5		
<b>Phil Wales</b>	2	2		
<b>Steph Harvey</b>	6	5		
<p><u>Notes</u>  1. Numbers of meetings possible to be attended vary depending on when a governor joins or leaves the Board during the year.</p>				

