Annual Statement of the Governing Body of Newport Infant School 2021-22

Introduction –

The Governing Body have maintained their leadership of the school and support of the Senior Leaders throughout this academic year; acting mainly through virtual meetings for the first part of the year and latterly returning to face to face opportunities and visits to the setting. For some members of the Board, this was their first opportunity to visit school, having taken on their role during the pandemic. Despite the challenges, the Board has continued to shape the strategic direction of the school, has monitored all aspects of school life and the provision for the staff, parents and pupils and has overseen the use of school resources in line with their core function.

Take over of the on-site Nursery.

A key element of the work of the Governing Body during the last academic year has been guiding and supporting the take-over of Noah's Ark Nursery which sits on the school site. This had been agreed by the Governors in 2020 but was delayed in its infancy by the pandemic. Governors pursued the initial steps taken and through the development of an Early Years Committee to oversee the support the move, they worked with Senior Leaders to ensure that the change was fulfilled. The transition was strategically planned so that Emily Russell, the Early Years Lead became the Nursery teacher in February when another member of staff returned from Maternity Leave. This enabled the school to begin to make changes to ensure that the provision aligned with the school vision for Early Years prior to the take-over. Emily was able to train staff and begin to alter the curriculum and environment straight away so that the impact of the transition was quickly evident and the staff and setting were well-placed to meet the expectations of the school from September 2022. The School Improvement Partner visited the Nursery in the Summer Term and was impressed with the quality of provision; she could see the improvements made and the capacity of the staff to fulfil the role of Early Years Practitioner. The numbers in the setting are already above the pre-COVID levels which is further evidence of the improved offer at the setting.

Change to the Leadership Structure

The Governors supported the change to the Leadership Structure of the School to create two part-time Headteacher roles with Mrs Heeley taking on the responsibility for 2 days a week. Miss Russell was appointed as Assistant Head for Early Years by the Governors which created a secure Senior Leadership role to ensure that Early Years was well led and managed within the setting as well as recognising the impact that Miss Russell has and affording her non-contact time to fulfil this appropriately. The new leadership structure enables the school to have greater leadership capacity within the confines of the budget, supports the workload of leaders and recognises that almost half of the pupils on roll at the setting are now working within the Early Years curriculum. The strategic decision to support these changes were taken by the Governors in recognition of the need for succession planning and as a means of retaining and developing staff identified as having leadership qualities by providing them with opportunities for promotion within the setting. As part of this change, a responsibility was offered to leaders in the school to take on a mentoring role which included the management of the Teaching Assistants and Early Career Teachers. This recognised the value that the Teaching Assistants bring to the school and the importance of supporting their well-being and professional development in line with that of other staff.

Buildings

The Personnel and Finance Committee, supported by the Full Governing Body and the Leaders within the school have monitored the work that the Headteacher has carried out with the Local Authority Buildings team resulting in the new build for the Nursery area including the link corridor and cladded walls. This has created a safer, more eco-friendly environment within this part of the setting with the aim of improving the school's energy efficiency rating. The Governors continue to drive a move to secure new windows in the older parts of the building within the next year to bring down heating costs and make the school more sustainable. This would also make it viable to decorate the interior of the building. They recognise that with the new windows pending, it would not be a good use of school money to pay for decoration at this point.

Technology

The Governing Body have been instrumental in supporting the decision to purchase a class set of iPads this year which has been highly successful. Staff state that their ease of use means that children can complete quick, memory-building and recall tasks on them which support them to know and remember more and the Apps available ensure that there are activities which are suitable for all pupils at our school.

Outdoor Classroom

The school has long desired an outdoor space where the children can learn outside, applying their skills to a different environment and support their mental health and well-being. The Governors supported the decision to spend some of the COVID catch-up money to put towards the PTA funds to enable the school to purchase a log cabin which is suitable for learning and Forest School activities. Governors recognised the importance of supporting the well-being of the children through outdoor learning and aimed to approve the purchase of a building which was sustainable and fit for purpose. The new outdoor classroom was erected during the Summer Term and opened by the Mayor of the town at a whole school picnic event to which parents were invited. The Governors will monitor the impact of the outdoor classroom during the next academic year.

Curriculum and Outcomes

The Curriculum and Outcome Committee, supported by the link governors for subject areas have monitored the educational outcomes for pupils at the setting. They were delighted that the outcomes for pupils in Year 2 at the end of Key Stage 1 were largely at pre-COVID levels and were significantly above the national expectations. Governors were particularly delighted with the high percentages of pupils who achieved greater depth in their learning, demonstrating the school's commitment to ensuring that all children reach their potential. Whilst the results for the phonics screening were still above national, they were not as high as the school would normally see and whilst it is recognised that the gaps in schooling caused by the pandemic are a partial factor, this has become a priority for the school in the next academic year. The outcomes for Early Years were also lower than on a typical year and this will be monitored by the Governors as the new Early Years Curriculum is put into practice from age 2 as a three-year plan for improvement.

SEND Provision

The school prides itself on the provision that it makes for pupils with SEND and for many years, governors from the Personnel and Finance Committee have met with the Local Authority Finance team to ensure that the school offers the best support to these pupils and pupils who do not have an additional need whilst meeting best practice in value for money. This has become increasingly

difficult as budgets become tighter, expenses rise and needs grow. Governors supported Senior Leaders this year to work with the Local Authority to revise the way that SEND support is offered to children with Complex Additional Needs by opening a Specialist Resource Provision. The offer recognises the high quality of support for SEND and the capacity of the staff within the setting. The Governors support the school vision for inclusion in creating this offer and promote the diversity of the school as one of its key values. The SEND Governor meets regularly with parents of pupils with additional needs at coffee afternoons organised by the SENCO. This ensures that parent voice is heard as well as providing an opportunity for the Governor and SENCO to support parents.

Link Governors

The Link Governor for Maths has spent a lot of time in school this year supporting the Maths Lead and ensuring that the Maths offer in the school is effective in line with school priorities. The Link Governor for Literacy was new to post this year and has familiarised herself with the subject area, meeting the curriculum lead and developing an understanding of the school's curriculum offer in this subject as well as monitoring the impact of the school improvement which had taken place during the year, particularly in phonics and reading.

Safeguarding and Vulnerable Pupils

Governors support the school in carrying out the annual Safeguarding audit, ensuring that keeping children safe is at the heart of the ethos and that procedures are followed rigorously. This includes a review of the behaviour policy to support a more restorative approach to behaviour management. Governors challenge leaders about any peer-on-peer abuse and racial incidents and leaders report to Governors about vulnerable pupils in the school each term. The evidence provided demonstrated that peer on peer abuse reduced during the year due to the actions taken by the school and that vulnerable pupils were well-supported, particularly in terms of Covid catch-up.

Governors wish to thank the staff for their continued hard work and parents and carers for their continued support during the year.



Fiona Hand

Chair of the Governing Body