



**Governing Board Annual Report
Academic Year 2016/2017**

After a difficult couple of years in which John Rankin has faced challenges in leadership, governance, and finance, I am confident that 2016/17 will prove to be a turning point.

Leadership was key in this with the arrival in September of our new Executive Headteacher Felix Rayner who as expected brought vast experience, vision, and a new sense of purpose. Amy Watkins, Head of John Rankin Junior returned from maternity leave, middle leadership was reviewed and strengthened, and key teaching posts were appointed.

Important further steps in the continuing process of integration of both sides of the School were achieved, with co-operation on teaching, learning, and assessment across the Schools, and the amalgamation of the two PTA groups into one entity.

The Governing Board as you may know is collectively accountable, and formally tasked with:

Making sure the vision, ethos, and strategic aims of the school are clear.

Holding the Executive Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the School and its pupils.

Overseeing the financial performance of the School and making sure money is well spent.

In addition, the Board undertakes to ensure that our children are happy and in a safe place.

During the last nine months Governance has undergone significant changes both in membership and structure. The year began with Board membership under strength, and efforts being made to recruit new governors. Meanwhile to ensure delivery of the planned programme of work, our Resources Committee (including finance) and our Premises Committee (including health and safety) were combined under the leadership of Dr. Adrian Garcia-Sierra, Vice Chair of Governors.

This new 'super committee' has had a busy and productive year. On finance, priority has been given to assisting the senior leadership team in setting the annual budget, with close scrutiny of all essential and discretionary spending, and with advice and support from our local authority school finance team, to designing a robust 3/5 year plan to take the School out of its current deficit, and into a balanced budget position. In this we can take some comfort from the fact that many schools around the country are facing a similar challenge for reasons that have been well covered in the media.

The Resources and Premises committee has also worked closely with the School's Site Controller to develop short and medium term plans for asset management, repair, refurbishment and preventative maintenance of the School's site and buildings in line with current and future requirements. Health and safety compliance has been kept under constant review and the School came out well in a recent local authority audit.

Our Teaching and Learning Committee led by Chair, Tessa Roots, has also had a busy and productive year. The scope of work this year has included the following: Assisting the senior leadership team with recruitment, initiating governor 'link visits' and subject 'learning walks' to ensure that the Board is fully informed on curriculum delivery, scrutinising progress and attainment data on all subjects, understanding fully the impact of the School's Inclusion Leader's work with disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs, seeking evidence on the effective use of 'Pupil Premium' and Sports Premium funding, and attending Pupil Progress meetings and external reviews with teaching staff and local authority advisors.

Four appointments were made to the Board during the last two terms. This not only brings the Board up to full strength, but adds significantly to our range of skills with expertise in Early Years, finance and accountancy, marketing and communications, and legal affairs.

As for what the future may hold for John Rankin Schools, the Board has kept itself informed and appraised on the changing landscape for education nationally. Although Brexit appears to have sidelined the Conservative Government's long term plan for all schools to become academies, we do not believe that it has gone away.

In this context the Board recently appointed a 'strategy working party' to explore all options for a future direction including that of remaining independent, assuming that option will continue to be available to us. The working party has since met with a number of academy experts and multi academy trust leaders, and will continue to build up a knowledge base on this complex subject.

Undoubtedly, the highlight of the school year was the successful OFSTED inspection in June for John Rankin Infants School. Governors were delighted, but not surprised that the hard work, dedication, and self belief demonstrated by Felix Rayner, Sylvianne Wheable and their team was rewarded with HM Inspectors' judgement that in all of the key measurement criteria, JRI was judged 'Good'.

Governors do not underestimate the challenge that Felix Rayner and his team have now set for John Rankin, to complete the School's journey to 'Outstanding', and are fully committed to provide the required levels of challenge, support, and hard work that will be necessary to see it become a reality.

Alasdair Pearson

Chair.