



# GOVERNING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

Academic Year 2015/16

The John Rankin Schools  
Newbury  
Berkshire

'Inspired to learn together'  
'Challenged to achieve our best in all we do'

## John Rankin Governance

The School's Board of Governors are tasked by the Department of Education with three key functions:

- (1) Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction.
- (2) Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils.
- (3) Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Each of the Board's functions listed above have been put rigorously to the test during the year, and in line with these responsibilities governors set themselves a number of key objectives. These included board reconstruction, recruitment to fill board vacancies, scrutiny of pupil progress, and an audit of IT architecture and curriculum application. Some have been achieved and are referred to later, and some remain work in progress.

'Challenge and change' sums up this last school year. Key challenges have involved both leadership and finance, and disappointingly, a higher than normal turnover in teaching staff. The unexpected resignation in December of the recently appointed Executive Headteacher put immediate pressure on to our leadership team. Early in January as we prepared to amalgamate two school budgets into one, it became clear that for some time the Schools had been living beyond their means. The result was that we were heading for a significant budget deficit at the end of the 2015/16 financial year.

On the first of these challenges, the Board worked quickly with the West Berkshire Education team to identify and appoint an interim Executive Headteacher. Debbie Grimsey took up a two-day per week secondment in January and, in addition to providing a steady hand on the tiller, has successfully introduced important and effective changes in practice and assessment. The report from HMI following the recent Ofsted interim visit at John Rankin Infant and Nursery School acknowledged this.

The Board moved quickly to find a long-term leadership solution and in April appointed Felix Rayner, former Head of Winchcombe School, Newbury, who takes up his new post on 1st September 2016. He has been released by his present school to spend ten days at John Rankin during the summer term, assessing the quality of teaching and learning, and working closely with Debbie Grimsey to achieve the most effective handover.

On the second of these challenges, we appointed a new School Business Manager in December, who has in the last few months worked closely with the Schools Finance team at West Berks to put in place a robust and achievable recovery budget. This budget, with unanimous Board approval, was submitted to the Local Authority on 31st May, and addresses all areas of overspend, inefficiencies, and lack of control that led over a protracted period to the 2015/16 deficit. A bid submitted recently by the Board to the Schools' Forum for emergency funding support has been successful, and will accelerate progress towards full financial recovery.

For the benefit of parents and carers, information about the governance of The John Rankin Schools can be found on our website. This includes statutory documents such as the Instrument of Government, and the list of governors detailing their roles and responsibilities. Governor attendance records can also be found on the John Rankin website, but does not include the many ad-hoc meetings that have required governor commitment during the last several months. Nor does it feature the significant number of external training courses undertaken by governors since the start of the school year on subjects such as safeguarding, finance, leadership, and pupil progress assessment.

The Board has undergone considerable change during 2015/16. We have welcomed on to the Board a number of new faces, and said goodbye and thank you to others. Recruitment of governors to fill the required number of places is an ongoing challenge in finding people with both the relevant skills and the available time commitment. An important change to the Board has been the appointment of three new committees:

\* **RESOURCES COMMITTEE** which 'Strategically manages all aspects of budget, financial control, staff, pay and all other relevant resources'. Work during the year has included oversight of the preparation, and planning prior to submission of the 2016/17 budget, an HR review necessitated by the change to a single budget, recruitment issues, and review of the Pay policy.

\* **TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE** which 'Strategically monitors the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment, outcomes for children, and effectiveness of early years' provision, with a view to raising standards'. Governors have called for evidence that pupil progress is being effectively monitored with the change from assessment by 'Levels' to assessment by 'Age related expectations'. Members have examined data on pupil progress, looking in particular for evidence that the gap between disadvantaged pupils and the others is closing. Individual members have also been closely involved with the application of PPG (Pupil Premium Grant) and Sports Premium funding, calling for evidence of effective spend on both.

\* **PREMISES COMMITTEE** which 'Strategically manages and oversees the Schools' site and buildings facilities, including internal and external teaching space, and ensures compliance with all mandatory Health and Safety regulations'. Included in this remit are premises letting policies and charges, accident reports and fire drills, school meal arrangements, training, travel plans, and for a planned programme of buildings maintenance and improvement.

Governors have been active during the year fulfilling their individual delegated responsibilities for oversight of safeguarding, early years provision, IT and web-site, curriculum subjects, data and assessment, governor training, and policy review. Governors have attended 'learning walks' around the school to familiarise themselves with teaching practice and curriculum, and a number of school assemblies and events.

In the course of two or more challenging years for John Rankin, governors have been encouraged by the resilience and team spirit demonstrated by all staff, and by the unstinting support of parents and carers. The way ahead is not without challenge. Another u-turn from the government on their academisation programme seems a certainty, and governors will address this decisively if it happens. The School community can be assured that we will do all in our power to influence the direction of travel, and to ensure that John Rankin is well placed to determine its own destiny. Meanwhile, our new Executive Headteacher and leadership team will be encouraged to make further progress towards increasing our collaboration with other local schools, in various aspects of teaching and learning, training, and in sport provision.

Alasdair Pearson  
Chair of Governors

Membership (as at 14th July 2016)

Alasdair Pearson (Chair of Governors)  
Caroline Hearn (Vice Chair of Governors)

Simon Butler, Co-opted Governor  
Rachel Evans, Co-opted Governor  
Adrian Garcia-Sierra, Parent Governor JRJ  
Debbie Grimsey, Acting Executive Headteacher  
Fiona Henderson, Co-opted Governor  
Tessa Roots, Parent Governor JRI  
Barbara Sandford, Co-opted Governor

Teresa Crocker, Clerk to Governors

Email: [governors@inthehive.net](mailto:governors@inthehive.net)

## THE JOHN RANKIN SCHOOLS

Website: [www.jrs.w-berks.sch.uk](http://www.jrs.w-berks.sch.uk)

### **John Rankin Infant & Nursery School**

Garford Crescent  
Newbury  
Berkshire  
RG14 6EX  
Tel: 01635 42376  
Email: [office@jri.w-berks.sch.uk](mailto:office@jri.w-berks.sch.uk)

### **John Rankin Junior School**

Henshaw Crescent  
Newbury  
Berkshire  
RG14 6ES  
Tel: 01635 42859  
Email: [office@jrj.w-berks.sch.uk](mailto:office@jrj.w-berks.sch.uk)