



Governing Board Annual Report

Academic Year 2021/22

This past academic year has in some ways seemed an extremely long one and yet at the same time seems to have flown by. The difficulties of Covid seem a distant memory for many of us and over the past few months we have been extremely happy to get back to normality in our school life. As always, our Executive Head and Senior Leadership team have worked tirelessly to provide the best possible experience for all children and the work of the whole staff team has not gone unnoticed or unappreciated by the Governing Board. On behalf of all governors, I would like to express our deep gratitude once again for everyone's hard work over the past academic year.

The big news of the year was that after six years as Executive Head Teacher, Felix Rayner has decided to leave JRS. As I previously said in my note to announce his resignation, it is hard to overstate the job that Felix has done during his time at the school and the personal contribution that he has made to our progress over the past few years. The school he leaves behind is far improved in every way – better staff morale, better community links, better parental communication and most importantly better outcomes for all our children. He knows he will be missed by every member of our community and I know he will miss John Rankin sorely too. This report is an opportunity to formally thank him on behalf of the Governing Board for all his hard work and dedication to the school over the past few years and to wish him every success and much luck in the future.

So in the Spring Term governors needed to start the process of recruiting a new Executive Head Teacher and a Headteacher Appointment Panel consisting of five governors was formed. This group worked extremely hard to advertise the role and then shortlist and interview candidates. We wanted to find a new Executive Head who understood and shared our values and longer-term vision for John Rankin and following a rigorous selection process in April we were delighted to offer Flora Cooper the position. Flora brings with her a wealth of experience having spent the past eight years as Head of a primary school in Oxfordshire and she cannot wait to hit the ground running from September. As a person she is extremely friendly and approachable and I know that she is really looking forward to meeting and getting to know all our children, staff and parents as soon as possible. No doubt there will be challenges, there always are in schools, but the Governing Board are very confident in her ability to continue to lead JRS from strength to strength.

One of the most notable and beneficial features of the school over the past few years has been how staffing has remained so stable and it continues to do so. This continuity enables for a much smoother transition into the new academic year with expertise and experiences shared across staff at all levels. Of course there is naturally some movement as is to be expected in a school of our size and on behalf of all governors I would like to say goodbye and good luck to TAs Miss Bennett, Miss Clarke, Miss Dyson and Mrs Hughes. We also say a very fond farewell to teachers Mrs Canniffe who is retiring, Mrs Odwell and Mr Swan who has moved house away from Newbury and has a new job in a school just 5 minutes away from his new home. We would like to call him out especially for all the work he has done over the past few years with regards to sport at JRS and the allocation of Sports Premium funding. This has allowed all our children to access a wide range of sports and activities they might otherwise not have experienced and has brought about many benefits to them, especially during the pandemic. Last but definitely not least, we wish to congratulate Mrs Allison on securing her first post as a Headteacher at Long Lane primary school in Tilehurst. She has been an excellent Deputy Head over the past few years and as Head of Inclusion she has transformed our pastoral and inclusion work at JRS. We thank all of you for your contribution to John Rankin and wish you all the best going forwards.

Governing Board activity has continued as always to focus on its core areas of school oversight– the ethos, finances and educational offering of JRS. For another year, our board has remained very steady with a solid group of experienced and committed governors. We have been very glad to get back to face to face meetings for the most part over the past few months. We said a fond farewell to Simon Butler in April who had been a governor at JRS for the past seven years and will be greatly missed. We subsequently welcomed a new co-opted governor, Tom Sutherland, who is a teacher at St Bart's. We are always very keen to maintain as many close ties as possible with our local secondaries and I welcome Tom formally here and look forward to working with you over the next year. We still have one co-opted vacancy which we will look to fill in the autumn.

Financially, JRS continues to be in a very strong position which is no mean feat given how hard schools need to work to keep out of deficit. Given the current climate, no doubt the next year will bring even greater financial pressures than usual, however the Governing Board have every confidence in the school business team and their ability to

manage the budget and governors will continue to scrutinise and monitor the financial situation closely month by month. We closed off last year's budget once again with a positive variance and have agreed and started into this financial year with a budget that includes significant spend across staff, premises- including the refresh of the library spaces - and IT. We are in a very good financial position to help to support our children to flourish at JRS.

Monitoring of children's attainment and progress across all year groups has continued to be a top priority for governors. As you are most likely aware, Year 2 and Year 6 SATS took place for the first time since 2019 and across the board we had some very solid results; in line with national figures and in some cases higher than our 2019 results with an especially strong result in reading and grammar. We also saw larger numbers of children reaching greater depth which given the backdrop of school closures and missed teaching is testament to the implementation by JRS of solid strategies to catch up on lost learning. Additionally, our most recent Year 2 phonics results were significantly higher than both in 2019 and national levels. Continual analysis of data at Full Governors Board meetings as well as in the dedicated Teaching & Learning Committee enables governors to understand the trends and address any concerns in a timely manner. Several governors were really pleased to be able to come into school last month for a Learning Walk to see in action what they read and hear about in governor meetings. I believe governor visibility in school is incredibly important and we shall be planning another walk for the Autumn Term.

Looking forward to September, the Governing Board are keen to start working with Ms Cooper. The focus will continue to be on overseeing the strategy of ensuring any gaps in children's learning that they may still have from the pandemic are filled and to monitor the planned spend ensuring that all children at JRS have access to the best education possible.

In summary this has been another school year of challenge and change but the teamwork, co-ordination and spirit shown by everyone within the JRS community has made it a success nonetheless.

Thank you to you all and I hope you have a lovely summer.

Tessa Roots

Chair of Governors

July 2022