



It is now more than 110-days since the normal pattern of school life was brought to a halt by Covid-19. It has been a challenging few months as we have juggled the many demands of providing ongoing schooling for key worker children and reopening to Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children from 1 June; all following lengthy guidelines set by the Government. Home schooling has continued for all year groups so that everyone has equal opportunities to access the learning whether they are at home or in school.

Thank you for all you have done to adapt to the changed environment and for supporting the school by engaging your children in the work that has been set. No doubt some of you will also have enjoyed being creative, exploring some of the many wider resources available to enrich the curriculum where you have been able. We are making time to learn lessons from our shared experiences over the last few months, both the positives and areas to improve. Particular thanks to those of you who completed the recent parent questionnaire to share your views, the themes of which we discussed as a Governing Body this week.

Our staff have been agile and resilient in managing through these changes for which we are extremely thankful, many being in school daily for our key worker children including during both the Easter and May half-term school holidays.

In addition to the usual pattern of our work as Governors, we have been meeting with Mrs Crouch, Mrs Birss and Mrs Kieran on a weekly basis during the lockdown to review the approach the school has been taking and to respond to feedback received from parents where we have been able. Mrs Crouch also has regular meetings with other local Headteachers to help share experience and approaches being taken to the common challenges we are all facing.

We are grateful for the many kind emails you have sent to our staff throughout with messages of thanks and encouragement. I admit we've all experienced moments of frustration trying to lead and operate within the limitations imposed in the guidance, such as the bubble sizes and span of teachers across bubbles, and we've worked hard to manage this as well as we have been able.

Whilst the disruption from Covid-19 has dominated recent times, this mustn't be the sole focus of the 2019-2020 academic year as prior to this we also had many months together in school.

This newsletter aims to share the impact of the outcomes of governor activity over the year.

#### **Our role as Governors**

All schools across the country are required to have a Board of Governors and the Department for Education sets us three core functions:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
2. Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff; and

3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Our Governing Body includes Mrs Crouch in her role as Headteacher, and Mrs Addis has been the staff governor over the year. Our Assistant Head, Mrs Birss, is also regularly in attendance.

Bernadette Davis has been living overseas this year and we said farewell to Sarah John after two full 4-year terms as a Governor.

We have thankfully been able to replenish our skills and experience with three excellent new appointments in the year:

- Hannah Draeger, a former pupil, was elected as a parent governor in October.
- Simon Caunce, a member of the St John's congregation, is Vice-Chairman of the Harpenden Cricket Club and brings HR, Finance and IT skills.
- Lucy Parr, a past parent and previous Chair of the PTA, is a member of the St Nicholas congregation, and brings communications and marketing experience.

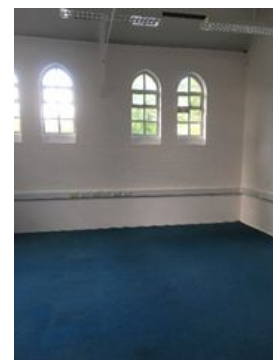
All our Governors are committed to the success of St Nicholas and are passionate about their roles. We particularly enjoy opportunities to be with the children to see their learning in action and hope these visits can resume in the Autumn. In addition to committee meetings switching to being held virtually, we have also been keeping our skills up to date with online governor training during the lockdown. You can read about [who we are](#) and minutes from Governing Body meetings on the school website.

### **Ongoing improvements to the school premises**

It is nearly a year since we officially opened the new entrance and I hope you agree that there has been a positive impact on the welcome we can offer those visiting the school through the safer and more spacious entrance.

During the year we have also invested in these areas, some of which have been done during the lockdown so have yet to be seen by some of us!

- New infant playground equipment
- A smartboard for the Pearl room - new name for the resources room
- Redecoration of the staff room and repainting the final areas of the school corridors which until recently had remained bright green
- Redecoration of the old IT room - now renamed the Jade room
- Replacement of the school server - it may feel a boring investment but our old server was limiting our technology capabilities so we are delighted to have a new server in place.
- Replacement of teacher laptops
- A new sound system for the hall 🎵



These improvements have been funded by a combination of generous PTA donations, our governor finances and the school budget.



Our Finance & Premises Committee have updated the school's Major Projects Premises Plan outlining the anticipated spend in the coming years. With the use of technology on the rise in all year groups, we need to plan a rolling replacement programme for tablets, laptops and smartboards and we will be reviewing our funding plan for these in the months ahead. With only £6k pa received from the Government for all capital spend, we remain hugely grateful to the PTA for all their generous donations so that we can continue to provide great facilities and equipment for our children.

We estimate that the funds available for projects such as these are down by approximately £15k against a usual year, the greatest impact being ∓£10k from cancelled PTA fundraisers including the school ball and ∓£5k cancelled lettings income in the Governor accounts. We look forward to ongoing collaboration with the PTA, as discussed in the recent AGM, to be creative in ways we can replenish this finance shortfall. The **PTA's Aquamarine Appeal** is an immediate response to this which would be great if you feel able to support.

### Our wonderful staff

2019/20 has been a notable year for a number of our staff:

- Huge congratulations to Mrs Kieran for working at St Nicholas for 25-years. We hope to mark the achievement when we are together again.
- Mr Carr and Mrs Jayes celebrated new arrivals to their families.
- Mrs Winfield joined the school office alongside Mrs Brazier who now works on a part-time basis.

Sadly we bade farewell to Mrs Harvey as she left the teaching profession in February. We are recruiting for a replacement Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) and we look forward to announcing a new appointment shortly.

We wish Mrs Addis well as she leaves at the end of the summer term to spend time with her family before they all move overseas to New Zealand. Mrs Addis has been a dedicated and caring member of staff in the years she has been with us and we thank her for everything she has done.

As confirmed in the recent transition letters, this is a recap of the staff allocation for September.

Class	Year groups	Teacher
Diamond	Year 6 all / oldest year 5s	Mrs Kennett

Sapphire	Youngest year 5s / year 4 all	Mr Carr (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday) and Mrs Crouch (Wednesday)
Emerald	Year 3 all / oldest year 2s	Mrs Weldon (Tuesday to Friday) and Mrs Birss (Monday)
Topaz	Youngest year 2s / oldest year 1s	Mrs Kieran (Monday to Wednesday) and Mrs Williams (Thursday and Friday)
Garnet	Reception all / youngest year 1s	Mrs Mortimer

The staff filmed a wonderful video in the height of lockdown which is linked [here](#) if you missed it. I am sure you will join me in wishing all our members of staff a well deserved break after a busy year with unexpected challenges.

### Our wonderful pupils

The children have behaved magnificently throughout the year and the staff have been greatly missing those who have not been coming into school during the period of lockdown.

Some events of note during the year have included:

- The year 5/6 footballers for winning the District Football Tournament in March - what an achievement!
- The chess team for coming 8th out of 15, an improvement on 14th place last year.
- Engaged children following workshops including Indian dancing, robotics and skipping.
- Fantastic fundraising by Garnet and Topaz children during the lockdown. Well done to Garnet class for "walking their socks off" for Guide Dogs and to Topaz class for their Skipathon, fundraising for the National Emergencies Trust. They raised over £2.5k between them which is a brilliant outcome.

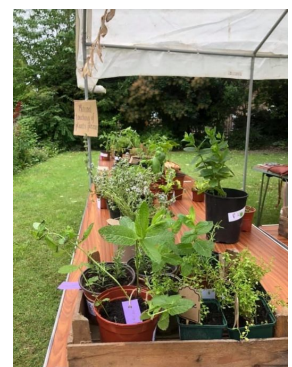


With District Sports cancelled this summer we can retain a bulging trophy cabinet after the various athletics triumphs of July 2019!

### Our parents, friends and partners

We remain hugely grateful to all those who support the school and keep it such a special place to learn and of which to be part. Particular thanks to:

- **The PTA** - to everyone for their involvement with the PTA whatever shape this has taken; from our committed class reps who have helped life run as smoothly as possible for us all, to everyone who has contributed time and energy arranging all the varied activities and fundraising, the Christmas wreath making and Christmas Fair being particular highlights. Thanks to everyone on the committee and those who make the time to attend PTA meetings throughout the year, including the recent AGM via Zoom. Thank you to Emma Roberts who has been an excellent PTA Chair and to Abbie Winters and Sorrel Harvey for becoming the new Co-Chairs.
- **Our volunteers** - to everyone who has helped on school trips and in weekly walking duties helping take teams and classes to and from the pool, park or other venues.
- Everyone for **welcoming new families** who joined during the year. Inevitably some families have moved away and, in addition to those who started Reception in September, we've been delighted to welcome several new families to the school in other year groups. Thank you to everyone for living our school values and helping to welcome new families when they join to help them make friends and quickly settle in.
- **The Club** - for continuing their excellent before and after school clubs. This year is their 10-year anniversary at St Nics and we are extremely grateful to Lucie Allen and Becca Brown for the fantastic Club they provide for our children.
- **The Church** - we remain a close friend and neighbour of St Nicholas Church and The Rector Dennis Stamps, Curate James Hadley and Reader Heather Richards greatly enhance our weekly collective worship activities.
- **Our various club providers** - School continues to run a range of extra curricular clubs and activities, including tennis, archery, football, netball, chess, language, dance and music lessons, enriching the learning and social experiences available. We are hugely grateful to all our partners who work with us to run these.
- **Our local community** - We continue to find ways to engage the local community. As examples, in October we held a Mindfulness session on Church Green to help promote World Mental Health Day; in December, our school choir enjoyed singing at a local care home, Field House. And most recently, the PTA held a wonderful plant sale, which was open to all, on Cornelia's lawn.
- **Friends of St Nicholas** - In 2017 we launched the Friends of St Nicholas as a new charity to help keep in touch with families as they leave St Nicholas. Thank you to those alumni families who continue to support us, keeping in touch and providing a new fundraising channel. Please contact [friends@stnicholasce.org](mailto:friends@stnicholasce.org) if you would like to become a member.







### Additional work of the Governors

As a Governing Body, additional areas we maintain oversight of include:

- **Safeguarding** - Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. School is particularly important as we are in a position to identify concerns early, provide help for children, and prevent any concerns from escalating. We also look after the health and safety of the children, staff and all who use the school site. Our staff take their responsibilities seriously to ensure a safe environment in which all of our children can learn and grow.
- **Admissions** - We are the admissions authority for St Nicholas. We are looking forward to welcoming a full cohort of reception children in September and have been busy responding to in-year admissions across other year groups in the year. Feedback provided from Garnet parents about their early experience at school provided helpful insights for us to consider as we engage both with current families and prospective parents.
- **School Effectiveness** - We have a School Development Plan which outlines the whole school priorities to drive further improvement in the quality of learning provision for our pupils and the level of attainment they reach.

All our plans for improvement are agreed on the basis of a review of pupil outcomes, our understanding of what works well, the needs of our pupils and the impact of previous improvement strategies. The priorities are the subject of discussions with staff and governors, and informed by the ongoing views of parents/carers and pupils.

We regularly monitor the effectiveness of how we are delivering against the School Development Plan and discuss how to respond to themes observed.

Areas of focus include

- Providing excellent quality of teaching and learning
- Ensuring every child makes excellent progress academically
- Developing well-balanced citizens for the future
- Securing and extending links with the Christian community
- **Vision and values** - As a Governing Body we strive to deliver our 'Believe and Achieve' vision in all we do by living our common values.
  - Believe in ourselves, those here to help us and God
  - Achieve our goals
  - Celebrate success in every area of school life

Core Values	
<b>Hope</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hope in God's transforming power</li> <li>• hope in the gifts and abilities of all who play their part in the life of the school</li> <li>• hope in the power of the school to develop the potential of everyone</li> </ul>	<b>Responsibility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• doing something to the best of our ability</li> <li>• accepting praise and acknowledging our mistakes</li> <li>• being a contributing member of the community and caring for God's world</li> </ul>
<b>Kindness</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being considerate and treating people with respect</li> <li>• showing love through our actions to each other</li> <li>• value who you are</li> </ul>	<b>Perseverance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being determined and using self-control to work through challenges</li> <li>• believe in yourself and keep going</li> <li>• living out our Christian values</li> </ul>



We appreciate all you do as parents to role model our school values with each other, our staff and children. We are planning a whole school focus on kindness when we return in September as the importance of this value has been particularly felt by our staff during the lockdown.

### Looking ahead

#### Good luck to our Year 6 leavers

We wish our Year 6 children and their families all the best as they leave St Nicholas. You have all worked hard over the years and we will miss you. The Year 6 children have been particularly impacted by the lockdown missing their SATs, week-long school journey PGL trip, the end of year play and the special leavers' end of term service amongst other things. We wish them all the best as they prepare to start in their new secondary schools.

#### September

We look forward to welcoming everyone else back in September to begin our new academic year. Please watch out for a letter from school this week with the details of our planned approach. We will also share any further details with you if the Government guidance evolves over the summer but otherwise we intend to make life at school feel as normal as possible for our children.

Thank you for reading on to the end and a huge thank you for all that you have done to support the children in their learning this year, whether in school or from home. We are all here to make their primary years as successful and memorable as we can, and we look forward to continuing that journey together in September.

Enjoy the Summer break.

Caroline Fleming  
Chair of Governors

*Dear God,  
Help us be kind and take responsibility for our actions.  
Help us persevere in school and at home.  
Help us strengthen our beliefs and achieve our goals.  
Keep hope in our hearts and love in our lives.  
Amen*