As we approach the end of another busy and fulfilling year at St Nicholas, it is a privilege to share the governors’ perspective on the achievements of our whole school community. It is my first year as Chair of Governors, having taken over from Caroline Fleming in October, and I am proud that as a board - and along with our staff - we always strive to hold the children’s best interests at the core of all that we do.

At St Nicholas we are very fortunate to have strong relationships between our pupils, staff, parents and governors, as well as with the local community, and these are underpinned by our shared motto ‘Believe and Achieve’ and the core Christian values which support all our everyday activities: kindness, responsibility, perseverance and hope.

**Our Governors**

As a Board of Governors our three core functions are set by the Department for Education and are outlined as:

1. ensuring that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined,
2. ensuring that the headteacher performs their responsibilities for the educational performance of the school and
3. ensuring the sound, proper and effective use of the school’s financial resources.

We have twelve governors in total at St Nicholas, including Mrs Crouch as Headteacher and the Rector (although this position is currently vacant following Revd. Canon Dennis Stamps’s recent retirement and while we await the appointment of his successor in the parish). Revd. Dennis made a huge contribution as governor and his impact went far beyond his involvement in collective worship and the fostering of such strong links between St Nicholas Church and School. He will be much missed.

We work as a team with collective responsibilities as well as individual ‘link roles’ and are incredibly lucky as a board to enjoy the wealth of skills and experience from such committed volunteers, often working behind the scenes and always for the good of the school and at its heart the children.

Our work covers many areas including safeguarding, admissions, finance and premises management, school effectiveness, GDPR, personnel, communications and strategic planning.

This year we have welcomed several new governors to the board: in the Autumn term Marie Price and Charlotte McCrossin joined as Foundation Governors along with Austin Finnegan, our new parent governor, and Dr Cherniaeva, staff governor. They were followed by the addition this term of Ken Burgess, Foundation Governor. They have each already made their mark, contributing in various different areas of responsibility, and we are delighted to have them on our board. You can read about them and the rest of our team on the school website.

Meanwhile, we have said goodbye to some long standing and truly dedicated governors who each served at least two four-year terms: Caroline Fleming, whose 8 years of service included 5 as Chair of Governors; Hilary Doherty, whose teaching background and experience was invaluable, particularly in areas such as personnel and curriculum; and Stuart Burnett, our Finance & Premises lead, who originally joined as a parent governor when his daughter started in Reception and was on the board for 12 years! Their contributions to the life and progress of St Nicholas have been much appreciated.

**Our Children**

One of the most enjoyable aspects of being a governor is the opportunity to visit the children in school to witness their learning, share in their worship and celebration assemblies, or support special events and activities. We share subject responsibilities and other areas of school life between us and visit regularly to monitor the impact of the School Development Plan.

One of the overriding observations of governors is the children’s high standard of behaviour and politeness, often also commented on by external visitors. Alongside this, their curiosity and perseverance in learning and their frequent eagerness to share what they have achieved with us and with each other is a testament to our school’s approach to encouraging **resilient, collaborative, creative and empathetic learners**.

The children have continued to work hard and we are proud of the **learning progress and attainment** each pupil has made:

**Year 1 Phonics Check:**

| **Subject** | **Percentage of pupils achieving expected standard or above:****St Nicholas** | Percentage of pupils achieving at least the expected standard: nationally |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Phonics 2023 | 65% | 79% |
| Phonics 2024 | 87% | 79% |

**Key Stage 1 Comparative Report for 2024:**

| **Subject** | **Percentage of pupils achieving expected standard or above:****St Nicholas** (2024) | Percentage of pupils achieving at least the expected standard: nationally (2023) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| English reading | 71% | 75% |
| English writing | 62% | 69% |
| Mathematics | 71% | 76% |

**Year 4 Multiplication Test 2024:**

| **Subject** | **Percentage of pupils achieving at least the expected standard: St Nicholas** (2024) |
| --- | --- |
| Y4 Multiplication test |  19 out of 20 children (95%) (i.e. children who achieved 70% or more) |

**Key Stage 2 Comparative Report for 2024:**

| **Subject** | **Percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard or above:****St Nicholas**(2024) | Percentage of pupils achieving at least the expected standard: nationally (2024) | **Pupils achieving Greater Depth: St Nicholas** (2024) | **Pupils achieving Greater Depth: nationally****(2022)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| English reading | 92% | 74% | 44% | 27% |
| English grammar, punctuation and spelling | 96% | 72% | 40% | 36% |
| Mathematics | 84% | 73% | 32% | 27% |
| English writing (teacher assessment)  | 84% | 72% | 4% | 20% |
| Science (teacher assessment) | 72% | 81% | N/A | N/A |

Beyond their progress in core academic subjects however, a **broad and balanced curriculum** remains equally as important for the children’s learning, development and wellbeing. We continue to offer a wide range of clubs from netball, football and fencing to art, chess and languages.

Music is also thriving at St Nicholas with recorder club, piano lessons, choir and both individual and collective musical performances wowing parents and wider audiences throughout the year. Children were proud to take part in the Harpenden Spring Festival Concert in March and recently the Key Stage One Music Festival. One particularly heart-warming occasion was the lovely performance some of the choir gave to members of the parish and wider public at the Farewell Tea Party for Revd. Dennis and his wife Helen in June. We also celebrated World Music Day with a concert in church attended by parents and governors, which even included an entertaining rendition of the Pink Panther theme on the saxophone by Miss Machell!

In the arena of **Sport**, our children continue to participate in a wide range of opportunities. As well as swimming lessons for all year groups, they have enjoyed netball, football, tag rugby, kwik cricket, rounders and athletics with competitive matches and tournaments alongside PE lessons and extra-curricular clubs. This year we celebrated the netball team winning the Small Schools’ League Cup and the girls’ football also taking the Trophy for the Small School’s League, as well as enthusiastic participation in the annual District Sports evening recently.

Throughout the year there have also been a number of **workshops** which engage the children in active learning and enhance their knowledge of various topics. These have included Science Week activities across school focussing on the theme of ‘Time’, a STEM workshop for Diamond & Sapphire classes, a Year 6 ‘Crucial Crew’ visit about personal safety, a combined Drama/Geography day on Antarctica for Emerald, and a year 4 Robotics workshop.

Parents were also included, with a workshop for them about ‘Tooled Up Education’, a platform to support family mental health. We continue to be proud of our focus on **wellbeing** in school, with the ongoing practice of Brain Gym and Mindfulness techniques as well as other events encouraging the children to feel positive about themselves: Odd Socks Day in Anti-Bullying Week celebrating what makes each of us unique, ‘My Voice Matters’ in National Mental Health Awareness Week helping children to speak up when they need support, Neurodiversity Week, and even a ‘Love Yourself Day’ of activities arranged by members of our wonderful PTA.

The **enrichment roles** our children can be involved in also help to build confidence and team building skills as well as encourage consideration of wider issues. Our School Council members (two from each class Topaz - Diamond) have this year canvassed the opinions of their peers to provide feedback on ideas from developing the main playground to views about the school logo and school lunches, as well as organising events for Earth Day where pupils took part in House activities.

Our Year 6 children have Ambassador Roles serving the school community in areas such as Performing Arts, News Reporting, Collective Worship and Sports & Health. For example, our Collective Worship Ambassadors organised and led a celebration worship session for All Saints’ Day encouraging us to serve one another as the saints did.

We are also truly thankful to all the staff who are involved in planning and running so many fantastic **school trips**, which have this year included:

Year 6 - PGL residential trip

Year 5 - Celtic Harmony overnight trip

Diamond - St Albans Abbey

Sapphire - Verulamium Museum, RoboThink

Emerald - Roald Dahl museum, Eric Morecambe Centre museum,

Topaz & Garnet - “There’s a Monster in My Show” theatre trip

Topaz - Tring National History museum, Rothamsted Research facility

Garnet - Harpenden Library, Hammonds End farm

**Our Parents**

We do not underestimate the importance of **parental support** for all the activities that take place in school as well as for the children’s learning. Reading at home with your children and supporting homework, coming to class assemblies, shows and open afternoons and even helping out in school. Your engagement and support as parents and carers is hugely appreciated by our staff and children.

Recently we celebrated Multicultural Day, an event which develops an understanding of cultural diversity and brings Geography to life as children learn about traditions around the world. We were delighted and thankful to have parents come in and share their backgrounds: Mrs Grozdeva shared Bulgarian traditional costumes, traditional stories and Bulgarian dances; Mr Thompson-Clarke spoke passionately about Wales; Mrs Bulba shared a presentation about Ukraine which also included a folk tale; and Mr and Mrs Constantinou shared great facts about Cyprus and China.

We are proud that our **PTA** is one of the longest running in the country - at over 80 years old! - and is still thriving, with parents continuing to give generously of their time, talents and energy to provide an incredible range of events, both fundraising and social, for the children and families. This year’s events have included film night, school disco, second hand uniform sales, family welcome picnic, annual playground tidy up, Lunar New Year fair, class bakes and treat sales, and of course the fabulous Christmas Fair and the recent Summer Ball (which raised nearly £7,000!) We are so grateful for all the fundraising that has enabled the enhancement of our provision for children at St Nicholas.

One of the highlights of this year and a great example of **school and parent collaboration** was the opening of the new Infant Playground in the Spring by Harpenden Mayor Cllr Fiona Gaskell accompanied by the choir singing “A Million Dreams”. Garnet class teacher, Miss Robertson, led the development of the playground to ensure different areas provide exciting opportunities for children to develop all aspects of the Early Learning goals. The project was generously funded by the PTA and the occasion was an opportunity to thank the former PTA Committee members, Mrs Winters, Mrs Churchill and Mrs Love for their years of service. We are grateful to Mrs Longden for taking on the mantle of Chair this year and to the Treasurers, Mrs Du and Mr Mills,and Secretaries, Mrs Van Aardt and Mrs Gill.

**Our Staff**

Lastly - and by no means least! - I would like to offer a sincere **thank you to Mrs Crouch and all our members of staff** for the continued hard work, dedication and care in all that they do. This year we welcomed Miss Machell as class teacher in Emerald and Miss R Brown and Mrs Booth as Teaching Assistants. At the end of term, we say goodbye to Mrs Marshall and Miss Pierson, TAs in Garnet and Topaz respectively, and thank them for all their contributions to the life of St Nicholas.

The staffing for 2024/2025 will be:

* Garnet – Miss Robertson
* Topaz – Mrs Hammerson & Mrs Williams
* Emerald – Miss Machell & Mrs Jayes
* Sapphire – Dr Cherniaeva
* Diamond – Mrs Kennett

We are proud of our teachers and I would like to share a few of the wonderful messages sent in from parents during ‘Teacher Appreciation Week’ which were most gratefully received:

**Garnet class:** “Garnet is such a warm, loving and nurturing class”; “Thank you for making a difference in our child’s life”; “Thank you for all your hard work. We see how much time and effort you put into each individual child.”

**Topaz class:** “My child loves going to school and leaves with a big smile on her face every day”; “Thank you - not only for the academic education, but for being a great role model and for instilling important values in our children that will guide them throughout their life.”

**Emerald class:** “A huge thank you for every effort you made to support our child. You are stars! Amazing, caring and professional with big hearts!”; “Thank you for everything you do: for taking such good care of our child, for encouraging him and helping him grow.”

**Sapphire class:** “A big thank you for helping our child along her journey in Sapphire and for all the learning, lessons and memories… she loves being part of your class”; “Thank you for all your hard work. You consider each child individually and it is clear how much effort you put into the class.”

**Diamond class:** “The kids are all lucky to have such dedicated, funny and kind teaching staff”; “You nurtured and pushed appropriately to send my child happy, prepared and enthusiastic for the next stages of their academic life”; “Thank you so much for your professionalism. With a heart overflowing with gratitude, the ‘school - child - parents’ triangle works like clockwork.”

Our incredible team is supported by wonderful teaching assistants, our Inclusion Co-ordinator Mrs Broekhuis, the school office, midday supervisors, the Herts Catering team and our caretaker Mr Higley. We also continue to work closely with Lucie Allen and Becca Brown at The Club, Simon Price at Team Horizon and other club providers. Altogether it is quite a team and on behalf of the Board of Governors I would like to thank each and every one of them for the part they play.

And finally, after such a busy, action-packed year, we reach the long summer holiday and a time of rest, relaxation and reflection. I wonder what favourite memories of the year you and your children will recall as you gather to enjoy some time together. I hope that whichever they are, you share a sense of achievement between you, whether times have been joyful or sometimes challenging, for as we remember in school through our favourite Bible verse:

*“With God there is no limit to what you can do. There is no obstacle you can’t overcome. Through Him all things are possible.” (Matt 19, v26)*

Wishing you all God’s blessings for a very happy Summer,

Lucy Parr

Chair of Governors

July 2024