



## Christmas 2019

Dear Parents & Carers

As we approach the Christmas break we would like to take this opportunity to update you on the work the Board of Governors has been doing over the term.

### STRATEGIC PLANNING

The main focus of the Board of Governors in the Autumn term is to set the strategy for the school for the coming academic year and then to monitor progress towards those strategies. Once again this year we have created a pictogram of the main priorities which is available on the school website [here](#) and was discussed at the Governor Drop-in last week.

From a Board of Governors' perspective, while our primary focus is always ensuring the children in our school are happy, safe and enjoying a broad and balanced educational experience, this year we have three main priorities:

1. to navigate the fact that in the financial year 2020/21 we are going into budget deficit
2. to be ready to receive Ofsted (due any time from the coming summer term)
3. to look after the well-being and professional development of our staff

### FUNDING

The lack of appropriate school funding continues to be a major concern for the Board of Governors and we are working hard to create a sustainable future for St John's. As noted in the parent newsletter recently, the SMSJ secondment has allowed us to balance our budget for the current financial year. However, due to static funding and the increase in various costs including pensions, pay rates and so on, we are looking at a large budget deficit for the next financial year. In the new year we will be meeting with representatives from Barnet Council and the LDBS to discuss next steps. Both these parties are aware of how rigorously we scrutinise the school's finances and how much work has already been done to both cut costs and increase income. This meeting is Phase 2 in our work for the future of St John's. Phase 1 was a document, debated and discussed by the Board of Governors, which detailed our financial options as a school.

### Secondment opportunities

We are delighted to have Mr Sweetingham and Mrs Mitri back full time in school now. The secondment to SMSJ has been a successful experience, in

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terms of helping another school, developing our staff and also financially. However, we all agree that our school will benefit from having all of our Senior Team back and focussed on our School Improvement Plan for the coming year.

We would like to share that we were recently asked to consider seconding Mr Sweetingham again to another school. Due to the timeframes (the school concerned needed someone to help immediately and we needed more time to consider this opportunity in detail) and the fact that we all agree our school will benefit from having both our Head and Deputy in school for a period of time we declined this opportunity. It's testimony to our staff that we were considered again so soon. With our precarious financial situation we will be open to discussions in the future if similar opportunities come up.

## Volunteering

Linked to our financial situation and also the secondment, we would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the message in the parent newsletter that we very much welcome volunteers who can help our school. Please do get in touch if you are interested in helping, whether you just want to lend a hand or whether you have a specific skill you would like to share. We are very lucky to have an incredible band of amazing volunteers already in our school, from parents who run the orchestra and those who listen to children read to people ferrying children to sports events and our hard-working fundraisers and governors who all work for free, but we need more help so please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to get involved.

## Developing our vision & mission and our curriculum

When we worked on our vision and mission four years ago we were very happy with the outcome but at the time we did not link it to a piece of scripture. In our Autumn meeting we looked at this and we will be communicating our new scripture and why we think it is the appropriate one for our school in the new year. We also spent some time thinking about the intent of our curriculum and how it fits with the ethos and focus of our school. Again, we will update you on this in the Spring newsletter.

## SUB-COMMITTEES

This term our four sub-committees have been very busy.

Our **Admissions** sub-committee met to confirm that no changes were needed to the current policy, although we are ensuring that all the roads currently in the parish are included in the list sent to prospective parents. We will continue to monitor how our Admissions criteria is working on a yearly basis especially as this is the first year the new criteria is being used.

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Our **Finance & Premises** sub-committee met and discussed in detail the three year forecast (which starts with a predicted deficit of £70,000 in 2020/21) and some of the high cost areas of our budget. It was also noted that compared to last year the school is now generating more income from lettings, achieved primarily through staff members coming in at weekends to open up or staying late at night.

The **Teaching & Learning Standards** sub-committee focussed largely on analysing the impressive key stage results from 2019 as well as reviewing our SEND policy. We were very pleased with our results across the school and especially relating to the progress and attainment made by our Pupil Premium cohort in Key Stage Two. You can view the results on the school's website [here](#). However, there are always more challenges ahead and we continue to monitor our Pupil Premium and SEND progress carefully. This sub-committee also heard a lovely report from Mrs Mitri on the Christian life of our school, including the work of the faith council, the collaboration with local churches over the Harvest Festival collection and the fact Mrs Mitri continues to facilitate the Barnet RE leaders working together.

The **Personnel** sub-committee has also been busy monitoring the appraisal cycle (basically checking that all staff have been appraised and objectives set) and making its own contribution to the cycle through appraising Mr Sweetingham. With guidance from the LDBS, this committee also approved the new pay policy for teaching staff.

### Monitoring School Life

As usual we've been very active in terms of being involved in school life. This involvement allows us to be sure that what we're told is happening really is. The whole Governing Body spent time in school in October, helping in classrooms and then hosting the staff for lunch. Individual governors have attended other sessions such as the Big Voice, collective worship, assemblies and nativities. We continue to hold our termly drop-ins which are an opportunity for parents and carers to ask any questions and understand the work of the Board of Governors.

### Training

Before each of our Full Governing Body meetings we hold a training session. This term we focussed on the new Ofsted framework. Our new parent governor Jeremy Brough has attended his Induction training and our Training Link Governor, Alice Gavin-Atashkar, continues to work with the DfE on the training funding we have been awarded. Our Chair of Governors also assisted on a governance review at another primary school in Barnet which is always an excellent reminder of best practice in governance.

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## Changes

We have been delighted to welcome Carolyn Black as our new LDBS Governor. Carolyn worked as a secondary English teacher for many years and also ran the Hampstead Literary Festival so her love of reading chimes perfectly with our focus on reading. Carolyn has made a strong start in her contribution to the Board of Governors and we're very much looking forward to working with her.

Sadly Mrs Tidiman has had to resign as staff governor due to personal circumstances so we will be recruiting a new staff governor in the new year. We would like to thank Mrs Tidiman for all her work and contribution to the Governing Body.

## KEEP IN TOUCH

As always please do get in touch with us via our email and come along to our next Governor Drop-in on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

## LASTLY

In the midst of all the festivities at this time of year, the children have been remembering those who are less fortunate than themselves. It's a good reminder that we are lucky to have what we have and to be part of such a wonderful community. Thank you for all your support in 2019.

We wish you all a wonderful Christmas break and a fantastic start to 2020!

Imogen Hall  
Chair

On behalf of the Board of Governors  
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