

GOVERNOR'S IMPACT STATEMENT

2016/2017

Barrow 1618 goes from strength to strength and there is no better evidence of this than was pronounced by the school SIAMS inspection early in the Autumn term. "The school is exceptionally well led by an inspirational Christian leader who ensures that all are valued within the school community. This is strongly supported by the distinctive child-centred curriculum the school has developed. The rapid improvements made since the school opened have been driven by the cohesive staff team and they clearly articulate their ambition for this school from its Christian foundation. The governing body has worked determinedly to secure their founding vision for the school, which is reflected in the recent successes it has gained. The pupils live out the 'Barrow Values' in all that they do and say and clearly understand how these are rooted in biblical teaching."

The areas for improvement were to develop active partnerships with schools and communities representing more diverse faiths and cultures and to share the good practice developed in religious education (RE), leadership and governance, in order to contribute to the development of Church school leadership more widely.

Both of these have been actively followed up by the school and supported by Governors. The possibility of leading training for Siams inspections is being explored with the diocese, and other roles for the school to play in school improvement on behalf of the diocese – a preliminary meeting was held with the Director of Education to discuss these. The diocese's challenge to share good news and spread best practice is being initiated through performance management.

The school continues to enjoy great popularity and the Admissions committee have had to strictly conform to its policy and guidelines. However there have been areas identified for improvement where wording can be clarified and the policy tightened in general. During this year amendments have been out for consultation regarding prioritising children of teachers, those living within 2 miles of the school, and those with siblings in the school on the closing date of application. There continue to be much larger numbers of children applying for places than places available in reception and waiting lists for most year groups further up the school. It was agreed that rather than increase the PAN, the school would exceed it in the bottom three year groups by two in each year, in order to deal with a potential funding deficit. Governors reached this decision in consultation with staff and with their full support, agreeing to ring fence some of the additional income created to support classes with higher pupil numbers and higher numbers of pupils with SEND.

Despite no apparent need for active marketing, Governors have continued to assist with the promotion of the school both within and outside its walls. There was a three page article in the Shropshire magazine as well as various pieces in the Shropshire star throughout the year. A roller sign has been ordered and new signage which include the OFSTED and Siams outstanding logos. School calendars were produced again this year, and the school was approached by a London based company who produce a document endorsed by the Government listing the most improved schools in the country. Governors declined to pay for an article in the publication, but the school is still listed. The Bishop of Hereford attended school at the beginning of the Autumn term to launch the celebrations of the 400th year of education at Barrow by unveiling the Headmaster's inspirational "50 things to do at Barrow." Governors have in the meantime been gathering names and contact details of alumni of the school in preparation for celebrations next year.

Although there have been no changes to the governing body this year, time was spent arranging for reappointment of those who had already served four years. No governors missed more than one full governing body meeting and most were present at all of them. Representatives from the School Council and Friends of Barrow had attended as observers. Several governors attended the Academies Show in November 2016, there has been safeguarding training undertaken and further Raise online training, one governor attended training for clerking of committees, another attended governors Health and Safety training and there was training for the governor with responsibility for LAC. Governors have also now arranged for their training to be recorded centrally so that they are alerted when renewals are due. They have also funded further extensive staff training

Staff were consulted as to whether or not the staff satisfaction survey was still useful, and it was decided that it was not needed on an annual basis, but governors continue to assess happiness with work and work life balance through link governor visits. It was decided that since salaries had not changed much even though staffing costs had increased by 10%, and until pupil funding followed the increased pupil numbers there would not be funds available for increases, governors should look to other ways of recruiting and retaining staff. After much discussion and research it was decided that this would be an added benefit of increasing the Autumn term half term to two weeks rather than one. Opinions of parents and staff were also taken into consideration and this change implemented for Autumn 2018.

A new part time appointee started in Reception working a job share alongside the existing EYFS teacher who has reduced her hours, the link governor supported the head teacher and the class teacher in her induction and through the transition period - the first year has been very successful. The Administration assistant has been taken on permanently, and a new TA appointed for Elm tree class, a new clerk to Governors has been appointed through Telford and Wrekin, and the schools senior financial officer taken on as an employee rather than on a contract basis.

The governors have continued to review and revise policies and procedures across the school when they are due or circumstances have changed. Considerable work was carried out during the year on the staff handbook and creating new family friendly policies and updating and adopting other relevant ones to sit alongside the handbook – particular attention was given to maternity and adoption policies. Governors have maintained their involvement in the annual staff performance cycle and approved decisions on targets as well as undertaking the Head teachers performance review and setting targets for him.

The health and safety and premises committee have met on a termly basis with two site walkarounds as well. Tree safety inspections have been arranged, and there has been a considerable amount of work on the school grounds to improve their safety and functionality, and all actions from the recent safetymark audit have been attended to. Very preliminary plans have been drafted for a school extension to move the staff room from Ash tree class and increase the teaching space. The new caretaker started in post at the beginning of the Autumn term, and the grounds maintenance contract was reviewed and retendered with a new appointment resulting. Funds were also identified to take on a new employee to look after the kitchen garden resource and ensure it is fit for its educational purpose. This was agreed initially for a 16 week trial, with a view to having produce fayres run by the children and growing food for the kitchens and one day being at least partially self sustaining. There is now a standing agenda item which is a “wish list” for the school grounds and this is brought forward to the Finance committee to improve forward planning; an increased sum has been budgeted for ongoing buildings maintenance as well.

The Finance committee has dealt with a forecast deficit, largely caused by changes to SEN arrangements and the “falling away” of initial diseconomies grants. After consultation, it was agreed to exceed PAN in three year groups. Governors have considered new rules around persons of significant control, income production from extended schools activities, auto enrolment, bonuses to reflect outstanding inspections, and new lease arrangements for the nursery, alongside their usual tasks of budget setting/tracking, policy reviews, and financial accountability.

A new standing agenda item for “Church matters” was created early in the year for full governors meetings at the request of the RE link governor. The open the book sessions have continued throughout the year, but the vicar having left and the new appointee not taking his post straight away, there was a noticeable gap in the involvement with the local church. This was filled temporarily by the rural dean. The new vicar is now in place and has agreed to attend governors meetings as an observer, there being no current vacancy. The Head teacher attended a two day diocesan training session on understanding Christianity. The link governor considered new assessment grids for RE with the RE lead teacher, the parent RE survey and key observations from inter faith week, as well as how scholarpack is now working for tracking in this subject.

The school site continues to be used by the community outside school hours, and governors have met to consider ways of extending this offer. The children utilise the forest school area and kitchen garden whenever possible and the smallholding site has been further developed, although yet to play much of a role in the curriculum.

Pupil premium and Sports premium play a vital role in funding terms. A greater percentage of children in receipt of pupil premium made at least expected progress over this school year than those not in receipt of pupil premium, money was spent on additional TA cover, small group visits, and targeted sessions for parents as well as children outside the school day, as well as peripatetic teaching. The school has a Link Governor for Pupil Premium who met with the HT on a termly basis to discuss impacts of the PP allocation. This included review of progress data and comparisons to EEF recommendations. Link Governor visit notes for PP are held on file in school. The school has hosted the ‘Cooking Bus’ as a day long experience for our Pupil Premium and otherwise vulnerable pupils as a means of developing communication/confidence. Sports premium funding is spent on experienced and reputable coaches for a minimum of two hours a week for all children, they are also developing the skills, experience, confidence and resources of school staff to support the quality provision. Training for bronze pupil sports ambassadors has run alongside the successful retention of the School Games Mark Gold award, and the school has again joined and played a significant role in the East Shropshire Schools Sports partnership. It is a great credit to the school that they continue to boast many and varied sporting achievements – cressage cup / hi-5 / rugby cup / key stage 1 cross country (also hosted)/ shropshire gymnastics to mention only a few.

The curriculum committee oversee monitoring, assessment and performance within the school as well as curriculum development and progress against targets. Despite very complimentary Ofsted and Siam's inspection reports, the school is continuing to challenge itself and staff and children. There is a monitoring cycle for the year which is shared with governors, monitoring is carried out every Monday and feedback on observations is given to teachers immediately. There has been a focus this year on writing which is an area of statutory weakness and at the end of the year 20% and 50% pupils were working at a “higher level” in writing and SPAG respectively. A whole school ‘write inspired’ week was held in the summer, with the intention to focus the whole school on improving stimulus for writing.

This year has seen the development of the growth mindset throughout the school to really embed positive learning attitudes in all students, together with the development of a more thematic approach to the curriculum; governors have discussed and reviewed the homework policy and through the link governor supported the science lead with formulating summative science testing for the school. A review of marking throughout the school has led to a reduction in written marking since it has been observed that feedback in person is more effective. The Head teacher reports to the full governing body 3 times a year and questions about his report are submitted by governors.

The SEND link governor has been in and observed children who have given particular concern to staff, and taken advice from Reach psychology services, helped with regard to the EHCPs for SEND pupils, and governors have ensured that there is funding available for extra support in the classroom. There is also a governor with responsibility to ensure that higher attainers continue to be challenged and she has worked alongside the school noting the effects of strategies such as the bronze silver and gold platinum markers in numeracy, and time to shine in literacy, as well as “talented IT” and “talented science” workshops. There has been TA training about working towards greater depth in writing.

The governors set themselves targets each year and this year they were a continuation of those from the previous one – collaboration and community - strengthening impact, which really leads on from the Siams inspection report; further development of middle managers and subject leaders, which arose from the Ofsted inspection, and future sustainability, which for us, standing as the only primary free school in Shropshire, is also of paramount importance.

The school continues to offer the use of its facilities to the wider community, to take part extensively in activities outside of the school and through it's lent project the children gain a wider understanding of the world outside its doors and how they can impact it. This year the school raised funds to buy and install a defibrillator on the school site, as well as donating £400 to The British Heart Foundation through their Lent project. The school held a Fair Trade week where children met different people and saw the impact of this on cultural diversity and have also hosted a deputy Head teacher from Lightmoor school who is carrying out her NPQH. The British Values link governor has visited twice and ensured that there is also a robust understanding in this area. The school were shortlisted for the High Sheriff of Shropshire Citizenship Award and attended the award ceremony together with the Chair of Governors.

There has been a considerable increase in responsibility for middle managers with link governors playing a key role, as teachers take on subject leads and are responsible for their development. It has been a focus for staff CPD and reflected in performance management targets so that the new thematic curriculum is supported by strong and secure subject leadership. One of the teachers has mentored a trainee teacher for a term this year for the first time which has also been a great success, and another has been through designated lead training for safeguarding.

Governors have continued to meet, research and discuss various options open to the school in terms of its future sustainability, whether it be through collaboration with other schools, a multi academy trust, other income earning ideas, or through sharing best practice as a teaching school. The idea has never been to jump before we are ready to make a decision, but to be well enough informed to make the right decision when the time comes to do so. In the meantime, the governors have concentrated on continuing to support the school and to create the strong foundations from which staff and children can challenge themselves and push their boundaries in a safe, financially secure, and happy place. We can also take time to bask in the glory of being part of such a thriving and dynamic model of education.