



12 October 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

One of our responsibilities as Governors is to ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction. Last month we held a strategy morning with Mr Halls, Mrs Crozier and Mrs Cutler, where we agreed one common vision and one set of aims for both Thomas Coram and Victoria.

Flourishing in learning and love

Our vision across both schools is for our children to **flourish in learning and love within a happy, Christian family**. We also rewrote our aims so it's easier for our children to understand, and these aims are now the same for Victoria and Thomas Coram. We aim:

- to be proud of ourselves and each other for always being the best that we can be
- to be happy and safe, and feel part of a caring school family
- to love learning through exciting, creative opportunities
- to know that we are all special in God's eyes
- to have a sense of responsibility and the confidence to stand up for what is right in our world
- to work together to prepare us for 'life in all its fullness'
- to practise Christian values in everything we do

You will see these and our motto '**Flourishing in learning and love**' around our schools, on our websites and in our prospectuses. We hope you and the children will also experience and support our vision in daily school life.

2018/19 improvement objectives

At our strategy morning, we agreed key improvement objectives for each school for this academic year. There are several and they cover improving outcomes for all learners; supporting the personal development, behaviour and welfare of our children; building on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; supporting effective leadership and management; and developing the schools' distinctive Christian character.

Two of the Governing Body's priorities for the year are: to get further curriculum, staff and financial benefits from the new Federation; and to find more ways to raise the schools' profiles within the wider community and work with Swing Gate School to promote the benefits of infant-junior education to prospective parents.

Checking progress

Our second Governing Body responsibility is to hold the Executive Headteacher and the senior leadership team to account for the educational performance of our schools. We will be checking progress through:

- analysing and questioning the progress reports and pupil performance data provided by Mr Halls, Mrs Crozier and Mrs Cutler every term
- meeting an independent assessor several times this year (this is our Hertfordshire Improvement Partner – 'HIP'; who is also an Executive Headteacher of three primary schools) for their feedback on the progress in both Victoria and Thomas Coram
- visiting the schools ourselves, often informally but once a term formally during Governor Visit Week to see evidence of children's work and progress against key objectives

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Executive Headteacher:
Mr R Halls BA (Hons) QTS NPQH

Head of School:
Mrs C Crozier BA (Hons) PGCE

Head of School:
Mrs J Cutler BA (Hons) PGCE



Review of 2017/18

Governing Bodies are encouraged to publish an annual statement on the activities of the Governors and their impact on children's education. Please find following a summary for the last academic year.

New leadership team

Last September, we welcomed new leadership teams in both schools plus a new Executive Head/Head of School management structure. We worked very closely with Mr Halls, Mrs Crozier and Mrs Cutler last year to establish this team and build expertise and knowledge sharing. Good feedback from parents and carers, staff and our HIP last term shows that this structure has been well received, and this stability will have had a positive impact on our children's education.

Launch of Castle CE Federation

Last year, we consulted on and oversaw the move from an informal 'collaboration' to the Castle Church of England Federation. This Federation means we can more easily share resources, negotiate contracts and set strategic direction across both schools. The Governing Bodies at each school were disbanded in April and a new one was created last term. Like any new team, we spent time last year getting to know each other; we assessed our skills and roles; and we developed our understanding of both schools. By the end of last term, we had established a Governing Body containing very committed and skilled people, all of whom are dedicated to improving the children's education across both schools. Find more information about who our Governors are at www.castlefederation.org.

Both schools were financially stable

The final key Governing Body responsibility is to oversee the financial performance of the schools and make sure money is well spent. In a Federation, each school keeps control of their budget and last year, working alongside Mr Halls, we monitored income and spend at both. At the end of the financial year, we were very pleased to confirm that both schools were in a positive financial position (you can find a financial summary on each school's website). New grants were also awarded last year for significant capital works that were carried out this summer. Although we are very aware of tight public finances, combined with falling numbers of Reception-age children across Berkhamsted and Hertfordshire, last year our budgets both supported the children's education and helped maintain the fabric of our buildings. The invaluable fundraising by the Friends of Thomas Coram and the VSA last year also bought extra items that had both an immediate and lasting benefit for our children.

Educational performance remained Good

In February, Thomas Coram had an Ofsted inspection which re-confirmed the school as Good. An Ofsted visit to Victoria remains overdue, however our HIP inspected Victoria (and Thomas Coram) several times last year, and confirmed our own assessment that Victoria is a Good school. These gradings were due to the excellent senior leadership and hard work of all the staff on improving the educational standards and the positive outcomes for the children. We are very proud of what the children and staff achieved last year.

With an established leadership team and Governing Body, high quality staff and energetic, hard-working children in our schools, we are excited about what we can achieve this year. We also welcome your feedback - please contact the school offices or talk to your class teacher about how best to do this or fill in the Ofsted Parent View survey (see each school's website for a link). Governors wearing name badges are also at most school events; just ask a member of staff to point us out.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Jenkins

Chair of Governors, on behalf of Castle Church of England Federation Governing Body