



Annual Governance Statement

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bicester

Purpose of this Governance Statement

This governance statement has been prepared and published by the Governing Body of St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bicester (hereafter referred to as the Governing Body) in compliance with our duty to report on the ways in which we have fulfilled our obligations and responsibilities relating to (i) our overarching duty to conduct the school in accordance with its Catholic character and (ii) our core functions (which are explained below) during the 2021-2022 academic year.

A list of serving governors is available to view on the Governors' page of our website.

Role of the Governing Body

As the Governing Body of a Catholic school, our overarching responsibility lies in ensuring that the School is conducted in accordance with its Catholic character at all times, and this overriding duty (which is also a legal duty) permeates everything that we do. Further, in accordance with our legal obligations, the Governing Body endeavours to operate at a strategic level leaving the headteacher and senior school leaders responsible and accountable to us for the operational day-to-day running of the School. It is by achieving these aims that we can be sure that our School has effective governance.

The three core functions of the Governing Body are:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
2. Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the School and its pupils, and for the internal organisation, management and control of the School, including performance management of staff; and
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the School and making sure its money is well spent.

As an integral part of the vision for the holistic formation of children and young people Canon law (Church law) also requires that Catholic schools are "...at least as academically distinguished as that in the other schools of the area" and the Governing Body are mindful of this requirement in all that we do.

Scope of Governing Body's Responsibilities

The Governing Body acknowledges that we have overall responsibility for ensuring that St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bicester has an effective and appropriate system of control, financial and otherwise. However, such a system is designed to manage rather than eliminate the risk of failure to achieve our objectives and can provide only a reasonable (as opposed to absolute) assurance against material misstatement or loss.

The Governing Body has delegated the day-to-day responsibility to the headteacher for ensuring financial controls conform with the requirements of both propriety and good financial management.

Governance Arrangements

Composition of the Governing Body

The Governing Body is made up of 7 †Foundation Governors, 2 Staff Governors (including the headteacher), 2 Parent Governors and 1 Local Authority Governor.

† Foundation Governors are appointed by the Archbishop of the Birmingham, Bernard Longley. They are appointed not only because of their particular skills, but, more importantly, for the strict purpose of ensuring, on his behalf, the Catholic character of St Mary's Primary School. Foundation Governors are also under important legal duties to preserve and develop our School's Catholic character. In order to ensure that the St Mary's Catholic character is protected and that it is being conducted in accordance with the tenets of our Catholic designation, the Governing Body must always have a majority of Foundation Governors.

The Archbishop is Canonically responsible for his schools. He ensures that the Catholic ethos of our school is maintained, particularly through the appointment of Foundation Governors, but also through overseeing the appointment of members of staff and through Diocesan inspection, in order to ensure that St Mary's is fulfilling the objects cited in our Instrument of Government and the trust deed under which the school was established.

Governing Body's work this year and Governors attendance at full Governing Body meetings

The full Governing Body has met 4 times during the year.

We have not cancelled a Governing Body meeting because it was not "quorate" (the number of Governors needed to ensure that legal decisions can be made).

Overall Governors have excellent attendance at Governing Body meetings.

Individual Governors' attendance during the year at Governing Body meetings can be found on the Governors' page on our school website.

Committees work this year and Governors attendance at Committee meetings

At St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bicester we have a Finance, Premises and Health & Safety Committee, a Curriculum Committee, a Personnel Committee, an Admissions Committee and an Appraisal Committee. Individual Governors' attendance during the year at Committee meetings can be found on the Governors' page on our school website.

Governors' Future Plans for the School

The Governing body will continue to focus on School Improvement; Embedding changes to the curriculum and assessment and Ensuring future sustainability

Minutes of Governing Body and Committee meetings

Minutes of Governing Body and Committee meetings are public documents - you can ask in the school office if you would like to see a copy of the minutes.

Review of Value for Money

The Governing Body has used its resources to provide good value for money during the academic year and has assessed where value for money can be improved including the use of benchmarking data where available. The Governing Body has delivered value for money during the year by ensuring that three quotations are obtained for larger items/jobs and references/recommendations are sought.

The Risk and Control Framework

The School's system of internal financial control is based on a framework of regular management information and administrative procedures including the segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability, where appropriate. In particular it includes: –

- Comprehensive budgeting and monitoring systems with an annual budget and periodic financial reports which are reviewed and agreed by the Governing Body;
- Regular reviews by the Finance Committee of reports which indicate financial performance against the forecast and of major purchase plans, capital works and expenditure programmes;
- Setting targets to measure financial and other performance;
- Clearly defined purchasing (asset purchase or capital investment) guidelines;
- Delegation of authority and segregation of duties;
- Identification and management of risks.

Capacity to handle risk

The Governing Body regularly reviews the key risks to which the School is exposed together with the operating, financial and compliance controls that have been implemented to mitigate those risks.

Review of effectiveness

The Governing Body has responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the systems in place in the School to identify and manage risk and plan to address any weaknesses (if relevant) and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

How to contact the Governing Body

We always welcome suggestions, feedback and ideas from parents and the wider school community – please contact the Chair of Governors, Mr Chris Hartley, via email to: chartley@st-marys-bicester.oxon.sch.uk.

This governance statement is approved by order of the members of the Governing Body on 23rd November 2021 and signed on its behalf by:



CHRIS HARTLEY

Chair of Governors



P M PICKERING

Headteacher