

# Annual Governance Statement 2023-2024



Dear Parents/Carers,

It is my pleasure to share with you the Governance Annual Report for the academic year 2023-24, which runs from September 2023 to August 2024.

Richard Challoner School is a Catholic Secondary School and a Single Academy Trust. In March, 2024 the school underwent a Catholic Schools Inspection under Section 48. The school was judged to be outstanding in all nine areas showing the religious character of the academy is preserved and developed. Overall the judgement was good, this is because 10% of RE Curriculum time is a limiting factor as directed by the Bishops of England and Wales. Plans are in place to move to 10% RE Curriculum time on the first day of the new academic year. We thank our parents for taking the time to respond to the Inspectorate Survey.

The purpose of Governance is to provide:

- **Strategic leadership:** The Governing Board aids the setting and defining of the school's strategic direction, including its vision and strategic priorities. It establishes and models the school's culture, values and ethos. Students, both current and future are at the forefront of decision-making, with the principles of those who have gone before. The aim to provide an outstanding and inclusive education as well as opportunities for wider curriculum to develop the whole person.
- **Accountability and assurance:** The Governing Board has robust effective oversight of the operations and performance of the school, including the provision of education, student welfare, overseeing and ensuring appropriate use of funding and effective financial performance, keeping the school's estate secure and well-maintained. As well as consideration for the environment and sustainability for the future.
- **Strategic engagement:** The Governing Board has strategic oversight of strong relationships with stakeholders. The Governing Body receives feedback from parents, pupils via school parliament, other schools, the local authority and our local communities.

The board has collective accountability and strategic responsibility for the trust. It has a focus on ensuring the trust delivers an excellent education to pupils while maintaining effective financial management and must ensure compliance with, the trust's charitable objects, regulatory, contractual and statutory requirements, and our funding agreement.

The board also has strategic and statutory responsibility for safeguarding and Special educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The board also offers the informal support and encouragement which will enable it to thrive and secure the highest levels of success for the students entrusted to us. This success comes from the opportunities provided.

The Board is confident that the school has met all of its legal and statutory obligations. The Governor's priority is to fulfil their core functions. We listen to all our stakeholders and form a strong and supportive community at Richard Challoner School.

The Vision and Christian Ethos of the School is that it is the right and duty of this School to offer an education based on the teachings and values of the Catholic Church. The offer is not to impose and the personal conscience of all students and parents is respected. The school seeks to foster an awareness of the living presence of our Lord and a climate within its Community inspired by the teachings of the Christian Gospel. This Christian climate continues to be expressed primarily through the example and commitment of the staff and their relationships with the students, along with the relationships between the students. We strive to encourage a partnership with parents, an education in conformity with the Christian ethos of the school that will enable all students to develop his/her full potential. The board continues to consider the Curriculum whereby we provide a broad and balanced curriculum in accordance with National Curriculum requirements and with the School's Curriculum Policy and the values of the Christian Gospel. We enable all students to have the opportunities to experience success and to develop a sense of their own worth. To help students to be sensitive to the needs of others and free from prejudice.

The vision and values continue to be underpinned by the School's motto 'Keep Faith'. Our School motto has been important as Governors remain committed to providing an outstanding education despite being placed into financial risk as a result of the pandemic and absorbing unfunded staff pay rises.

Governors are extremely grateful to the staff at Richard Challoner School or as we often refer, to them as the Challoner family. Governors would like to thank Mr Maher Headmaster, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Headship Team and Executive Leadership Team (ELT) for their continued commitment, support, approachability and confident leadership. The board thank the Governance Professional for continued support by offering advice on accountability, strategic responsibility and detailing the changes to legislation.

We fully recognise the outstanding teaching and learning that happens at the School day in and day out, as well as the important roles carried out by our Support Staff, all of whom play their part in providing a safe, caring, well maintained and exceptional learning environment for our students and a culture to breed success. The Governors fully appreciate the role and contribution to the School community made by the PTFA, their financial donations have enhanced the School environment and had a direct impact on the students' positive learning experience. Their work has been critical of late to provide funding for a minibus, upgrade to the Newman Centre garden, Projects in the Art and MFL departments, blinds and a water heater in the school kitchen.

In 2023-24 the board of Governors welcomed four newly appointed Foundation Governors - Mrs Casey to extend our expertise in Finance (Appointed October, 2023), Mrs Mayhew an ex-headteacher with a wealth of knowledge in Education (Appointed December, 2023), Mrs Noble a current Headteacher again with expert knowledge in Education in the Primary School sector (March 2024) and Fr Edem Parish Priest St Joseph's Church in Merton. (August, 2024).

We held a parent governor election and are pleased that four parents put themselves forward for this role. Following a ballot, Ash Winston was elected as Parent Governor in June, 2024. On behalf of the board of Governors we are extremely grateful for their support and commitment of our school.

We thank Fr Edet, Mrs Mason and Mrs McDonald who have stepped down during 2023-24 for their contribution and support to the board.

## **Further reflections on the year**

We remain extremely proud of the achievements of our Year 11 and Year 13 students in their GCSE and A-Level examinations, the resilience they have shown in challenging times due to the pandemic has been humbling. Whilst our results are provisional at this stage we are reporting that 28% of students achieved 3 A\*-B grades at A-Level, 65% of students achieved 3 A\*-E.; the results that has enabled the vast majority of students to reach their destination of choice. 88.89% of Year 11 students achieved 9-4 grades at GCSE. Our results are truly outstanding, Attainment 8 is 58.53 and Progress 8 is +0.81, our students at GCSE have obtained over three quarters of a grade higher than expectation. The trend in results are higher than our achievements in 2019 for which we must report on. We continue to remain one of the leading, non-selective schools in the country.

Whilst the School strives to provide the opportunities to gain outstanding results to the best of the students' abilities, we also provide wider curriculum opportunities. The school and its staff continued to provide a wide range of trips and activities across all year groups, including Drama and Theatre trips, Year 7 North and South Camps, Battlefield Trip to France, Stratford Upon Avon Cultural Trip, MFL Trips to Spain and to France, Geography Field trips to Wales, True Adventure Trip to Borneo, Competitions and events for the students to participate and excel in. Opportunities included our House system of events, master chef, sporting fixtures against local schools in Basketball, Football, Rugby, County Cross Country, Swimming Gala and a Formula 1 Competition, finishing the year with Sports Day. Music Performances Soloist Concerts, Winter Concert including Instrumentalists, Choirs and Bands. Highlight of the year has seen the choir singing at Churches in Budapest, Hungary, and singing at St George's Chapel – Southwark Cathedral for Richard Challoner Day. Our Xavier Centre has enjoyed trips to Wisley, the Theatre and an adventurous activity centre.

This academic year the Gender Equalities and Racial Diversity Working Groups continued to meet during term time. Both working groups were attended by both our students and staff body. The Governing Body received highlights from these groups along with feedback from the Student Parliament (Student representatives Yrs7-13), from the Parent Forum (Parents with children in Yr's 7-13) and from the PTFA. Governors thank Mr McEvelly for his hard work and dedication over the last few years as Chair of the PTFA as his term comes to an end.

The Governing Board has delegated to its committees the first check of all school policies which undergo a final recommendation and ratification to the Board of Governors. Governors continue to check the policies for the latest guidance and accuracy on procedure in school. Whilst the school maintains the statutory policies it has also brought in a number of policies it has considered relevant, for the effective running of the school.

The Governing Board place our community at the forefront and continue to consider financial pressures placed on families especially as a result of the cost of living crisis. The Board welcomes the schools support on charities, collecting presents for the children at the Children's Trust, raising funds for the Air Ambulance and Battersea Cats & Dogs home. The Board welcomes the continuation of the pre-loved (Second -Hand) Uniform sales for Years 7-11 and the availability of the hardship fund and Bursary Fund 16 - 19. The school has gone above and beyond its calling to assist those in need and fulfil its Christian ethos to react to where help is needed the most.

The Estate has been maintained but due to budget restraints, significant projects are on hold.

The School continues as lead school for the Kingston Cluster – NHS Mental Health Trailblazer.

### **Impact in 2023-24**

The board constitution changed by over one-third of newly appointed Governors in 2023-24, however with existing expertise and new governor skillsets the board continues to weather the storm and move forward with vast knowledge and experience.

The Board has completed an annual skills audit, which is an important tool in the Governor recruitment process because it allows the Full Governing Body to ensure it has the expertise required for effective governance. The findings revealed that there are no gaps in the Collective Board's skill set. The board continues to learn through e-learning modules from the National Governance Association (NGA), NGA guidance, local authority training, and in-house training. All Governors receive regular Safeguarding training and are Safeguarding trained through Hays Online, which includes PREVENT training.

Governors regularly visit school to fulfil their monitoring roles – These roles include Leads in Safeguarding (LAC, PLAC), SEND, Health & Safety, Careers, Equality & Diversity, GDPR, Pupil Premium Departmental visits and reports of visits have been presented to the board for any further actions to consider. In 2023-24 we introduced a Lead Governor for Cyber Security.

How has the Governing Board helped the School achieve its vision? Each year the School Development Plan (SDP) sets out how the School plans to deliver its vision. The SDP is developed by the Headship Team - Mr Maher and Deputy Headteachers Mr Henderson, Mr O'Brien, Mr Webber and Mrs Harvey with SLT discussion, then reviewed and approved by the Curriculum Committee and final approval by the Governing Board. It includes, amongst other information, key outcomes and the actions required to deliver. The Full Governing Body Meetings have strategic focus and feedback and challenge is provided to check impact of the outcomes linked to the SDP. This ensures that the Governors remain focused on strategic matters that directly impact the education of the students.

- In 2023/24 we held five Full Governing Body meetings, one AGM for our members, as well as five Finance, Premises General Purposes Risk & Audit Committees, five Personnel, Pay, Pastoral and Wellbeing Committees, five Curriculum Committees and two Admissions Committee meetings.

- We received reports from Mr Maher, Headship Team, SLT and Mrs Fowler covering a variety of areas related to school development, including Student Progress, Attendance, Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Premises, Risk Management, Data Protection, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and exclusion to name but a few.
- We received presentations from Subject Leads about the curriculum for their subject area.
- We monitored the 2023-24 financial performance against the budget and both reviewed and considered the School's budget for 2024-25 and the medium-term financial plan until 2027-28.
- We revised and reviewed the Risk Register.
- Governors have received targeted NGA e-learning training for their needs, from induction to exclusion panel, safeguarding, safer recruitment etc.
- We attended a training day in preparation for the Catholic Schools Inspection.
- We requested the invitation to our SENCo Mrs Cronin to attend two meetings of the Curriculum Committee to provide SEND oversight and Designated Safeguarding Lead Mrs Southall to present updates on Safeguarding to the board.
- We received a SSAT report following a staff survey to consider Vision, Values and Moral Purpose, Leading people and Operational Management.
- We agreed a new Governor Visits Policy and schedule of visits. We have visited the school during the school day and received presentations from and engaged in dialogue with staff and students covering a range of topics.
- Governors with individual responsibilities (Link Governors) for Safeguarding LAC and PLAC, Health and Safety, Careers, GDPR, Special Educational Needs or Disabilities had meetings with the responsible Leads and reported the results of their visits to the Governing Body.
- We received link Governor reports from Governor visits to Curriculum areas and meetings with the Subject Leaders.
- We have undertaken financial benchmarking against similar schools.
- We have received an Estates Strategy update for our School.
- We have received an annual Health & Safety Report.
- We have ensured that the Pupil Premium Strategy and Reporting are completed and to time.
- We have aided the school on Internal scrutiny for VAT Audit, Health & Safety Audit and Professional Development of Teaching staff Audit. These three audits were taken from the risk register as a higher risk status to check for understanding and compliance.
- We reviewed and approved a significant number of policies, Governors have oversight to approve all policies including non-statutory and monitor effectiveness. Statutory policies include Safeguarding, Health & Safety, Charging & Remissions, Relationship, Health and Sex Education, First aid etc.
- We conducted a self-evaluation of the board which provided opportunities to strengthen our impact of Governance. The outcome of the evaluation showed our board is effective and no further actions are required as we move to 2024-25.

## **As we approach 2024-25**

- We will continue to support the Headteacher in the implementation of the Schools vision and values.
- We will continue to monitor income and expenditure performance against the 2024-25 School Budget.
- We will continue to monitor student wellbeing, student progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance, curriculum provision, safeguarding, health & safety, staff work/life balance and financial performance. We will support and review the Schools implementation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) statement.
- We will regularly receive curriculum presentations from Subject Leads.
- We will support and review the School Development Plan and monitor its implementation through the Full Governing Body.
- We will continue to take part in Governor visits to Departments as well as to receive curriculum presentations from Subject Leaders. Our visits will also include identified focus visits with Governor links to the School Development Plan.
- We will keep Succession Planning on each Agenda of the Personnel Committee with feedback to the Governing Body.
- We will monitor and focus on digital strategy and cyber security.

We will continue to act to make informed decisions for the greater good for our students, staff, parents and all our stakeholders. We continue to embark upon continued onward discussion and collaboration on its journey towards becoming a member of Christ the Redeemer Multi Academy Trust.

A full list of the Governors, their responsibilities can be found on the school website. The Governing Body can be contacted via the Governance Professional Mrs Heather Fowler/ or via the contacts section of the school website (School Office).

Thank you for the continued support of our School.

Heather Fowler

**Governance Professional**

**On behalf of the Board of Richard Challoner School**