

July 2020



Governing Body Newsletter

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Chalfont St Peter

Love – Learn – Grow

'Striving to be an excellent school where children and staff are inspired to love, learn and grow together within the Catholic faith'

Dear Parents, Staff and Children,

As we approach the end of what has been a unique year in the history of the School, and of education generally, I wanted to share with you some of the successes and some of the challenges that we as a school face, and to share what the Governors have been doing over the past 12 months.

We are deeply conscious of how difficult the past few months have been for everybody: for parents, for staff and for children. I firstly would like to thank you, the parents, for both your forbearance and your involvement in the continuing education of your children. We recognise the pressures that have been placed on everyone and the frustration that we have all felt at not being able to get all of our children back into school this term.

I would also like to thank the staff for the way that they have adapted to new ways of teaching, and the additional stresses and strains which distance learning has created. A number of the staff gave up most of their Easter, and half-term holidays, in order to keep the school open for Key Workers and we are grateful to them.

We are also grateful to the Senior Leadership Team of Mrs Lovegrove, Mrs O'Kane, Mrs Ford and Mrs Rospedzihowska who have been unflappable in dealing with the myriad of issues which have arisen as a result of lockdown, home learning, reopening, and now planning for September. We are immensely grateful to them for their dedication.

The staff and the Governors cannot wait to get all the children back into school. Our focus is now firmly on September and ensuring that we are ready for all the children to return. The Advent Term will be even more challenging than normal as we try to make up for lost time, but I know that the staff are passionate about getting back and providing the best possible education for all our children. I can assure you that the education and well-being of the children is at the top of everybody's agenda.

What does a Governing Body do?

I thought that it might be useful to remind everyone of the responsibilities of the Governing Board. Our three core functions, set out by the Department for Education

(DfE) 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 the performance management of staff; and
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction:

The governors regularly discuss the strategic direction of the school and have recently reaffirmed our vision for St Joseph's, which is "to be an excellent school where children and staff are inspired to love, learn and grow together within the Catholic faith."

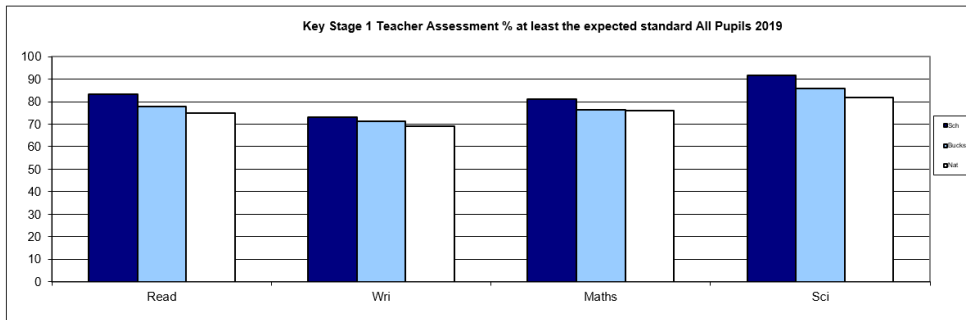
To this end we are constantly trying to ensure that everything which the School does is in accordance with our vision. The desire to learn, love and grow together permeates everything which happens at school. Our aim is that every child should reach his or her full potential. This is a demanding aspiration but it is one to which we are all fully committed.

Governors are often described as the "critical friends" of schools and that is what we seek to do: to challenge the school leadership, but always in a constructive manner because we are all seeking exactly the same ends: the fulfilment of each child's potential.

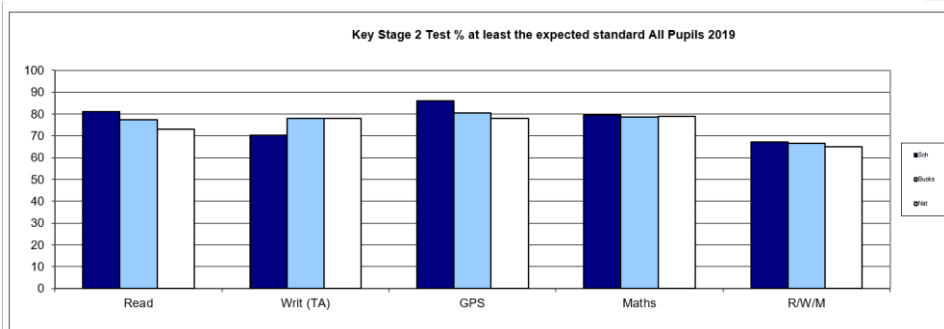
The educational performance of the school:

As a Governing Board we scrutinise all the information available about the attainment and progress of all children in the school on a termly basis and challenge the action plans of the Senior Leadership Team, with a particular focus on any areas where improvement may be required. I have included the latest published information in this letter which relates to the data from Summer 2019.

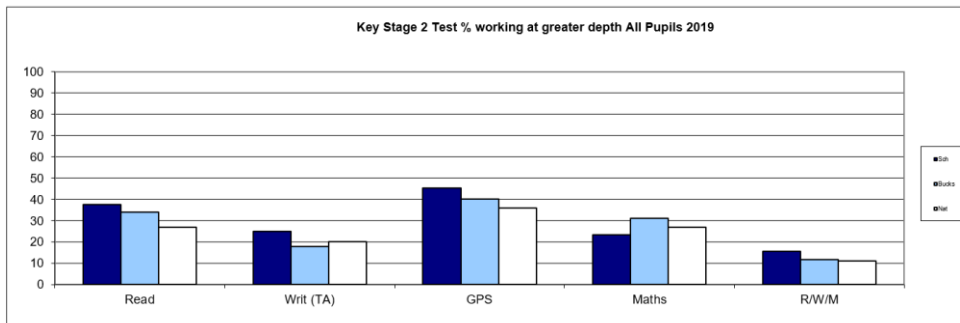
In all of these tables the first bars represent the results of St Joseph's, the second bars represent the results across Buckinghamshire, and the third bar represents the results nationally. As an overall summary I would say that the results are strong and areas for further development are highlighted in the School Improvement Plan.



At Key Stage 1 children at St Joseph's were outperforming both the Buckinghamshire results and the national results. The results are very encouraging, but we continue to strive for further improvement.



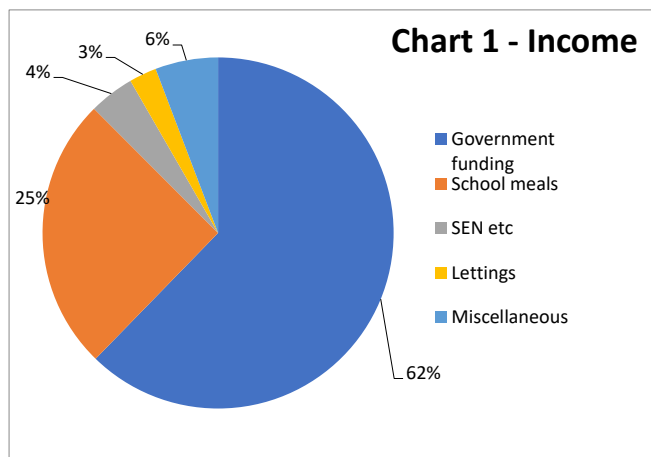
The above table is derived from the results of the 2019 SATs and shows the percentage of pupils reaching expected levels. We continue to perform well in Reading, GPS (Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling) and Maths. With regards to Writing, there is a continued focus to raise standards. The Senior Leadership team and the staff have reviewed the school's approach to writing and introduced a new writing cycle, invited external writers into the school, and sought to review best practice. The early results of this appear promising but this is a long term journey to which we are all fully committed.



The table above illustrates the percentage of children working at greater depth and the School compares favourably with County and National comparators across Reading, Writing and GPS. We should be aware that there will always be annual fluctuations depending upon the cohort of any particular year. Overall, across Writing, Reading and Maths the percentage of pupils working at greater depth in all areas is above County and National averages and the results remain strong.

Financial Performance of the school:

We review the financial position of the school every term and support the Senior Leadership Team in making appropriate financial decisions. In the tables below we show how income is generated, and how income is spent.



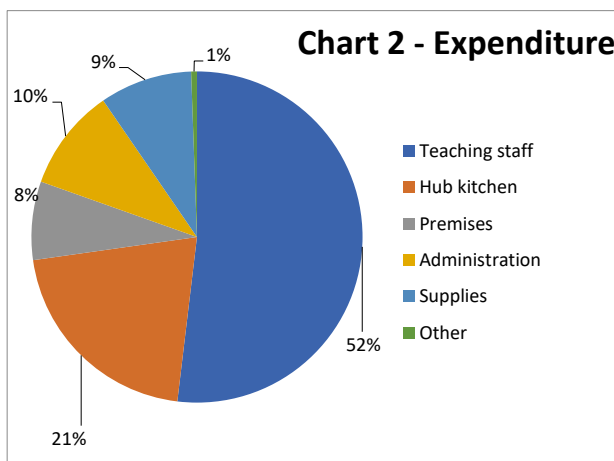
The school is a substantial financial enterprise with total income of over £2.3m. Of course, the most significant element of income is the per child grant that the school

Commented [BM1]: Mike (Robinson), can you provide updated charts for me please? I'm told that you did them last year and I can't link to the source data.

receives each year from Central Government funds, including additional income specifically to support children with particular needs. School finances are always a challenge and in the current financial year (20/21) more than most, as we have had just over a term with minimal catering income as a result of lockdown.

Most schools would have similar income and expenditure charts to St Joseph's, except for the catering income and expenditure. As I'm sure most parents are aware St Joseph's acts as a hub kitchen for 14 other schools and our wonderful catering staff prepare approximately 1,800 meals every day in term time. This is a phenomenal effort by Mr. Jefferys, Mr. Jaspal and the team and their success in selling our catering services has a direct impact on the financial situation of the school and therefore the education of our children. We would not be able to employ all the Teachers and Teaching Assistants that we do were it not for the financial contribution of the Hub Kitchen.

We also generate income from out of hours letting activities and constantly being on the 'look out' for additional, predominantly County led, funding opportunities. These produce extra income that can be directed towards educational activities.



As with all primary schools, the greatest element of expenditure was on staff, including their training. Further significant amounts were spent on running the premises and on supplies. Hub Kitchen expenditure relates to food and staff costs and is more than covered by the income we receive from participating schools. The Headteacher scrutinises expenditure closely, supported by the finance team, to ensure that the school provides the best provision and value for money.

Capital Improvements/Building Fund

The main school budget deals with the day to day expenditure. Separately, the school is responsible for capital expenditure - to maintain and improve the buildings and grounds. Parents will be aware of the huge amount of building work which has

gone on over the last 3 to 4 years. We hope that by September we will have completed more roof works in the KS1 ICT Suite and Office Areas, and have installed a new boiler and heating system in Key Stage 1, as well as some enhancements to the Pre-School. It has been a long journey for us but hopefully everyone will see the fruits of this investment when we return in September.

Parents will hopefully be aware that as a Voluntary Aided school, 10% of the capital spend each year has to be funded by the parents. The Friends of St. Joseph's School (FOSJS) administers the collection of this money for us, although the building funds are accounted separately from the rest of the FOSJS income. Unfortunately, the number of families contributing to this scheme has fallen, and unless more parents start to contribute it will not be possible to pay for additional planned improvements. **This is now becoming a critical issue for us and will impact on our ability to make further improvements going forward unless we are able to build this fund back up again.**

The suggested donation is a regular payment of £10/month. Direct debits are the easiest way to make regular payments and allow planning of regular expenditure. Taxpayers can claim Gift Aid from HMRC which returns the tax to FOSJS's adding 25% to any donations. This meets the school's obligation to find 10% of the cost of projects, with the Diocese and Local Education Authority making up the other 90%. So, for each £120 donated by parent taxpayers we are able to claim £30 in Gift Aid, which allows us to bid for £1,350 in grants. In this way a family's £10/month donation grows to a substantial £1,500/year to be spent on improving the school buildings.

This is why we are so grateful to all the parents who contribute in this way and ask other families to give serious consideration to starting a direct debit or making a regular contribution via Parent Pay. Please see the attached form for details of how to set up direct debits and make contributions.

We are very grateful to FOSJS who are busy throughout the year continuously looking at innovative ways to raise important funds for our school. In recent years the school has received whiteboards, laptops and play equipment among the many contributions of FOSJS. This year's contributions have focused on funding Learning Resources, particularly reading materials and maths equipment, as well as Forest School training. **This is quite separate from the 10% contribution to the building fund.**

Therefore, to Lisa, Laura, and their fellow trustees and the class parents, thank you so much for all the hours of hard work you have put in over the year. You are truly amazing and the governors are so grateful for everything that you do.

Our school cannot function so smoothly without the contribution of many others and is reliant on the goodwill, kindness and support of many volunteers. Again, a huge thank you to you all on behalf of the governing board. Not only do you raise significant funds for the school, but you are setting an example to all the children.

I am overwhelmed at the dedication and kindness shown by everyone involved within the school community.

Governor's Engagement Plan

As a governing body we regularly review our annual engagement plan which enables us to meet all members of the St Joseph's School Community. Throughout the year, governors have again attended various meetings within the school and within our partnership Catholic schools. Since lockdown we have been unable to visit school and have been conducting our meetings via Zoom. We are desperate to get back into school as soon as we can because seeing the children in school is by far the most enjoyable thing that we do! Notwithstanding lockdown, over the course of the year we have:

- Had lunch with the pupils
- Attended Open Evenings
- Attended Learning Walks
- Met with the various subject leads
- Attended Love, Love, Grow Award Assemblies
- Attended Black History Month Speech Day
- Attended the various Christmas Concerts and events
- Attended the diocesan Mass for schools
- Met with the school representatives: School Council, Faith Ambassadors, Junior Leadership Team, Eco Team and House Captains

We are always impressed by the courtesy, the confidence and the maturity shown by the children. They are great ambassadors for the school.

Promoting our School

We have plenty of reasons to be proud here at St Joseph's – our school has been prominent within the local community competing in sports events and competitions with other schools. Many parents, staff and governors attended the Remembrance Day Parade and the Christmas shopping night. The school choir also sang at a number of community events around Christmas time under the guidance of Mrs Fallon and Mrs Pugsley. During lockdown the pupils wrote to the residents of Windsor Lodge, sharing messages of hope and kindness, during a difficult and isolating time for them.

The school continues to use Twitter to keep people informed of school activities, so please follow [@StJosephsCSP](#). Of course, word of mouth and the testimonials of pupils and their families remain the greatest form of promotion available to us, so please do continue to share your pride in St Joseph's. We have space to take more pupils, particularly in KS1 and year 3, so as a school community we would ask you all to promote the school whenever you can – we would love to have a larger St Joseph's community in the coming years! If anyone has any marketing experience or innovative ideas about how we reach a larger community, please do get in touch!

Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)

Last year Debbie Dry updated you on the developments of Multi-Academy Trusts within the Northampton Diocese. Two new Multi Academy Trusts were formed on 1st February 2020, one in the North of the Diocese and one in the South. These MATs were initially formed as a merger of the existing Catholic MATS to further protect Catholic Education across the Diocese. At present, St Joseph's and other local Catholic schools within our Bucks Partnership group are not in the position to join a MAT but it is something Bishop David and NORES (Northampton Office for RE & Schools) wish us to consider and which is under ongoing review. We will update you on this should there be any change to the current position.

Health & Safety and the Environment

At St. Joseph's School staff and Governors ensure that the children's safety and welfare is at the centre of all decision making. The governors' responsibility for Health & Safety is monitored by a nominated governor reporting to Full Governing Body meetings. Members of the committee carry out termly H&S inspections of the school as well as ensuring policies and procedures are up to date and adhered to, and that areas of improvement are identified and acted upon. Additional assessments have taken place during the recent building work and post Covid19 lockdown to ensure safe operation of the school and also that emergency evacuation routes are clear. Children have rehearsed evacuation and lockdown successfully.

The school kitchen is an important focus of both H&S and finance and continues to be 5-star rated. With strong competition from catering companies the hub kitchen has continued to make a profit for the school.

As part of the termly inspection the accident records are checked to ensure that no premises or procedure changes are needed for safety reasons.

We continue to monitor the school drop off and parking arrangements. Whilst on the whole this continues to work well, we are aware of the impact on the local residents and would request all staff, parents and governors continue to be mindful of this when visiting the school.

We believe the school building and grounds provide an excellent environment for teaching and learning. To maintain this quality, the Governors are continually looking at ways we can make further improvements for the benefit of all our pupils and teachers.

Safeguarding

The safeguarding and wellbeing of our pupils is paramount and we take great care that all necessary procedures are in place. We have a new safeguarding governor, Mr Simon Hardcastle, who will meet regularly with Mrs Lovegrove and the school Safeguarding Lead, Mrs Ford. Communication is key. Therefore, if you have any concerns at any time, please contact the school and we will ensure these are followed up and resolved.

Governing Roles

My thanks to Debbie Dry and Deborah Taylor who both stepped down as Governors this year. Thank you for your contribution to the Governing board over many years.

I would also like to welcome Simon Hardcastle, Margaret Van Duyvenbode and Jenny Donnelly to the Governing Board and to thank them for volunteering to be governors: it is greatly appreciated.

We currently have one Foundation Governor vacancy; if you are interested in this rewarding and fulfilling role, please contact the Clerk to the Governors at governors@st-josephsprimary.bucks.sch.uk for further information and a description of the role. We are always looking to enhance the diversity of the Governing Board and to make it reflective of the school community so applications from under represented groups would be particularly welcome.

Finally, on behalf of the governing body I would like to wish all pupils leaving us this term all the very best for the future in their new schools and to their parents—thank you for all your support. May you all have a restful and enjoyable Summer holiday.

Barry Moloney

Chair of Governors