



Every Child, Every Chance, Every Day

St. Mark's Governors' Annual Report to Parents

July 2015

Welcome to the St. Mark's Governors' annual report to parents. I hope that you find the report a useful summary of who the governing body is, how we are set up and what we have been working on over the last year.

As we draw this year to a close, I am thrilled that we have achieved so much. Our Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) inspection was hugely complimentary about the Christian ethos and inclusive environment that we provide at St. Mark's. The Ofsted judgement of Good was a great endorsement of all that has been achieved across the school by staff and governors alike. Most importantly, our children are making at least good progress and report feeling safe and happy at school.

Year on year our SATs results have improved over the last few years and our 2015 results were no exception. Our children were in line with national averages at level 4 but above them for level 5. We also secured level 6s in maths and SPAG. These results clearly demonstrate that our more able children were stretched to realise their potential. Our success story lies in the progress that our children make, particularly for those achieving three levels of progress. In all areas, we far exceeded the national average. For instance, in maths we achieved 60% against a national average of 35%. This was a fantastic achievement for year 6 – well done to them and all the teaching staff that enabled this wonderful outcome.

	Attainment			Progress between KS1-2	
	L4	L5	L6	2 Levels of Progress	3 Levels of progress
Reading	85%	62%		88% N-91%	40% N-35%
Writing TA	92%	50%		100% N-93%	56% N-33%
Maths	88%	65%	12%	96% N-89%	60% N-35%
SPAG*	88%	65%	15%	NA	NA

N = national average

*SPAG =Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

If you haven't already done so, please take some time to visit our new school website. It contains lots of detailed information about all aspects of the school, the curriculum and the many varied activities that your children participate in. www.st-marks.islington.sch.uk.

I am blessed to work with an amazing group of people so it is never easy to say farewell to any of them. Madeleine du Vivier is leaving our governing body to chair her own. In the three years that she has been with us, she has been a great source of challenging questions and chaired the Children, Families and Community committee. Our partnership arrangement with Kentish Town also draws to an end and they too have appointed a substantive Headteacher. The team there have been incredibly supportive and I will miss our collaboration. We also say a heartfelt goodbye and thank you to Mr Henry. We owe much of our current standing as a Good school to his excellent leadership. I wish all of them the very best of luck in their new ventures.

This has been an important milestone year for the school, best reflected in the appointments of Ms Braithwaite and Mr Jones. With their enthusiasm and passion for St. Mark's, I have every confidence that we will continue to have much to celebrate in the coming year.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kinnear". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Christine Kinnear

Chair of Governors

The work of the Governing Board

The governors of St. Mark's are a diverse group of people who bring a wide variety of skills and knowledge to the school. Drawn from parents, staff and volunteers from the wider community, we work as a cohesive group to make important decisions for the school such as approving the School Development and Improvement Plan and monitoring and evaluating its implementation. We also have responsibility for agreeing the budget and determining school policies. In essence, the Governors have the ultimate collective responsibility for ensuring that the school is well managed and run.

We meet termly for a full governors meeting and each Governor is also a member of at least one of the following committees:

Committee/Working Group	Area of responsibility
Curriculum & Monitoring	It is responsible for overseeing the curriculum that is provided across the school and monitoring children's progress to ensure that our aim of continually improved standards is being achieved.
Resources	This is the largest committee covering matters of Personnel, Finance and Premises.
Children Families and Community	The newest committee, it looks at safeguarding, admissions, attendance & punctuality as well as all of the other non-curriculum matters that impact on learning.
Strategic Steering Group	This working group was formed to allow the governing body to think about our longer term goals for St. Mark's.
Performance Management	Governors have a responsibility to review the Headteacher's performance and set annual objectives. This function is carried out by the performance management committee.
Complaints panel	If a formal complaint is lodged with the Chair of Governors, this panel will meet to deal with it.

As outlined above, each committee has its own distinct areas of responsibility but they also work closely with each other to make sure that all major decisions are fully scrutinised. This was very much the case this year as we implemented a number of changes which had a fundamental impact on St. Mark's school.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Historically, St. Mark's has had minimal input into how, 'school ready,' our Reception children are when they arrive. Many of the children have never attended nurseries or experienced the level of social interaction that is common in school. Consequently, many of our children are below national averages in their social and educational development. A major contributor to the decision to build a new EYFS centre on the Mitford site consisting of a two year old room, a nursery and space for an additional Reception class was, therefore, to provide our potential Reception intake with an opportunity to build their educational and social skills from an earlier age. This should then translate to an easier transition period for them into Reception so they can start their remarkable journey as young learners with increased confidence and ability.

A second, but still very compelling, reason for introducing the EYFS centre was the chance that it offered to revamp the Mitford building. Although it provided additional space that the school made good use of, the building was draughty, suffered from poor lighting, and proved very expensive to run. The original proposal was to refurbish Mitford but through much negotiation and determination from the governors, we can now look forward to a completely new, purpose built building which will do much to lift the physical appearance and, more importantly, the learning environment of the school.

The centre should be completed by October with the first intake of two-year olds starting later on that month. The nursery is due to open in January 2016. Islington Council will confirm at a later date if we will have an additional Reception class starting in September 2016.

The project is a huge undertaking for the school. We have benefitted from substantial financial contributions from the local authority and the LDBS. Similarly, governors and the school are putting significant amounts towards the project. This show of commitment will deliver a beautiful centre but does not extend to additional items such as a fully equipped outdoor playspace or nicely finished garden space. Governors have set a target of £20,000 to cover these items and have successfully raised £10,000 so far. If you have any ideas as to how we can raise the remaining amount, please do get in contact – we would love to hear from you.

Teaching Structure

This was the first year with the new Teaching Assistant and Pupil Premium teaching structure. Both were introduced to provide a greater focus on teaching to your child's ability; supporting those that are most challenged and stretching the more able.

The slightly longer day and full time nature of the Teaching Assistant role has enabled them to work more effectively to support learning and progress in class. Additionally, the use of Pupil Premium teachers who alongside the class teacher teach small, focused groups has provided an environment where the teacher is left with a reduced class size and allows for greater teaching time per child.

The Curriculum Committee reviews pupil progress each half-term and governors are now confident that the new structure has been beneficial, with children across the school continuing to make at least good progress.

Governor finances

The AstroTurf and Arsenal parking are valuable sources of income which have allowed governors to continue to contribute financially to the life of the school. For example, our annual payment towards the Year 6 Osmington Bay trip and whole school pantomime.

To accommodate our commitment to the new EYFS centre, governors have received approval for a £50,000 loan from the LDBS which is payable over three years. This decision was not taken lightly, but we are confident that it is an affordable amount.

Being able to support the school and provide experiences for the children that they may otherwise not have are very important to governors so, through our newly formed fund-raising group, we will continue to search for grants and money generating opportunities.

If you would like to share ideas on how we can increase our finances or contribute to the work of the fund-raising group, please do not hesitate to get in contact.

New Committee Structure

Over the last three years, the governors have adapted to best meet the needs of the school. In the past, for example, we have recruited Associate Governors who have the specific skill set that we need and rejigged our training arrangements so that all governors have the required knowledge.

This year, we reorganised our committee structure to create the Children, Families and Communities Committee. Central to their purpose is to enhance the social, educational and spiritual connection that the school has with the parental and wider community. Their work covers our home school links, our relationship with St. Mark's Church and in-school aspects such as behaviour and safety. Working with the school leadership, this committee has led on the reinvigoration of the St. Mark's vision expressed through an artwork project which enabled children right across the school and their parents/carers to contribute. We also now enjoy deeper ties to St. Mark's Church with the very successful lunchtime club and mentoring visits from the youth team.

Ofsted are very keen that schools actively teach values such as tolerance, democracy, rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect. This is something that we embrace already at St. Mark's and through the CFC committee we will continue to ensure that these values hold true in what is taught and experienced by the children at school.

Curriculum Changes

This year saw the introduction of the new National Curriculum. Our curriculum maps are available on our website to help you understand what this means for your child(ren.) Through half-termly meetings, the Curriculum Committee monitored the smooth introduction of the changes. Much of this was down to the effective subject leader structure that we have in place. Each subject leader developed an action plan for how their subject should be taught. Standards were then maintained through a regular monitoring cycle which involved activities such as class observations and book reviews.

From September the Department of Education will no longer track children's progress using the existing system that we have become accustomed to. The School Leadership team have already started the process of determining a replacement structure and Governors will work closely with them to ensure that a robust system that can accurately track children's progress is ready for the new academic year.

Leadership & Management

In a bid to improve the performance of the school, there has been continued professional development of all staff and a very deliberate programme of building the capacity of our leadership team over the last few years. The benefit of this approach was evident this year as we appointed two fantastic internal candidates with Ms Braithwaite selected as Headteacher and Mr Jones as Deputy Headteacher. Both went through a rigorous recruitment process in which they competed with external candidates and shone through as unanimous choices.

They represent a dynamic team who, alongside Sarah Bearfoot as Assistant Headteacher, will lead the school with the upmost commitment for the successful outcomes for all children at St. Mark's.

Undoubtedly, we are sad to say goodbye to Mr Henry. He has made such an enormous difference to St. Mark's since he joined in January 2012. Under his guidance, we have experienced an almost 40% uplift in children achieving level 4+ in English, Maths and Reading at the end of Year 6 and secured a Good with Ofsted. But his accomplishments are more than just academic. He leaves the school not just looking better through improvements such as our beautiful displays and renewed outdoor playspace but also feeling much more of a cohesive community which is proud of St. Mark's school. It has been a real privilege to work with Mr. Henry and we wish him well in his new role as a Leadership and Management Advisor in Hackney.

What next for St. Mark's?

Being recognised as Good by both Ofsted and SIAMs inspections was a welcome validation of the high quality work and commitment of the staff at St. Mark's over the last few years. Nevertheless, governors and the School Leadership continue to be ambitious for the school so we have taken the points for further improvement raised by both inspections and will be implementing them next year.

September onwards marks a new chapter for St. Mark's. We will have a reformed leadership team, some new teachers and a brand new Early Years Foundation Centre. Governors acknowledge the challenges that this represents but are also very excited by the new opportunities that these changes present. We will be working closely with Ms Braithwaite and her team to build on our successes and move ever closer to being an outstanding school.

If you have any comments or queries please get in touch via email at stmarksgovs@gmail.com or you can leave a message with the office.