

Chair of Governor's Report

July 2021

Steve Turner, Chair of Governors, Pitcheroak School

This year has been as challenging as any the school has faced. Dealing with the pandemic has taken a huge amount of our time, our energy, and our resources, to manage both the impact on children and staff and the concerns of our parents and supporters. The Governing Body has praised and thanked everyone for their efforts throughout the year and I wanted to start this report with another huge thank you to our staff, for their commitment to the school and to supporting our pupils. And I also want to thank teachers for pulling lessons together on line, so that pupils could continue at home. We are proud of the excellent IT systems that supported home learning through all of the uncertainties, and the work that David Wilson does in facilitating the use of IT throughout the school is very much appreciated.

Our challenges continue. We have had to sacrifice the DT room to be another classroom this year, as the relentless pressure for the school to provide more and more places continues. This year Governors have listened to Worcestershire Children First's directors explaining their plans for SEN provision and the anticipated growth in pupil numbers forecast. That need is exercising the ingenuity of our Senior Leadership Team and the Governors keep seeking support for extending the school while retaining the essence of our pastoral and dedicated care.

Despite limited time and all the hassle of managing the bubbles, we have seen the ongoing rollout of personalised learning. The approach of the school has been first class and the attention to detail in curriculum planning that the Governors see in our meetings is hugely impressive, and we thank Trish Baker for all the thought going into ensuring SOLAR is tailored to Pitcheroak.

The increasingly complex needs of our pupils means that we are changing lunch and break times, and lunch sittings, and we have consulted with staff on this this year. These changes will help us manage the stresses of the day. I am delighted Jo Hooper has joined the leadership team. The way the school will be managed going forward will be reflected in how we as Governors work with the school, and we will adopt a primary/secondary approach to governor visits as well.

The refurbished School House, and the work done around it to create work experience opportunities has been the most significant investment this year. Funding these sort of changes is going to be increasingly difficult over the next few years according to Worcestershire Children First, who have maintained the same funding levels for many years across all SEN provision. The Governing Body is considering whether becoming an Academy is the best solution to this challenge, as you will be aware from communications sent out thus far. One of the reasons is access to better support resources and alternative funding streams to meet the needs of the children of Worcestershire with more confidence than we are able to as a maintained school.

Elsewhere we have completed the security fencing, improved the fitness area and playgrounds, and made every pound we spend work twice as hard. Thanks are due to Sarah Wilkinson for all of her work in keeping the school's finances in order through the chaos of the last 12 months.

Terry Miller has left the Governing Body after almost seven years as our Local Authority Governor. Terry has been a tower of strength in taking on large areas of our responsibilities as Governors including safeguarding, which is a

prime concern of us all. I am taking this opportunity to thank Terry again, for all of her work as a Governor, and for her passion for the school. We have new governors who have joined us during the pandemic. This year we have appointed Josh McNamee as a new co-opted Governor, Julie Hicks as a new parent Governor, and Robin Lunn as the new Local Authority Governor. I would like to thank every Governor for their support over the last year and through the pandemic where decisions such as when to open the school have had to be taken by us all. I would also like to thank Lynda Watkins for her efforts as clerk and the time she found to help us during the additional meetings we needed.

Finally, I would like to thank Sheila Holden for her determination to protect everyone to the best of her ability over the last 15 months. The resilience needed to push back at impractical suggestions, impossible deadlines and lack of support from agencies we should be able to rely on has been immense. Our roles as Governors would have been much harder without the dedication and energy of Sheila and her leadership team. I was finally able to visit the school this month for the first time since February last year and being able to immerse myself in the joy of the school again, and see children enjoying Pitcheroak, just makes me proud to be the Chair of Governors here.

Even with all of the stress of the pandemic the school has moved forward in lots of ways. We have received recognition from external bodies:

- Association for Physical Education, Distinction Level (November 2020);
- National Online Safety Certified School (May 2021);
- Leaders in Safeguarding Award (April 2021);
- Governor Mark (March 2021 for the second time);
- Leading Parent Partnership Award (March 2021 for the third time);
- Basic Skills Award (July 2021)

External bodies reassure us all that the things we do are recognised as good practice, not just our ideas. The Safeguarding Award, the Online Safety, the Basic Skills Award and the AfPE are new awards for us and reflect the effective leadership provided in these areas.

Our challenges don't diminish. Next year we will have to accommodate more children, with more complex needs, and with less support from the Local Authority. We will do all that we can to sustain Pitcheroak School for the benefit of our pupils.

Thank you

Steve Turner

Chair of Governors.