

# **St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School**



## **Governors' Annual Report to Parents** for the academic year **2022-23**

## **Mission Statement**

### *'Nurturing Hearts and Minds'*

God's love is at the heart of all that we do at St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School.

Hearts and Minds are nurtured in a stimulating and safe environment. We believe that every child is unique, and we nurture each child through a creative and rounded curriculum to reach their full potential. Talents are celebrated and differences are respected within a strong, supportive Catholic community.

At St Gabriel's children learn to love, respect and care for each other and God's entire world. Our school is a place where children are filled with a love of life and learning.

Dear Parents,

Although it is no longer a legal requirement for governing boards to produce an 'Annual Report' to parents, we have decided that we should continue to report each year to let you know of developments and plans at St Gabriel's.

It is the role of the governing board to both support and challenge the school and, in particular, to ensure the Headteacher is held accountable for the education provided to your children. In addition, Foundation Governors are appointed by the Bishop to ensure that the Catholic character of the school is preserved.

The governing board for the year (September 2022-23)

<b>Chairperson</b>	<b>Michael Mitchell</b>
<b>Vice Chair</b>	Kirsty Moore
<b>Parish Priest</b>	Fr. Tony Grace
<b>Foundation Governor</b>	Joe O'Toole
<b>Foundation Governor</b>	Gerard Silverlock
<b>Foundation Governor</b>	Jonathan Luxford
<b>Foundation Governor</b>	Nicola Hassall
<b>Local Authority Governor</b>	Catherine Fox
<b>Parent Governor</b>	Katie Poole
<b>Parent Governor</b>	Ruth Reeves
<b>Staff Governor</b>	Kaye McCann
<b>Associate Governor</b>	Claire Stevenson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Edward Byrne

Michael Mitchell was elected as Chairperson for the year 2022-23 alongside Kirstie Moore as Vice-Chair, as you will see in the table above.

We would like to express our thanks to Mrs. Nicola Hassall, a foundation governor who served the Governing Board of St Gabriel's for the last four years. Her contribution and commitment to the school during that time and especially in supporting music throughout the school is gratefully acknowledged. We wish her every blessing in her retirement and in her new role as a proud grandparent!

We would also like to welcome Mrs. Katie Poole (Parent Governor) who joined the board during the year.

The governing body meets formally once per term and is supported by a set of committees which deal with Staffing & Curriculum, Finance & Buildings, Admissions, Pre-School and School Improvement.

In addition, individual Governors are delegated as lead Governors on curriculum subjects and provision of Special Education Needs (SEN), Pupil Premium and Safeguarding.

An External Advisor, Craig Richardson (ex-Headteacher and current Ofsted lead inspector) was appointed to work with the Head Teacher to review, monitor and challenge the performance of the school and report to the governing board accordingly. The school was also supported by the Diocesan School Support Officer, Mr. Rob Hughes, an experienced ex-headteacher also.

### **OFSTED**

St Gabriel's was last inspected in 2012 and received an outstanding judgement. This was over 11 years ago so we are still expecting an imminent inspection this coming year. Much has changed at St Gabriel's since then, notably a change in senior leadership, staffing and governance, but also in the framework of Ofsted itself in how it judges schools. This has changed at least three times. We know we are a very good school with outstanding practice evident. We continue to strive to be the best we can be, using the support and challenge of our School Improvement Partner. Collectively, our school community is an excellent one. The school continues to be high performing and continually works to align itself with the ever-increasing demands of inspection, as the bar continues to rise.

## **Opening and Closing of the School Year 2022-23**

### **Context**

For the first time since the pandemic, school was able to operate without any restriction or specific guidance. The school adapted incredibly well to these previous challenges and continued to provide excellent provision throughout. Governor meetings and visits took place in school without such restriction.

The governing body would like to thank and acknowledge the dedication and hard work of all the school staff in supporting our children with their learning during these challenging and difficult times.

## **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding our pupils and community is always our first priority and as a governing body we have a designated governor specifically to look at safeguarding within the school. Our safeguarding governor also met with pupils (our Safeguarding Ambassadors) to discuss their views and reflect on their work in keeping safeguarding a high priority in school.

Policy and investment are vital to keep our children safe. We have invested in training for governors and made regular visits to the school site conducting reviews and offering support. Notably this year saw the installation of an electronic gate system for vehicle and pedestrian access to the school. This has significantly improved the security at the front of the school. Our thanks must go to the diocese in funding the majority of these works and improving the security of the school.

## **School Performance Results**

The most recent set of school performance data (July 2023) has been published on the school website.

[St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School: Performance Data \(stgabriels.cheshire.sch.uk\)](https://stgabriels.cheshire.sch.uk)

Given the impact of the pandemic over recent years, the results achieved were again better than we expected across all areas of reading, writing and maths, demonstrating huge effort from our pupils and staff. Maths continues to be a school strength, with writing and reading both above local Cheshire East and national averages.

Most notable points of the 2023 KS2 performance data was the recognised progress levels in the following subjects against schools nationally.

**Significant progress** = significantly above national (IDSR October 2023)

- **KS2 Reading** (top 20% schools)
- **KS2 Maths** (top 20% schools)
- **KS2 Reading** high standard (Greater Depth Standard, top 10% schools)

These are super results for our pupils and school, and as a result, a testament to the learning opportunities they experience at St Gabriel's.

By the end of KS2 our pupils are ready to meet the demands of the next stage of their educational journey.

Our KS1 results also show great achievement and improvement. The Y2 cohort worked incredibly hard last year, their performance again being above the Cheshire East and national averages.

As always, the core areas of reading, writing and maths remain a high priority for us as a school alongside the nurturing and development of all our pupils.

## **Curriculum**

The pupils experienced a broad and 'rich' curriculum throughout the academic year, which allowed them opportunities to experience skills across a broad learning spectrum. Alongside the core curriculum areas of RE, English, Maths, Science and Computing, topic areas allowed these skills to be developed further in terms of assemblies, themed days and educational visits conducted. Visits to the school continue with Viking Day held in Y5 which allowed the children to experience outdoor learning, the visit of Key Strings, a longstanding musical partnership bringing different genres of music into school as well as animal visits, a sculpture workshop and a parent musical assembly,

Great work has been progressed in all subject areas over the last few months with detailed curriculum plans in place for all subject areas and year groups. We continue evaluating our curriculum from an 'intent' point of view in terms of why we are teaching the things we teach. We have made some changes in the sequencing of topics and added some new ones also.

## **Attendance**

This year our attendance fell to 95.7%. Although in line with national averages our previous year's attendance figure of 97.2 % held us high in the attendance rates. Our historical attendance means we fell into schools with low absence rates. This is one of the biggest factors that influence the extent of children's learning and enjoyment in being at the school, which we value highly. Evidence tells us that schools with higher attendance rates produce greater outcomes. Our dip last year saw more families requesting leave in term time in the summer months due to rearranged holidays. Hopefully, this will subside in the coming year. Monitoring school attendance records and maintaining our excellence will always be a priority for us.

## **SEND**

The SEND provision at St Gabriel's remains strong and with a new SENDCo in post (Mrs Baker). The number of pupils being supported has grown significantly in recent years and remains a priority for us to support the children. We have a designated governor with a responsibility for SEND who meets termly with staff to support and report back to governors. We continue to work alongside other external partners in supporting our SEN provision, who regularly visit the school.

## **Admissions**

The school admitted a near full cohort of 30 pupils into reception for September 2022. The school opened again for the year 2022-23 with 215 pupils enrolled against our target enrolment of 210 pupils.

## **Pre-School**

St Gabriel's Catholic Pre-School continues to provide an excellent early years start for children wanting to start in the primary school. Increasing pupil numbers allowed the Pre-School to extend their opening times to open for the whole school week.

The Pre-School are collaborating closely with the school and join us regularly for meetings, assemblies and play. Integrating the pre-school formally into the school remains a strategic aspiration.

### **Stakeholders Views**

The school sought the views of parents, staff and pupils in the Spring Term of 2023. We would like to thank everyone that returned their views, which was a significant response. The parental response was valuable to us so that we can strive to improve provision. Notable views from parents were:

100% of parents feel that their children are well looked after in school

100 % of parents feel welcome in school

100% of parents feel that the school is well led and managed.

Whilst the views were very positive, we also took note and acted on the comments and suggestions made to us. Requests were made to have face-to-face parent meets and an opportunity to discuss progress towards the end of the year. Both of these were actioned by the summer term.

The pupils continue to tell us how much they enjoy their learning and the opportunities they receive, especially through the curriculum days held.

The staff also tell us they enjoy working at St Gabriel's. Their well-being is vitally important to us, and this is a good indicator for us regarding the provision at the school.

We will be asking all our stakeholders (parents, pupils, and staff) for their views again, in January 2024.

### **Collaboration with Other Schools**

The school continues to work closely with local primary schools in Alsager and sister Catholic primary schools in the area, and with our feeder diocesan secondary school –St Thomas More Catholic School (Academy), in Crewe.

The school is actively involved with other similar schools in the local area as we strive for best practice across the curriculum. For example, we have been working with staff from St Mary's Catholic Primary School on a reading and writing project, sharing best practice with the aim of improving standards. Our excellent relationship with St Thomas More Catholic High School allows us to use their expertise and they provide our languages tutor for KS2.

This past year saw greater relationships develop with St Mary's Crewe, St Anne's Nantwich and St Thomas More Crewe and ourselves all coming together as Heads and Chairs of Governors to discuss further collaboration.

### **Governor Training**

Governors attended diocesan and local authority briefings each term to ensure that the Governing board is kept current with the changing educational world in addition to attending

in-depth training courses in specific areas of expertise throughout the year. This included Governors attending the Shrewsbury RC Diocese Annual Governor Conferences.

### **Accommodation of the school**

During this academic year, the school has undergone extensive roof repairs to replace the roof across the whole school building. A four-phase project is near completion with the first three phases completed.

Space remains a premium at the school and all learning spaces are maximised to operate effectively.

### **School Improvements**

We continue to review our plans for the future of the school, including the areas for future investment. Previously, funding was secured from the Diocese for additional improved security measures for the school with the addition of the secure entry porch and we have also been successful in securing funding for the electronic gates. We will continue to look at site security, also seeking to improve our outdoor learning provision further.

We ask every family each year to contribute towards the school building fund which goes towards the maintenance and upkeep of the school buildings. Your donations are vital to us in order to provide the roof repairs, improve access around the school and in keeping the site safe. Thank you to everyone that has donated towards this essential fund.

### **St Gabriel's Strategic Future Direction**

We, the Governing Board of St Gabriel's, have been reviewing the future strategic direction of the school, and have agreed on the following strategic priorities for the school.

1. We plan to integrate St Gabriel's Pre-school, which is currently independently managed and maintained by St Gabriel's Parish, into St Gabriel's Primary School by the end of 2024.
2. Once this integration is complete, we plan to join the Diocese of Shrewsbury Schools Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) of Our Lady Help of Christians (OLHOC) at the most appropriate time after this.

The Governing Board has agreed on this course of action for several reasons, namely:

- MATs are now mandated for all educational authority schools by 2030 (both the current government and current opposition show no appetite to reverse this policy), and the Bishop has mandated that all Shrewsbury Diocesan schools join one of the 3 MATs set up for the Diocese (OLHOC is the MAT designated for our part of Diocese).

- MATs are beneficial as they provide support around the collaboration and management of schools within the trust in areas such as resources, expertise, and knowledge/best practice.
- Cheshire East, our local Education Authority which currently provides most of these resources to the school will run down their respective resources, expertise, and knowledge as increasingly more local schools move into academies. The timing of our entry into the MAT will be important as we expect that the nearer to the date of 2030 we stay independent we would see an inevitable rundown of the current support from Cheshire East.

At St Gabriel's we believe that before we start on the journey towards being part of the MAT, it is vital to the future of St Gabriels that we secure the position of the pre-school within the St Gabriels family, which will ensure the early years foundation within the school.

The school will continue to have its own Governing Body, Headteacher, senior leaders and teaching staff assigned to the school, focusing on maintaining St Gabriels individual curriculum and essence. The OLHOC model is such that there are anticipated to be no discernible differences to either the pupils or parent / carers experiences and engagement with the school

As a governing body, the experience of our staff, our parents and - most importantly of all – the safety, learning experience, and happiness of our children, is at the heart of all we work for.

The unique ethos of St Gabriel's is what makes it an incredibly special place of learning, of nurture and of growth. We acknowledge with respect and gratitude the vital role that everyone who is a part of our school family plays in creating, nourishing and sustaining this ethos.

In this next phase of our school's journey, we aim to both protect our individual identity, honouring both our history and our present story, whilst safeguarding the future development of the school for the generations to come.

We will commit to updating everyone on the progress of integrating the Pre-school and joining the OLHOC MAT as details and timelines become clearer and will welcome any questions you may have.

St Gabriels RC Primary Governing Body

(See useful link on OLHOC)

[Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust - Frequently Asked Questions - FAQs \(olhoc.org.uk\)](http://olhoc.org.uk)

### **Communication on school life**

Regular newsletters, the school website, the school 'Twitter' and Facebook pages provide a full overview of activities in the school. Mr. Byrne and Mrs. Stevenson are visible each morning in welcoming the children into school and seeing parents at this time. If you would like to discuss something with your child's teacher, Mrs. Stevenson or Mr. Byrne, appointments can be made. Communication can also be made through using email via the class email address.



We aim to maintain the school website (<http://www.stgabriels.cheshire.sch.uk>) as our main communication vehicle on school life so please continue to review this site on a regular basis for updates.

Thank you for your continued support to St Gabriel's.

Michael Mitchell

Chair of Governors: St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School

December 2023