



# **St John's Highbury Vale CE Primary School**

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Executive Head Teacher: Mrs Tonnie Read

Head of School: Mrs Lindsey Hodgson

## **Governors' Bulletin: December 2022**

Dear Parents and Carers,

When we approach the end of a calendar year there is a tradition of both looking backwards and forwards, so....

... looking back to September, I started as the new Chair of Governors. I'd like to thank Harry Oulton, the previous chair, for all he did during his five-year tenure. He oversaw a difficult period for the school, having to make tough decisions in the restructuring that required huge amounts of time and energy. Since then, I know both Mrs Read and Mrs Hodgson have appreciated his support and the governors his continued oversight and direction. He leaves behind a thriving and stable school community.

This sense of community was certainly evident at the start of the academic year when staff and governors joined together for the annual safeguarding training. There was a real sense of collaboration and eagerness to learn from both new and longer-term staff as they prepared for the year. On my subsequent visits to the school, it has been a pleasure to see this continue, even with the tiredness a long Christmas term can bring! Their cohesion and communal focus have underpinned all the work done in school, along with their dedication to ensure the well-being and academic progress of all children. This has meant that standards that were affected by the pandemic, such as writing, are coming back on track, areas of the curriculum developed last year have continued to be embedded and the whole school Happiness Project has been highly enjoyable, with positive learning and creative outcomes. In fact, this last proved so successful it is being shared with our Partnership Schools!

Meanwhile the governors have continued to re-establish their presence in school, post the Covid restrictions, by reintroducing the role of link governors. Individuals now take greater responsibility in working with the staff leads in various areas, such as finance, well-being or equality, to strengthen the depth of monitoring and ensure consistent scrutiny, even when they are not the focus of the current School Development Plan. These roles can be found in the governors' section of the school website.

Looking forward, the strength of all the work achieved this term will be important to remember, as well as build on. The one thing that has not happened yet is the long overdue Ofsted inspection. We are very used to having to adapt to constant changes in the world of education and one of these is a new inspection framework for how schools are judged. The shift broadens the focus from academic achievement to the whole experience of a child in school – with the quality of education offered, safety and well-being all receiving more attention. I have been interested to read about the experience of those schools visited so far, in articles such as <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/nov/22/hundreds-of-schools-in-england-lose-outstanding-status-after-reinspection> . Ofsted’s director of education, Chris Russell, has stated that if a previously ‘outstanding’ school receives a ‘good’ grade it “doesn’t mean that the school has declined in recent years, in fact the opposite can be the case” because the top grade is a “challenging and exacting judgment to achieve” <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/downgraded-outstanding-schools-may-have-actually-improved-says-ofsted-director/> So, we need to hold on to what we know about our school! I have every confidence in the school doing well as we have a rich curriculum and happy children, who are performing well – all strengths that the governors, senior leaders and staff and will work to sustain in the terms ahead. Please continue to do your part by making sure your child attends school punctually, on every day possible!

In the meantime, I hope you have a good Christmas break and find that elusive balance of festive excitement and peace!

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Hinton', written in a cursive style.

**Sarah Hinton**

Chair of Governors