



GOVERNORS' REPORT JULY 2021

Our ethos is to create 'an inspirational setting, where all children flourish'.

Our Vision for Sheepscombe school

Our vision is to be the rural school of choice in the local area, where every child is inspired with a love of learning and is supported to become a confident and resilient lifelong learner. We aim to

- provide a broad and varied curriculum with opportunities for all children to develop a wide range of skills and interests alongside achieving the best possible progress over their time at the school
- to be a learning community where teachers, support staff and governors continue to learn in order to create strong leadership and outstanding practice.

The governors have been working on three strategic priorities identified by staff and governors for three to five years from 2017/18. Our three priorities were to establish

A thriving village school under strong and dynamic leadership

An enriching curriculum where we work together to achieve the best

The creative use of resources to strengthen teaching and learning

As we reach the end of the time period allocated for the implementation of this strategy, we are delighted to report that these priorities have been achieved, thanks to leadership of Mrs Dangerfield (formerly Mrs Barron) and the commitment of her staff. The school is thriving; leadership is strong and dynamic. The children enjoy a rich curriculum where everyone achieves their best and resources are used creatively to support the children's learning. We hope that everyone will continue to enjoy and strengthen these achievements over the next few years.

In 2021, the governors discussed new strategic priorities for the direction of the school between 2021 and 2025. The priorities set out below respond to consultation with all governors and representatives of staff and parents.

Vision

Our vision is for a school where children actively engage with local and global communities and develop the confidence and skills they need to have an impact on the world around them in years to come.

The decades ahead promise to be challenging (eg climate change, speed of change, the continuing digital revolution). Our role as a school is to set children on a path where they can understand, question, manage and influence what happens in the future. We want our children to work for the benefit of society, to have a voice and to know how to be heard.

Ethos

Every activity involving the whole school community is strengthened by being caring and thoughtful.

- We care for each other, for ourselves and for local and global communities.
- We are mindful, thoughtful and reflective in everything we do.

Strategic priorities

To achieve our vision of encouraging children to engage actively in local and global communities now and in the future, our priorities are to:

- develop skills that empower our children and support participation, creativity, innovation and problem-solving
- nurture positive relationships supported by effective communication and collaboration and reaching out to others
- foster sensitivity that values and protects the local and global environment for future generations

The paragraphs below explain these three priorities further while recognising that they overlap with each other and with our vision of actively engaging in local and global communities.

Skills: We prepare our children for participating actively in society, helping them to develop the skills, confidence and understanding they need to influence the world around them. We encourage creativity (arts, crafts, music, drama), innovation (design, science, technology) and problem-solving. The aim is to develop skills that are both traditional and modern, equipping our children for living and working in a variety of ways in the 21st century world. This includes learning how to use information and digital technology with care and discretion and as a tool facilitating rather than dominating creativity, collaboration and imaginative thinking.

Positive relationships: We believe that our children need a caring relationship with themselves, understanding what it takes to maintain sound physical and mental health. They also need to be self-aware, confident and sensitive to the needs of others. Relationships are built on self-expression, good communication skills and learning how to collaborate with others. Learning and teaching is also about the strength of diversity and of inclusive relationships in society, in the classroom and in the playground. Play is as important as lessons for developing positive relationships.

There are real benefits in reaching out to others. Sheepscombe school has plenty to give; our small rural school is a leader in its field and we can continue to blaze a trail. We wish to reach out into the village and across the Stroud valleys to strengthen relationships locally. There is also a need to discover more about the wider world. We can broaden our children's perspective on our complex society by establishing and maintaining connections, for example, with a city school, a secondary school and a school elsewhere in the world.

The environment: It cannot be denied that the natural environment experienced by previous generations is now under an urgent threat from climate change and the apparently endless use of natural resources. So first we want our children to value their environment – not just the wonderful local environment, but the natural world elsewhere in other parts of the globe. They need to understand how the natural world works, how to convert to a world without fossil fuels and make a difference. For example, we encourage the school to demonstrate this understanding by actively working to become a carbon neutral school. Our children will need resilience and the agility to handle change. As citizens with social responsibility and resourcefulness, our children can work for a more positive future.

We wish the school well over the coming years as they embrace this strategy and strengthen the ethos of the school.

How we operate

Governor activities have been shared between the Full Governing Body (FGB) and the Finance & Resources Committee (FRC) while individual governors have specific responsibilities. The FGB and FRC each have responsibility for one or more of our original strategic priorities. This report reflects on our work for each priority.

The FGB is responsible for our first two strategic priorities:

A thriving village school under strong and dynamic leadership

An enriching curriculum where we work together to achieve the best

Under the impressive leadership of Mrs Dangerfield, the school has continued to grow and flourish with all places filled and children on a waiting list. We have a full allocation of 10 children for Reception 2021 plus 8 Little Lambs on roll for 21/22. It is the village school of choice for many families in the Stroud district. Its caring and nurturing ethos, the supportive family atmosphere and the breadth and vibrancy of the curriculum provide a much-valued school experience for all children.

Mrs Dangerfield has continued to further develop the strong and stable staff team comprising excellent teachers and teaching assistants who work exceptionally hard for the school. In July 2021, in discussions with governors, the staff emphasised that they felt part of a strong and effective team. It is a cohesive team spirit that has helped the school work through a year of Covid-19. Mrs Dangerfield is a teaching head working in Merlin class where she leads by example. Due to the current restrictions, there has been no external moderation process this academic year but Mrs Dangerfield will continue in her role as an Early Years Moderator and is also mentoring a new Head teacher at Hatherop school. Mr Ringer will continue as a Year 6 moderator in 2021/22. Both these roles bring sufficient funding to the school to offset time spent out of school moderating other schools. Mrs Dangerfield will also continue as a GlosEd leader for Early Years, a role which provides support to schools in difficulty pre or post Ofsted. The school has also played its part in training new teachers, one of whom has been appointed to join the staff team in September 2021. As one of the many knock-on effects of enforced school closures, headteachers of local cluster schools are currently considering ways of working together to challenge and support each other as they all strive to improve standards in their schools. We also think there could be benefits in our Governors working together at times or getting together for a discussion.

The governors' main role set by the Government is to make sure that the Head Teacher is accountable for her actions in school. We do all we can to support her but we also challenge her with questions during meetings and visits to help us understand the impact of actions taken. Lynsey Willis and Elisabeth Skinner have continued as Co-Chairs with Chloe Turner as FRC Chair. Governors keep a record of all our activities including formal visits, informal activities and training events attended.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, governor visits to school have had to be curtailed throughout the year but many governors managed to stay in touch with staff via Zoom and telephone calls. Mrs Dangerfield has kept Lynsey and Elisabeth fully informed of the school's response

to the ever-changing guidance issued by the government, along with regular updates on other matters of concern to governors.

Full Governing Board and committee meetings have continued during lockdown using a virtual platform which has proved very successful. Our clerk to governors, Maxine Godfrey, keeps abreast of changes to statutory requirements and ensures that the governing body is kept up to date. The Co-chairs have found having the services of a professional clerk to be invaluable.

The safety and welfare of the children and the entire school community is taken very seriously. As the governor for safeguarding, Lynsey Willis monitors safeguarding through discussions with Mrs Dangerfield and Mrs Powell and together they carried out the annual Gloucestershire Safeguarding Audit and produced an action plan for the year with a scheduled mid-point review. Mrs Powell, school business manager, has become a second deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as she is frequently the first point of contact for parents and takes calls from any external services. Mrs Lane continues as the first deputy DSL.

The government's series of enforced school closures during this academic year, due to COVID-19, continued to impose extreme logistical and safeguarding challenges for Mrs Dangerfield and her team as they went above and beyond to adhere to official guidance. Mrs Dangerfield extended the offer of school attendance to the children of all key workers but also to any other children and families for whom home schooling was posing particular difficulties. It was agreed that all invited children should attend fulltime, 5 days a week, to provide continuity and minimise the risk of transmission of the virus from home to school. Governors were kept informed of the school's plans throughout and were in full support of the measures taken to ensure that children were receiving the best possible quality of learning and teaching whether at home or at school.

In contrast to the March 2020 school closure when very few children were permitted to attend Sheepscombe School, the 2021 closures saw many more pupils attending. On 1st January 2021, 44% took up school places rising steadily over the following weeks. By the end of lockdown in March 68% of children were in school with 32% working at home. Over lockdown 73% of children attended school at some point because a few children came to school for a few days during periods of specific difficulty. Using the Government's formula for calculating attendance under the difficult circumstances of 2020/21, whole-school attendance is 95.6%.

The findings of a governor survey of parents in the summer term made it clear that this had been an extremely testing period for families, but in particular for those whose children had been learning from home. The aim of the survey was to understand how parents felt about arrangements for teaching and learning during the lockdown in the first quarter of 2021 and a summary of responses and planned action can be found at the end of this report.

The governors continue to help build connections with the village community although plans have been severely restricted due to COVID-19. We are very grateful to Debby Thacker who writes a piece every month for the Sheepscombe News; Elisabeth Skinner promotes links with Sheepscombe Cricket Club and Sheepscombe History Society while Matt Stanway facilitates the all-important link with the National Trust. Volunteering by villagers is encouraged while governors acting as volunteers work closely with the school; the school is looking forward to being able to welcome all volunteers into school again in

the Autumn term. A hugely successful 1000km kids cycling challenge, organised by FOSS parents, raised over £5000. This money will go to pay for music tuition, a wonderful and rich element of our curriculum offer. Another massively successful fundraising event, Village Open Gardens, was organised by a group of local residents. This raised a staggering £3600 and the governors are hugely grateful to all those who gave their time and money to each event for the benefit of our school.

Our main task as governors is to hold the school leadership to account for pupils' attainment and progress compared with initial targets. Governors would normally visit the school to look at the children's books and discuss questions with staff. We would then report visits to the FGB where we also review the evidence from INSIGHT data collected at the end of each term. During this academic year, the FGB met five times in the year; (October, November, January, May and July). In September, January and May our focus is on the data - the statistics that help us appreciate what the children achieve and the rate at which they progress. Despite no national testing taking place during summer 2020, Mrs Dangerfield uses teacher assessment outcomes as part of the monitoring system and explains the detail to governors who will look for evidence to support the data when next visiting the school.

We also use the data to monitor the progress of children with special educational needs (Tessa Lentel is the SEND governor champion) and those who qualify for the pupil premium (Chloe Turner focuses on this). The data continues to show that boys often struggle with writing in comparison with girls while late entry to school can also have an impact. Governors need to know that there are strategies in place to address such issues and the FGB also monitors the challenges offered to children who achieve 'greater depth' in their learning.

The FGB will need to continue to consider the impact of the extended period of school closure on the progress of each cohort of children and be alert to the actions taken to address the impact identified. All statutory assessments were again cancelled by the DfE this year due to COVID-19 and therefore data for the end of KS1 and KS2 will not be published by the Government.

A key area of focus at the November meeting was to review progress of Sheepscombe school's curriculum offer. This has involved teachers drawing up detailed curriculum plans which show progression over a child's primary school career as well as alignment to the national curriculum. Progress on this has inevitably been hindered by unprecedented demands on Mrs Dangerfield's time this year. Governors will be involved in progressing the process from September 2021 and will then begin to monitor the impact of the planned curriculum through leadership reports during 2021/22. Evidence of curriculum coherence and consistency across the school has been one of the main targets this year and book looks with all staff confirm there is increasing consistency in English and Maths.

The school has continued to provide breadth in the curriculum during the school day by having visitors and specialist teachers in school with all children taking part, examples are Iain Green the wildlife photographer, Gloucestershire music, the Chess teacher and Chloe Turner who has been in to teach Latin. The positive impact of developing class libraries and participation in the virtual Cheltenham Literature Festival are examples of further enrichment, with Debby Thacker, governor for English, noting the 'excellent use that was made of the material made available through the Festival' on one of her virtual KS2 visits.

Chloe Turner, governor for Maths, reported on a Chess lesson being delivered remotely, which she observed during the spring term. She commented that she could clearly see the links and value to the maths curriculum and concluded that the social skills and strategic thinking that it promoted was a great use of resources for children operating at all levels.

As governor Elisabeth focuses on PSHE (personal, social and health education) where the Sheepscombe emphasis is on healthy living, sport and forest school. Elisabeth has been unable to visit school this year but has discussed ways in which the teachers and children experience PSHE with a staff representative. Emphasis has been on opportunities for learning from the Covid-19 experience. Governors were concerned that staff should be able to manage the mental health and well-being of pupils. The school uses a PSHE resource called Discover to help pupils share and voice their concerns.

The FRC is responsible for our third priority:

The creative use of resources to strengthen teaching and learning

Under the leadership of Chloe Turner and working closely with Caroline Powell (our excellent School Business Manager), the FRC has monitored the financial condition of the school's revenue and capital budgets throughout the year. The Schools Financial Value Standard has been returned as required and the value of Gloucestershire County Council's Traded Services has been reviewed. The budget for 2021-22 with a small surplus was submitted to the local authority. Little Lambs nursery operating at full capacity for most of the school year has provided a most useful increase in income.

The FRC is responsible for strategic issues related to staffing, staff absence and staff CPD including the planning of INSET days. It has therefore monitored the performance management of staff and pay-related issues. The governors' Pay Panel and Appraisal Panels reported to the FRC. Chloe Turner is also responsible for reviewing the school's use of the Pupil Premium and Mrs Dangerfield's comprehensive report which shows that the Premium had a measurable impact.

A third area of responsibility is for resources, the premises and the outdoor environment. The FRC monitors spending on ICT equipment from the capital fund and general maintenance and Chloe and Caroline have again been relentless in pursuing grants and fundraising opportunities. During the financial year 2020/21, the FRC supported the purchase of much needed laptops, iPads and a charging station. GCC has approved the planned installation of two air conditioning units in Merlin class which it is hoped they will partially fund, and there are plans to develop an outside gardening area which could be used for a gardening club and an addition to Forest school.

Lynsey and Elisabeth have completed their four year term as co-chairs having served on the governing board for over 8 years. We wish the whole school community all the very best as they move forward to a bright and inspiring future.

Information about the governing board

Name	Type of governor	Committee membership	Any link roles

Vicky Dangerfield	Head Teacher	FRC	
Seth Johnson	Parent governor	FRC	Environment, Health & Safety; Website
Tracey Lane	Staff governor		
Tessa Lentel	Local authority governor		SEND
Elisabeth Skinner	Co-opted governor		FGB Co-Chair; PSHE
Matt Stanway	Parent governor	FRC	Science
Debby Thacker	Co-opted governor		English
Chloe Turner	Co-opted governor	FRC	FRC Chair; Maths; Finance
Lynsey Willis	Co-opted governor		FGB Co-Chair; Safeguarding and Attendance; Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

FGB meetings were held on September 29th (data meeting), November 10th (curriculum meeting), February 23rd, May 4th and July 8th (review meeting). All meetings were held remotely using a virtual platform.

FRC meetings were held on November 26th, March 18th and May 20th. Note that one Co-Chair attends every FRC meeting.

Governors' record of attendance				
Name	Possible attendance (full governing board meetings and committee meetings)		Actual attendance	
	FGB	FRC	FGB	FRC
Vicky Barron	5	3	5	3
Seth Johnson	5	3	5	1

Tracey Lane	5	0	5	0
Tessa Lentel	5	0	5	0
Elisabeth Skinner	5	1	5	1
Matt Stanway	5	3	4	3
Debby Thacker	5	0	4	0
Chloe Turner	5	3	5	3
Lynsey Willis	5	2	5	2

School improvement plan: headlines of what the governing board has been working towards, with year-on-year figures for comparison

Criteria	2019	2020	2021
<i>Pupil numbers</i>	62 (May 2019) with the prospect of 65 in September	67 (July 2020) with the prospect of 70 in September	72 (plus Little Lambs)
<i>A good rating from Ofsted</i>	Achieved March 2019		
<i>All procedures are in place for good governance</i>	Achieved (external review of governance January 2019)		
<i>The best possible level of attendance</i>	95% (May 2019)	93% prior to lockdown in March 2020 91% when school re-opened to all pupils in June/July 2020	Whole school attendance was 95.6% at end of 2020/21

<i>Pupils reach age-related expectations in attainment and progress (reading, writing, maths)</i>	Attainment data for 2019 shows a marked improvement compared with 2018. 83% of children at the end of KS2 made at least the expected standard in reading, writing and maths combined, with 33% combined at Greater Depth. (2018 33% Expected /0% Greater Depth) Individual subject figures for the end of KS2 for 2019: Reading 83% EXS 67% GDS (2018 83%/33%) Writing 83% EXS 50% GDS (2018 50%/0%) Maths 83% EXS 33% GDS (2018 50%/0%) This is above the national average in all areas (based on provisional headline figures). End of year levels would have been 100% for all subjects but we had one late entrant at Easter 2019. Class teachers maintain a detailed record of individual progress and attainment in maths, reading and writing (and in other curriculum subjects) for all children in all year groups and this is analysed by teachers and leaders. Plans to tackle any underperformance or to close any gaps are created and data is shared with Governors.	Attainment data was on track to meet almost all of Mrs Barron's challenging targets for reading, writing and maths until March 2020 when Covid-19 put an end to the recording of data. SATS tests in May were cancelled therefore there will be no national data for 2020. Governors will monitor the evidence of the impact of school closure in Terms 1 and 2 of the 2020/21 academic year.	Attainment data was on track to meet almost all of Mrs Dangerfield's challenging targets for reading, writing and maths until April 2021. SATS tests in May were cancelled therefore there will be no national data for 2021. Governors will monitor the evidence of the impact of school closure in Terms 1 and 2 of the 2021/22 academic year.
<i>Expectations of excellence in</i>	Ofsted confirmed that under Mrs Barron's leadership	Governors and Mrs Barron continue to have high expectations of teachers	Governors and Mrs Dangerfield continue to have high expectations of teachers

<i>teaching</i>	and her relentless drive to achieve excellence, staff have become more reflective and open to adapting their approaches to learning. Focused professional development and rigorous monitoring by the Head Teacher have been key levers in ensuring pupils receive high-quality teaching and support.	including the provision of materials for home-schooling and contact with children during the COVID-19 crisis. However, at the same time, governors were concerned for the physical and mental well-being of staff during the lockdown especially where staff were simultaneously home-schooling their own children.	including the provision of materials for home-schooling and contact with children during the COVID-19 crisis. However, at the same time, governors were concerned for the physical and mental well-being of staff during the lockdown especially where staff were simultaneously home-schooling their own children.
<i>Sound financial management</i>	Mrs Powell (SBM) and Chloe Turner (FRC Chair) continue to work hard, closely scrutinising and managing the limited budget. Acting on their sound advice, leaders have ensured that the school remains financially stable.	Mrs Powell is always impressive in the way in which she manages a restricted budget to provide the best possible benefits for children and staff.	Mrs Powell is always impressive in the way in which she manages a restricted budget to provide the best possible benefits for children and staff. The governors are also grateful to FOSS for their fundraising activities and consequent financial contributions.

Pupil premium grant

Number of children currently eligible for the pupil premium	1
Pupil premium allocation April 2020 – April 2021	Allocation 2019-20: £5270 Allocation 2020-21: £3465 Allocation 2020-21: £4684

Details of interventions and innovations using the pupil premium (PP)

Initiative/innovation	Amount	Impact (with commentary)
To ensure pupils benefit from good teaching	£2500	100% disadvantaged children have benefited from being able to maintain

		• small classes for mixed age groups • teaching assistants to support learning and pastoral needs • well-trained teachers benefiting from high quality CPD • mental health and well-being support and related training for staff • appropriate technology for learning at home and at school. These activities have supported the resilience of pupils and benefited learning.
To ensure that pupils make good academic progress	£1684	100% of disadvantaged pupils have benefited from one-to-one support and strategies to develop confidence in mathematics. This has contributed to resilience, a stronger sense of well-being and deeper learning. One to one or small group interventions have improved mathematical fluency, identified as a barrier to confidence in lessons, especially around improving working memory.
To ensure good behaviour, attendance and well-being	£500	Pupils had access to extra-curricular activities (eg music lessons, field trips, sports clubs and the residential experience). Staff have been trained according to pupil need.

Sheepscombe School Survey of Parents May 2021

Report for Governors July 2021

The aim of the survey was to understand how parents felt about arrangements for teaching and learning during the lockdown in the first quarter of 2021. Fifty-seven families were sent the survey and thirty-one individual responses were received. This report without the draft recommendations was sent to parents in early June.

In summary

Families have responded to the experience of learning at home in different ways that are very personal and depend on children's interests and needs, individual values, attitudes to the online space and family circumstances. The results of the survey are therefore significantly diverse

The governors recognise that lockdowns were extremely stressful for everyone concerned. It was clear, given a small school's limited resources, the complex Covid landscape and the Government's rules and guidance, that there would be no perfect answers. Responses to the survey support this contention; the variety of needs and personal circumstances means that there are no clear pointers to preferences should lockdown happen again. It will always be exceptionally difficult for the school to fulfil everyone's needs all of the time.

The governors are confident that the staff made every possible effort to find the best possible solutions. The Co-Chairs of governors were regularly kept informed of decisions and reasons for those decisions for teaching and learning during lockdown. We are confident that the full range of options were investigated, including discussion with other headteachers, before making decisions. We also appreciate that most staff were managing their own children's challenges with lockdown.

The governors will make some recommendations to staff as a result of the survey and the detail will be passed on to Mrs Dangerfield.

- The children of 42% of respondents experienced home learning throughout lockdown.
- 41% of the 22 parents who experienced some home-learning would like more live online lessons.
- Some parents liked the workbooks but others did not.
- Some parents enjoyed the flexibility to adapt activities while others asked for more flexibility.
- 41% (of the 22) thought that Google classrooms was effective.
- Three respondents felt disadvantaged compared with families of children in school.
- 79% of the 22 parents understood what to do and felt supported by staff.
- But half of the parents were anxious that they could not provide appropriate support for their children.
- Some parents highlighted the difficulty of managing home learning alongside paid work where activities required parents' participation
- Some parents hoped that the school would be better prepared next time so that parents could also be better prepared.
- Q7 attracted additional appreciation for the efforts of the school.

Recommendations

The governors recommend that the teachers consider the following.

- To continue to demonstrate sensitivity to the challenges of home learning for all parents but especially for those who are working while endeavouring to support home learning
- To be as well prepared as possible in advance so that parents also have sufficient time to plan how they will manage home learning
- To minimise the disadvantage felt by families who are not permitted to send their children to school
- To ensure that parents feel supported by regular contact
- To provide as much flexibility as possible but recognising the limited resources of a small school so that parents who wish to do so can adapt activities to suit their needs.
- To ensure the best possible experience of learning using Google classrooms, audio files, hangouts, live online lessons and feedback to both children and parents on their efforts.
- To consider imaginative uses for Google classrooms as a venue for contact between parents/carers and teachers.

Elisabeth Skinner and Lynsey Willis

June 29th 2021

On the horizon

Training for new Chair of Governors, Debby Thacker, and induction and training for two new co-opted governors is required from September 2021

Following the findings of the school's Ofsted inspection in March 2019, the governors will continue to focus on supporting the school to improve further. Key actions for governors will be to evaluate the impact of additional funding and to monitor the development of middle leaders' skills to support the Head Teacher in sustaining improvement.

The governors will work closely with the Head Teacher to complete the development of the Sheepscombe's revised curriculum offer in the light of the requirements set out in the Government's new Inspection Framework. A working party might be useful to expedite the process.

The governors will continue to work with the Head Teacher and staff to incorporate threads of the new strategic priorities into the school ethos and curriculum. Governors will also explore opportunities for sharing good practice with governors at other small schools locally.

There will continue to be challenges in supporting the school as staff and children return to the classroom following the COVID-19 crisis and in managing the budget over the next academic year.