**Great Wishford School**

**Annual Report from the Academy Council 2019**

**AIMS AND PURPOSE**

Great Wishford School has now completed its first full year as a member of Acorn Education Trust, and throughout the year our Academy Council has be making adjustments to the new ways of working – attending Trust meetings tailored to the needs of the school, attending shared training sessions and sharing good practice. There is a regular flow of information and dialogue from Trust to school and back, and we all constantly seek to increase the value we can add to the school and pupils. Currently the Academy Councils of all the Trust schools are reviewing their structure and function and seeking to improve and enhance the oversight they provide through support and challenge. The Academy Council will continue to monitor, evaluate and seek improvement throughout the year to come.

The role of the Council has 3 strands: it is strategic, it is about holding senior leaders to account and it is tasked with making sure that money is well spent.

Academy Council members are the guardians of:

* the standards in the school
* the safety of the students and staff
* the management of the finances and assets
* the school’s identity and community ethos

The AC is also responsible for following the Trust’s Scheme of Delegation and Terms of Reference.

**STANDARDS**

The school and all its staff and pupils have worked hard this year to raise standards at all levels, led by Stephanie Cleaver, who took up her appointment as Head Teacher in September 2018, and under the guidance of Stuart Porter, who has continued as our Executive Head.

Under an improved assessment system, standards have been closely monitored, and staff have worked together and in collaboration with the Trust to develop strategies for teaching and learning, encourage and assist pupils in becoming more independent learners and make informed choices to target and enhance learning. It has been hard and unrelenting work for staff, but both staff and pupils have risen to the challenge and we are delighted that KS2 SATS results this year show a marked improvement on 2018 and have exceeded our expectations, comparing very favourably with National figures.

In September 2018 the school appointed Rachael Banham to enable us to provide focused teaching for both Y5 and Y6 pupils. Rachael has joined the Senior Leadership Team and increased our capacity to develop the curriculum and improve standards of teaching and learning.

Staff have benefitted from the shared expertise that the Trust can offer, and have attended training sessions, visited other schools to observe teaching and talk to colleagues, and received support from curriculum leaders. In September a new curriculum will be launched, in line with the new requirements of OFSTED, and building on what has already been initiated this year. This will not mean major changes for pupils, but will enhance learning opportunities by ensuring that learning in all areas meshes together and ensure that opportunities for learning are provided for pupils at all levels and abilities. It will also map a clear progression in learning skills which can be easily monitored.

**SAFETY OF STUDENTS AND STAFF**

The safety of all members of the school community is always at the forefront of governor concerns. Safeguarding is a high priority and is a standing item at every meeting. One of our Council members has responsibility for overseeing safeguarding in the school. She conducts an annual audit with the Head Teacher and makes regular visits. She had a professional background in Child Protection and also leads staff training from time to time. I am pleased to say that there have been no significant safeguarding issues during the year, and our audit shows us to have robust systems and practices in place.

We are fortunate to have the support and expertise afforded by the Trust in Recruitment and in Health and Safety matters. Whilst AC members still have a role to play in both these areas and still maintain a core group of AC members who meet and make visits from time to time to address issues, overall leadership comes through the Trust. Through regular meetings of HTs, Chairs of ACs and Trust Leadership team we are able to identify areas of concern, formulate strategies and seek funding for improvements. Early in 2019 the Trust approved a programme of redecoration of classrooms and the restructuring of the staffroom, kitchen and reprographics area to improve access and workspace. Work began during the Easter holiday with the redecoration of Osprey Class and the staff area was completed during May and early June.

To facilitate separate teaching areas for Years 5 and 6, part of the old school building was upgraded with an interactive white board and new pupil furniture. This has proved to be a comfortable and spacious classroom area for Y5 pupils.

**MANAGEMENT OF FINANCIAL ASSETS**

As a member school of Acorn Trust we are managed through a strong and experienced financial department, which adapts to change as the Trust grows and which ensures that individual schools maintain solvency. All schools are acutely aware of the increasing difficulty of managing budgets to ensure continuity of high quality provision for pupils. The flexibility and scope of Trust financial management, together with the government grant which was provided for our conversion to academy status, has enabled us to recruit to build our leadership team, to begin improvements to the school environment and to purchase learning resources in priority areas. We are happy to say that we will be in a position to maintain our fifth teacher for 2019/20, and that the financial forecast for the next three years is stable.

**THE SCHOOL’S IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY ETHOS**

2019 has been a year of evolution, change and development, but throughout everything Great Wishford School remains at the heart of village life.

This year we have seen pupils, through their School Council, work with the Parish Council to improve traffic conditions outside the school; several services and celebrations of pupils’ work have been held in St. Giles Church; and once more the school has played a key role in Oak Apple celebrations. One of our governors contributes to Café in the Church, which continues to be a successful part of village life, and also to our ‘Open the Book’ assemblies, both presided over by Yvonne Allen, who is no longer a governor but who maintains a close relationship with the school and makes a valuable and valued contribution to its spiritual life. ‘Journey Days’ are being developed as key focus points in the school year, when pupils explore the big issues arising from scripture, and ask the big questions that life holds. I know that some of those questions have come home to families, where they have been shared again.

The whole school community has come together over the past months to find and articulate our Vision for the school as it moves forward, and pupils have created a ‘Vision Vessel’ which represents our values and Christian ethos. Governors have felt privileged to be a part of this process.

During the year, governors have liaised with the Head Teacher and teaching staff, attended events and services, helped to ensure that policies and procedures are compliant and up to date, attended training in a number of key areas, and worked closely with the Trust to provide the best we can offer our pupils. A highlight of the year has been total immersion in school life on two ‘Governor Days’, when governors enjoyed lessons, breaktimes, lunch and assembly with pupils and got a real feel for daily life in school.

**HOLDING LEADERS TO ACCOUNT**

Through our programme of scheduled meetings, and through frequent more informal communications, we support and challenge the Head Teacher and Executive Head to ensure the best provision that we can offer. We are always consulted on major decisions and our views are heard and taken into consideration. We feel confident that we have an open and honest relationship with leaders, both in school and in the Trust. We also have regular contact with other Trust schools through Chairs meetings, training and information sessions and more informal communication. This helps us to develop consistency across schools and to share expertise and good practice

The School Development Plan for 2018-19 was drawn up in school and agreed by Trust leadership and set significant challenges for pupil attainment and progress. It has been closely monitored throughout the year, and staff have worked consistently and collaboratively to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils. At teacher meetings and at regular Standards Meetings, attended by the Chair of Governors, data is scrutinised and action taken to ensure that areas of need are swiftly addressed. The Academy Council meets four times a year, when it challenges progress and outcomes; and the Head Teacher provides a full report to governors at these meetings.

The importance of a strong and cohesive staff team cannot be overestimated, and It was with some sadness that we said goodbye to Lulu Sparre at Easter. She has moved on to work in the pre-school sector, where we know her many talents will shine. Her role as EYFS/Year 1 teacher has been taken by Julia Barnard. Mrs. Barnard is an early years teacher with leadership experience , and we are delighted to welcome her to our staff team.

Alison Armstrong has also moved on, and she is replaced by Claire Ward, who comes to us from the Trust, having taught French at three Trust schools, including Great Wishford, for the past year.

The life of a school is always busy and ever-changing. Life never stands still in a school. Perhaps that is why the role of school governor is both challenging and rewarding; that, and the privilege of working alongside highly dedicated and talented staff and energetic and inspiring youngsters. As governors, we are proud to be a part of Great Wishford School.