



*'Our ambition is for Milton Road to be a school in which
all children fulfil their potential'*

Governors' Report to Parents 2015/16

An overview of 2015/16

2015/16 has been a challenging year, with changes in school leadership and a continued, resolute focus on school improvement in response to Ofsted's 'requiring improvement' judgement and in line with our collective Ambition for Milton Road. There has been progression on a number of fronts, with Milton Road now described by the Local Authority (LA) as an 'improving school'.

We've had an unprecedented number of meetings, partly because of our search for a new Headteacher and resolve to find the right candidate for Milton Road; partly because of budgetary challenges and fundamentally because of our focus on school improvement. In addition to meeting every half term to hear from the Headteacher and feedback on the work of our committees; we met informally in December to consider the leadership attributes of our new Headteacher; in February to update governors on the recruitment panel's decision not to appoint and what we could learn from this; in April to ratify the hiring panel's decision to appoint Dr Michael Catchpool and in May and June to consider and ratify adjustments proposed by the school to ensure financial sustainability. As I write, we are preparing for our final meeting with Ms Susan Dobbs as Interim Headteacher, as well as an informal meeting with Dr Michael Catchpool in preparation for a new chapter from September. In spite of the challenges, it has been pleasing to see evidence of school improvement in teaching and learning reported by the school's Senior Leadership to governors and verified by the Local Authority over a period of time.

Changes within the GB team

Having had a number of changes to the governing body in 2014/15, with the appointment of a new Chair and six new governors, this year the team has become more established, with each governor adding to our collective understanding of the school's strengths, potential, challenges and areas for development. An element of turnover is expected and healthy: we welcomed two new governors, Marco Donzelli and Debbie Scanlon, both as co-opted governors, with expertise in finance and education respectively. We thanked and bade farewell to Roger Pembury and Kathleen Johnson, who had been active on the resources committee.

Our focus for 2015/16

We have kept our Ambition for the school, set in autumn 2014, firmly at the forefront of our thinking over the course of this year: for the school to become one in which *all* children fulfill their potential, in line with the overall school vision to become a centre of educational excellence. We have continued our focus on the priority areas of strengthening leadership, raising the quality of teaching and improving pupil progress.

Having reflected in 2015 on improving our Governing Body effectiveness, we determined to:

1. Increase clarity about our purpose, role and responsibilities - We have refined our committee Terms of Reference; completed training on governance; developed briefs to guide the work of governors championing key areas such as safeguarding; communicated '*what we do and what we are there for*' in interactions with children, staff and parents.
2. Get to know Milton Road better - Every governor has been in school this year, monitoring developments, talking to children and staff, seeing the school in action.
3. Build an external orientation and perspective – This has been facilitated by the LA's termly Improving Governance workshops; the Annual Governor conference, active participation in an informal Chairs of Governors network and liaison with local schools about developments in the educational landscape such as the government agenda for academisation.

For clarity, our core functions are to:

- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction, which underpins the focus of our work;
- Hold the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and performance management of staff; largely the *raison d'être* of our Teaching and Learning committee;
- Oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well spent; largely the remit of the resources committee.

Teaching and Learning (T&L), author Danny Godfrey, Co-Chair of T&L Committee

We have met half-termly this year to allow us to closely monitor the impact of the school's improvement measures on the quality of teaching and the progress of children across the school. The committee has kept in close contact with the school's new Inclusion Leader and has seen promising evidence of progress in this area, both in terms of the processes being used and the performance of individual children. Vulnerable groups, traditionally at risk of experiencing barriers in their learning, have been tracked closely. There is evidence of positive impacts being made for children in receipt of Pupil Premium, children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Looked After Children. We have promoted the identification of Gifted & Talented children within the school, allowing stretching opportunities to be provided for these children and are encouraging the school to measure the impact that these have. Reflecting changes to the way in which children are being assessed nationally, we have kept in close touch with changes to the school's systems of monitoring children and presenting their progress and attainment, via the school's Deputy Headteacher. These systems are now well embedded in the school. Following external peer-review, the school's pupil progress data show a steady increase in reliability and evidence of progression.



We are delighted to see the KS2 national test results considerably exceeding the national average in this first year with the new assessment methods. 79.7% of Milton Road's Year 6 children reached the national expected level in reading, writing and maths combined, compared to a national average of 53% (and 52% for Cambridgeshire). Comparative data for similar schools will be available in the autumn.

Financial Governance, author Matt Hodgson, Chair of the Resources Committee

2015/16 was a challenging year for the school's finances, with a number of unbudgeted, one-off, costs, alongside budgeted increases in investment in leadership and external advisers aimed at improving the school's performance. The school ended the year with a cumulative deficit of £21k compared to a budgeted surplus of £7k.

The Local Authority (LA) undertook a Governance & Financial Management Audit in November 2015. Clear actions for improvement were defined and their completion was tracked by the Resources Committee. The Chair of Governors annually signs an assessment of the school's compliance with the Schools Financial Value Standard – for 2015/16 full compliance was achieved, aside from one point relating to completion of actions from audits, since at the date of signature (31 March 2016) there were a small number of outstanding actions. These actions have now all been completed.



We have been planning for an even more difficult 2016/17. The most important element of the school's income is its core funding per pupil from the Local Authority, which is based on pupil numbers on the school roll on census day - 1 October. MRPS had a significant shortfall in pupil numbers on 1 October 2015, due to a greater than normal number of pupils leaving the school in July 2015, and the empty places not being filled by census day. Combined with other negative factors, such as the opening deficit mentioned above, and the fact that school funding overall rose at less than the rate of cost inflation, the school is projecting a more significant deficit by the end of 2016/17. At the budget ratification meeting in early May, governors endorsed various actions to increase income and cut costs in as balanced a way as possible, to eliminate the deficit over the next 3 years. The underlying principle of these adjustments has been to render the school fit for purpose and keeping the children's educational outcomes at the heart of decision making.

Governor monitoring visits and links with the school

We have continued monitoring activity in the key areas of safeguarding, health and safety and have developed new governor links to provide support and challenge in the important areas of staff well-being and pupil behaviour. Pairs of governors met with each of the phase teams (EYFS, KS1, lower KS2 and upper KS2) this term to help us understand the impact on children of the school improvement plan; which areas have seen the best impact, which have been more difficult and how the plan could be improved. Governors with subject links have visited to discuss progress in the individual subject areas of maths, physical education (PE) and use of sports premium funding, Personal, Social, Health and Cultural, Education (PSHCE) to help us understand how the school provides a broad and balanced curriculum. Subject links in different areas will be followed up on further in the new academic year.



We have continued to monitor and validate school improvement in specific areas raised by Ofsted, such as looking in the children's books at how marking helps children progress their learning, talking to children in years 1 – 3 and 4 – 6 each term (October, December and May) about how the school helps them with their learning. We have accompanied the senior leadership team and LA representatives on learning walks every ½ term since January and been shown improvements in the learning environment, working walls, displays of the children's work, children's work in books, opportunities for extended writing. Being in school means we know the school better and are more in touch with improvements and areas that need further development. Crucially, this contributes to our questioning and the balance of support and challenge we are able to provide.



Headteacher recruitment

Governors were keen to engage with the school community to hear views on 'what makes Milton Road special' to communicate this to prospective candidates and what qualities would be important to children, staff and parents in the new Headteacher. This helped us give a flavour of Milton Road in the application pack, fed into our person specification and what we would be testing at interview. Dr



Michael Catchpool was asked to teach a lesson and reflect on the quality of teaching and learning; look around the school, the children's work and feed back on current strengths and areas for development; look at the school's progress and attainment data and highlight key points for action; lead a discussion with the school's Leadership Team on *How to embed creativity and innovation in the curriculum*. He met staff and PTA committee members informally; held a discussion on school finance; lead an assembly on an aspect of learning behaviours; was interviewed by the School Council; and presented to the selection panel *My vision for the school and how it will be better under my leadership*, as well as the formal interview with the panel: Gavin Bierman (Chair of Head Teacher Performance Management), Rolf Purvis (Co-Chair of Teaching and Learning), Ysanne Austin (GB Vice Chair) and Sylvie Baird (Chair). The positive feedback received from all quarters resonated with what we saw throughout the selection process and our decision to appoint Dr Catchpool was unanimous. We would like to thank all members of the school community who fed into and helped us with this process, including Kate Winter who helped with the application pack design.

GB Development, training and external focus

We have continued to consider the overall development of our GB, identifying the skills and expertise we possess and need to bring in. This has led to targeted governor recruitment in the areas of finance and education.

We have benefited from a 2 year governor training programme with the Local Authority (LA), which gives us access to an extensive programme and the opportunity for in-house training. We have appointed a training and development link governor to champion our development as a GB and ensure this is firmly on the agenda. Governors have attended sessions on improving governance, termly briefings on latest developments and statutory changes, governor induction, Headteacher performance management, safer recruitment, funding and budgeting. We have shared our learning and had the opportunity for questioning in FGB meetings.

In the autumn term I received positive feedback on the Leading Governance course run by the National College of Teaching and Leadership, which has developed my thinking as Chair of Governors (COG) and been the basis of a widened informal network of Cambridgeshire COGs .

Thank you to the Milton Road staff team

We would like to thank the staff team for their commitment, energy, resilience and all that they bring to the children and school community through the curriculum, extra curricular activities and caring for the children: teachers, teaching assistants, mid-day supervisors, office staff and the leadership team. We would like to thank Ms Susan Dobbs for picking up the school leadership baton at short notice and for her contribution to school improvement these 2 busy terms.



Thank you to parents and carers

We would also like to thank you, the parents and carers of children at Milton Road for the support you have shown the school and for your engagement in school development and school life. We'd like to particularly thank all who give generously of their time and expertise, volunteering in school led by Maria Roberts, running a club, helping on school trips, planning fun events and raising funds through the school's dynamic PTA. We are very conscious of the planning and hard work involved and of the difference this makes to the school.



Looking forward to 2016/17...

We are looking forward to a new chapter in the school's development, with the arrival of our substantive Headteacher in September. Dr Michael Catchpool is an experienced Headteacher, whose philosophy of education is that learning should: *'engage and excite all children, so they can develop a genuine passion for life-long learning'*.

We have been spending time with Dr Michael Catchpool considering the opportunities and challenges faced by the school and how we as governors can improve our effectiveness in supporting Milton Road's continued improvement in 2016/17.

Sylvie Baird, Chair of Governors