

Review of 2019-20 on behalf of the Governors for Valley Road School

Well, it was a game of two halves. A seemingly normal year at first brought us the usual things to be concerned about – results, intake, budget and the like. However, nothing could have prepared us for what was to happen from March.

The first half kicked off in September 2019 and things were looking good in terms of numbers coming into Reception, in fact we were full, and the Government were proposing to pour billions of pounds into education. We had also successfully transitioned the Nursery into the capable hands of the Cygnets team, and the SATs results across all disciplines (phonics, reading, writing, maths) for EYFS, Key Stage 1 and 2 were all above the local and national averages which was testament to the hard work of the staff, pupils and the support the pupils' families. And perhaps most amazingly of all, Oxfordshire had agreed to fund the work to replace the flat roof of the main block. Were we at last going to be able to say goodbye to the squadron of buckets deployed around the school whenever there was significant rain?

At the start of the second half we were introduced to new and strange words and phrases – lockdown, furlough and social distancing were difficult enough concepts to grasp for adults, and doubtless we all struggled to explain to our children what they all mean. The restrictions imposed on us from March have of course had a profound impact on all our lives in many different ways, but amongst this confusion and change, the school had to find a new normal to continue not only maintaining an acceptable level of education but also continue fostering character, connection and community that are central to the ethos at Valley Road. Many schools might have thrown in the towel (and did!), but the community responded with a solution which meant that within days of lockdown being announced every class at the school was “living on Teams” (thank you to the Microsoft Dads – you know who you are!), allowing education to carry on even though the school gates were locked. Some tough and quick decisions had to be taken to make all this work, and the Governing Body kept in touch with developments via Teams too and was not just fully supportive of Mr Coulson and his staff throughout, but also all Governors were deeply touched by the care and attention that had gone into making sure children would not miss out on learning. Governors would like to thank Mr Coulson and all staff at the school for going above and beyond in this strangest of years.

A child's education is a partnership between the teacher and adult caregiver(s), and this period has perhaps served as a reminder of this with parents/guardians having to play a more active role in their child's learning, particularly when they themselves may have needed to focus on their own work. Thank you for sticking with it. It may be what helps your child ride this thing out.

Dan Herbert

Chair of Governors (on behalf of the Governing Body)