

Chair of Governors Commentary 2019-20

Each year, the Chair of Governors writes a commentary on what has been going on in the school for the past year. This is my commentary for the 2019-20 academic year.

Looking back over my recent annual reports, I notice that they had started to become a bit 'samey'. This is partly for the excellent reason that the school has continued to improve steadily and each year I have been able to write about results that have illustrated that improvement. It is also for the disappointing reason that achieving our long-standing ambition to renovate the school has proved and continues to prove extremely frustrating and difficult. So the most significant elements, from a Chair of Governor's point of view, have remained much the same. But not this year.

This time last year, the school's trajectory seemed stable, although that is not to say that things were easy. Since becoming a governor at the school, I have come to realise just how much effort and agility on the part of the staff and leadership team is needed to generate the steady upward progress that school has shown. But Catharine and all her team seemed to know what was required and to be continuing to execute it very effectively, as they had in previous years.

Then, in February, Ofsted came. For those of you not familiar with the organisation, Ofsted (The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) is the part of the government responsible for inspecting state schools. They visit schools at intervals to determine the quality of teaching and learning in the school and identify areas of improvement and, for even the best of schools, their visits are stressful times. There are four available grades for a school, 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Requires improvement' and 'Inadequate', and at its previous inspection, Gillotts was rated as 'Good'. Under the current inspection framework, a school that was rated as 'Good' at the time of its last inspection, cannot be rated as 'Outstanding' at its subsequent inspection. At best, it can be considered potentially outstanding, in which case it will receive another, more detailed inspection, normally within one to two years, to determine whether it is 'Outstanding' or still 'Good'. I am delighted to say that this is what happened at the school's inspection this year meaning the outcome was the best we could get. Of course, this also means we have another Ofsted inspection to look forward to in the near future but that is a price we are all happy to pay!

By February too, Covid was starting to appear as a factor that might affect the school. I remember walking out of a meeting of the Curriculum and Student Progress committee in that month with Catharine. I was sceptical that the disease would have a significant impact on the school but she was already thinking about the possible implications, including the possibility of closure. And as we all now know, she was absolutely right to do so. In March, the school closed to students other than those who were children of key workers or classed as 'vulnerable children'.

I think it is hard to realise just how difficult running a school was during this period for school leaders everywhere. Running a secondary school is a full-time job at the best of times but suddenly the job doubled in scope. The leadership team was responsible for simultaneously providing on-site support for those children still attending school and remote education for those not, while also trying to ensure that everyone stayed safe. At the same time, as everyone was feeling their way through this completely new situation, instructions from the Department for Education on how the school should be run were changing on an almost daily basis, often with little or no notice.

Against this backdrop, I think the school did an amazing job keeping the wheels on. Work was set for students to do in their homes and the school remained open for those who needed it. Safeguarding was closely attended to and the school continued to remotely look after the welfare of vulnerable children who would normally have been in school. During the course of the lockdown, and in spite of the day to day demands associated with simply keeping the physical and virtual sides of the school going, staff continued to improve the materials provided for remote learning and to increase their online engagement with pupils. The feedback I have received from parents is that they feel the school did a tremendous job in managing the completely new and unfamiliar situation and I am deeply impressed by the efforts the staff made and the results they achieved.

Since the end of the summer holidays, the school has been operating under what have become the "new normal" conditions. The staff and leadership team have continued to work hard with all of the students receiving a normal education almost all of the time. This is in spite of the constraints on staff arising from the need to keep everyone safe and the occasional Covid case. I think they continue to do an amazing job for us all.

GCSE results

Many of you will remember the confusion surrounding the grading of GCSE and 'A' level results this year. The original plan was for grades to be decided using a standardisation algorithm developed by Ofqual, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. However, following the issue of 'A' level results, some people felt that this process had resulted in an unjust allocation of grades. As a result, the Education Secretary changed the basis of awarding of results to use the unstandardised 'Centre Assessment Grades', the grades that teachers thought their students would have achieved if they had sat the exams.

To be fair, it was an extremely difficult situation and whatever approach was taken was bound to create some inconsistencies. In recognition of this, the Government has announced that it will not publish any school or college level educational performance data based on tests, assessments or exams for 2020. It is therefore impossible to work out how Gillotts Year 11 students performed in 2020 relative to their peers in other schools. However, looking at the Attainment 8 data (Attainment 8 is a somewhat complex measure but is roughly how a student did in his or her best eight subjects), it is clear that our students did extremely well and we have no reason to think they were disadvantaged by the unique circumstances of this year.

School renovation

Those of you who have read my reports in previous years will know that we have been working for some time to try and sell a part of the school's land to raise funds to invest in renovating the school. Unfortunately, as we have gone on with it, various difficulties and complexities have emerged, making it a slow and frustrating process. Inevitably, Covid-19 has slowed the process even further and we have made little progress during the past year. However, we continue to persevere and I very much hope to have better progress to report next year.

Looking Ahead

So what does the future hold for our school? Well, if the past year has taught us anything, it is that the future is uncertain. To quote the great physicist Niels Bohr (although he was not the first to say it), "it is very difficult to predict, especially the future". However, it does seem that the extraordinary amount of effort that has been invested in the development of a new vaccine is paying dividends. Before I write my next report, it seems likely that extensive vaccination will enable us to go back from the "new normal" to something approaching the "old normal". I do believe though that we have all learned a lot from this very different period of education which can continue to deliver benefit in the future. The fact that we had adopted Google Classroom before lockdown meant that we were much better placed to manage remote learning than some other schools. Some of the innovations that have been driven by circumstances, such as the setting, management and marking of homework remotely, have the potential to deliver lasting value. The demands of the pandemic have also given impetus to programmes to ensure that all our students, including the most disadvantaged, are equipped with devices that make remote learning fully practical. So I am confident that although the whole experience has been tremendously disruptive, we will find ways to ensure that some good comes out of it. Above all, I think the resilience of the school during these difficult times has demonstrated the strength of the staff and leadership team and allows us to be confident that, whatever the future does turn out to hold, they will be able to ensure that the school continues to prosper and improve.

David Gorsuch
Chair of Governors

Statutory Annual Report to parents on the effectiveness of arrangements for SEND and Disability

The school's SEND Policy was last reviewed and amended by the Governors, Headteacher and SENCo in December 2020. Its aims and objectives are set out below.

Gillotts values the abilities and achievements of all its students and is committed to providing, for each student, the best possible environment for learning by:

- ensuring the identification of SEND as early as possible in students' school careers
- monitoring progress
- working collaboratively with parents/carers and outside agencies
- involving students and parents in decision-making
- personalising learning for students
- promoting independence
- ensuring that the responsibility for SEND held by all staff and governors is carried out
- removing barriers to achievement and success

Students with SEND at Gillotts continue to make good progress in all areas of school-life: academic, social and emotional. There were 32 students on the SEND register in Year 11. Due to the period of school closure, there were no GCSE exams in May/June. However GCSE grades were awarded to enable young people to progress. Our students went on to a range of post-16 placements, including: Shiplake College, The Henley College, BCA, Reading College as well as some individuals following a slightly different pathway with courses/apprenticeships at Marc Antoni Hairdressing, Harrogate Military Academy and The National College for Motorsport.

Staff have continued to receive training and guidance throughout the year and SEND were at the heart of the School Development Plan. Besides the regular staff briefings, the work of our SENCo has been supported by working in partnership with the SENCos of our five partner primary schools. A key aspect of our work is to give professionals time to reflect on their own practice and share successful classroom strategies with colleagues. This year's main focus has been to share good practice more effectively, through example by improving Student Profiles and their use.

While the implementation of the new SEND Code of Practice has been at the forefront of the Learning Support Team development plan over the past few years, the introduction of the new GCSE syllabuses and their implications for students with SEND are now a priority. As a consequence, the range of Literacy and Numeracy Interventions offered at KS3 and KS4 has significantly developed to reflect the demands and recently identified learning and teaching needs of the new syllabuses. The Team is also keen to develop its range of assistive technology; for example we have invested in text to speech software to support students in GCSEs while still promoting their independence.

Gillotts' admissions are managed by Oxfordshire County Council. As an Academy, we publish our Admissions arrangements each year; however our arrangements follow the current published LA admission rules for Years 7 to 11 at community and voluntary controlled secondary schools. A summary of the arrangements, including for pupils with disabilities, is published each year in our Prospectus. Our Accessibility Plan was reviewed and developed further in June 2018. Curriculum Access actions include a focus on differentiation. In normal (non-COVID) times, there are lunchtime clubs taking place most days in Learning Support, which support students in developing friendships and social skills in a safe environment. A proportion of staff briefings are used for small groups of teachers to meet with Learning Support Assistants to share strategies to meet an individual's needs. To ensure good Information Access, the school continues to work closely with the LA support services. Our Accessibility Plan (premises), adopted in 2003, was fully implemented by August 2006 and has been reviewed to ensure it continues to meet current requirements.

Catharine Darnton
Headteacher

David Gorsuch
Chair of Governors

EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

DECEMBER 2016

	Equality Objective	Success Criteria	Actions required to achieve objective	Aims of the Equality Duty	Protected Characteristics
1.	<p>Progress</p> <p>To improve achievement for identified groups: (Ofsted 2016)</p> <p>Disadvantaged students</p> <p>Student with SEND</p>	<p>Within 12 months Gaps with national non-disadvantaged narrowed</p> <p>Within 2 years Gaps with national non-disadvantaged removed and gaps with national non-SEND narrowed</p> <p>After 4 years Gaps with national non-disadvantaged removed and gaps with national non-SEND removed</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure all students reach their potential, through embedding the use of Assessment for Learning 2. Develop further Heads of House as lead champions for PP students, supported by tutors 3. Focus on improving the quality of teaching, not increasing the number of interventions. 4. Appraisal objective to include specified outcomes for PP and SEN students 5. Develop further learning walks focussed on the progress of PP and SEN students 	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>	<p>Disability</p> <p>Gender</p>
2.	<p>Diversity of the workforce</p> <p>Analyse our data so we monitor changes the diversity of our workforce (eg age, gender, ethnicity)</p> <p>Analyse our data on pay so we can monitor issues of pay equality, including the gender pay gap</p>	<p>Within 12 months Analysis complete</p> <p>Within 2 years Analysis complete</p> <p>After 4 years Analysis complete</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct analyses 	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p> <p>Foster good relations</p>	<p>Race</p> <p>Gender</p> <p>Age</p>

EQUALITY OBJECTIVES – Monitoring progress

	Equality Objective	Success Criteria	December 2017		December 2018		December 2019		December 2020																																				
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2.	Diversity of the workforce Analyse our data so we monitor changes the diversity of our workforce (eg age, gender, ethnicity) Analyse our data on pay so we can monitor issues of pay equality, including the gender pay gap	Within 12 months Analysis complete Within 2 years Analysis complete After 4 years Analysis complete	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
			22%	78%	19%	81%	20%	80%	23%	77%		
			EG	Percentage	EG	Percentage	EG	Percentage	EG	Percentage	EG	Percentage
			W-B	93	W-B	92	W-B	94	W-B	94	W-B	94
			W-O	4	W-O	3	W-O	1	W-O	3	W-O	3
			Black	0	Black	1	Black	1	Black	1	Black	1
			Asian	1	Asian	2	Asian	1	Asian	1	Asian	1
			Mixed	2	Mixed	2	Mixed	2	Mixed	2	Mixed	
			NR	1	NR	1	NR	2	NR	1	NR	1
			Other	0	Other	0	Other	0%	Other	0	Other	0
			Age	Percentage	Age	Percentage	Age	Percentage	Age	Percentage	Age	Percentage
			<25	3	<25	5	<25	4	<25	3	<25	3
25-34	20	25-34	18	25-34	21	25-34	17	25-34	17			
35-44	23	35-44	21	35-44	20	35-44	22	35-44	22			
45-54	33	45-54	39	45-54	38	45-54	38	45-54	38			
55-64	21	55-64	16	55-64	16	55-64	20	55-64	20			
≥65	1	≥65	1	≥65	2	≥65	1	≥65	1			
			Pay equality – see below		Pay equality – see below		Pay equality – see below		Pay equality – see below			

December 2017 – Pay equality

NB Calculated using FTE salaries

	Teachers - Main		Teacher - Upper		Support staff	
	Number	Average salary	Number	Average salary	Number	Average salary
Male	6	£26,274	10	£38,152	7	£19,531
Female	11	£29,269	27	£38,153	47	£21,421

December 2017 – Analysis of managers by gender

	Teachers – TLR holders		Support staff – designated line manager	
	Number	Average TLR	Number	Average salary
Male	8	£6,817	1	Withheld
Female	13	£6,627	11	£29,042

Note analysis of Leadership Team pay is not included due to small numbers and separate reporting in the school's accounts

December 2018 – Pay equality*NB Calculated using FTE salaries*

	Teachers - Main		Teacher - Upper		Support staff	
	Number	Average salary	Number	Average salary	Number	Average salary
Male	4	£27,065	10	£38,871	6	£21,432
Female	7	£31,001	32	£38,883	47	£21,592

December 2018 – Analysis of managers by gender

	Teachers – TLR holders		Support staff – designated line manager	
	Number	Average TLR	Number	Average salary
Male	8	£6,573	2	£26,654
Female	13	£6,760	8	£29,875

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	Teachers - Main		Teacher - Upper		Support staff	
	Number	Average salary	Number	Average salary	Number	Average salary
Male	4	£28,570	10	£40,171	7	£19,986
Female	12	£32,717	32	£40,086	49	£23,301

December 2019 – Analysis of managers by gender

	Teachers – TLR holders		Support staff – designated line manager	
	Number	Average TLR	Number	Average salary
Male	6	£7,884	1	Withheld
Female	16	£5,750	8	£31,960

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December 2020 – Pay equality*NB Calculated using FTE salaries*

	Teachers - Main		Teacher - Upper		Support staff	
	Number	Average salary	Number	Average salary	Number	Average salary
Male	7	£27,885	7	£41,419	9	£21,751
Female	6	£33,007	34	£41,129	46	£23,692

December 2020 – Analysis of managers by gender

	Teachers – TLR holders		Support staff – designated line manager	
	Number	Average TLR	Number	Average salary
Male	7	£7,008	2	£27,888
Female	18	£5,396	7	£31,789

Note analysis of Leadership Team pay is not included due to small numbers and separate reporting in the school's accounts