

Chair of Governors Commentary 2020-21

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 2020-21 academic year.

Looking back over my last annual report, I saw that I wrote in the final paragraph, “it seems likely that extensive vaccination will enable us to go back from the “new normal” to something approaching the “old normal””. And so it has proved, although I have to say that the transition proved much more demanding for the school than I foresaw and I think the central message of this report is how astonishingly well it has managed throughout the pandemic.

For the school, the past 20 months have been like space mountain in Disneyland...an unpredictable roller coaster in the dark. In that time, the school has been a provider of social care, a Covid test centre, a deliverer of remote education AND a regular secondary school...and even this last has been much more demanding than normal, with the need to manage bubbles and social distancing and to keep hand sanitisers topped up. Each of the roles could constitute a full-time task and the school has had to adapt to providing all of them with little increase in staff or funding. The task has been further complicated by the rate at which demands on the school changed. The government, dealing with the pandemic on a national scale, continually changed its expectations, often with very little notice. So the increase in the range of activities has had to be managed against a backdrop of rapidly changing government requirements while keeping staff safe and managing staff absences resulting from Covid.

The development of Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) to be used instead of exam results in the summer created another layer of challenge for the school. In the space of about six weeks, the school went through a process of carrying out and marking assessments, gathering and moderating the grades and submitting them to the awarding bodies. It was the school's policy to ensure consistency and transparency throughout the process but these are not easily achieved...the process demanded a lot of extra work from teachers, subject leaders and the Leadership Team, as well as the Exams Officer. It is a tribute to the thoroughness of the job done by the school that, although the marks submitted were significantly better than those of the previous year because of the ability of the cohort, none were challenged by the awarding bodies. It is also a commentary on the quality of the process that, although there was a small number of challenges of the results by parents on behalf of their children, few were upheld. And the achievements of the students who have endured this unprecedented year have shown that the school has continued to provide a top-quality education, in spite of the extraordinary extra demands placed on it.

So what of this new academic year? Well, superficially at least, things ARE pretty much back to normal. I was in school a couple of weeks ago and it all felt much as it did before the pandemic, a busy and happy place. Having been close to it all throughout though, I have come to realise just how much effort and ingenuity goes into delivering this ‘close to normality’ for students. There are still many additional demands on the school staff relative to pre-pandemic times. They are distributing hundreds of test kits each week, still managing staff absences due to the disease and developing and implementing contingency plans in case an upsurge of cases causes cancellation of GCSEs in 2022. Their success in delivering a near-normal experience for the students is a tremendous tribute to all of them and especially to the leadership team who have, I know, been working extraordinarily hard throughout. For my part, I have been hugely impressed by all their efforts and the fantastic outcomes they have delivered.

So what can we expect from here on? Well, as has become normal during the past 20 months, nobody knows. One thing we can expect is another visit from Ofsted. (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 came to Gillotts in February 2020, just before the start of the pandemic, and classed the school as potentially ‘Outstanding’, the best possible outcome. This verdict is supposed to trigger another inspection within one to two years (and usually sooner) to determine whether the school qualifies for the ‘Outstanding’ badge. Like everything, the repeat inspection has been delayed by the pandemic but we can expect to see them back in the next 18 months and we will hope for another very positive evaluation then.

Beyond that, it is very hard to know. To repeat the quote from the great physicist Niels Bohr that I used last year, “it is very difficult to predict, especially the future” and this has never been more true. However, throughout the pandemic so far, the staff and leadership team of the school have shown that they have the skills, agility and commitment to deal with whatever comes. I feel absolutely confident that they will deal effectively with whatever turns up and throughout it all will continue to deliver a first-class education for the school's students. I continue to be very proud to be the Chair of Governors at the school.

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

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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 SENDCo has been supported by working in partnership with the SENDCOs 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.

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Headteacher

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	Equality Objective	Success Criteria	Actions required to achieve objective	Aims of the Equality Duty	Protected Characteristics
1.	<p>Progress</p> <p>To improve the impact of the curriculum on identified groups:</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 for SEND with all national narrowed</p> <p>After 4 years Gaps with national non-disadvantaged removed and gaps for SEND with all national removed</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop the practice of each subject team (and the individuals within it) to embed Assessment for Learning and hence improve progress 2. Continue to develop the Curriculum and Assessment statement in each subject 3. Plan a systematic approach to revision for major exams 4. Develop systematic teaching of vocabulary 5. Develop the English curriculum to ensure students have the cultural capital they need to access the English curriculum, and hence the wider curriculum. Explore links with the curricula of other subjects 6. Ensure the culture is that 'Attendance is everyone's business' 7. Monitor and develop the range, quality and take-up of extra-curricular activities offered by the school with a particular focus on disadvantaged students and students with SEND 	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>	<p>Disability</p> <p>Sex</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>	1. Conduct analyses	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p> <p>Foster good relations</p>	<p>Race</p> <p>Sex</p> <p>Age</p>
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EQUALITY OBJECTIVES – Monitoring progress

	Equality Objective	Success Criteria	December 2021	December 2022	December 2023	December 2024																																		
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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>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Male</th> <th>Female</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>21%</td> <td>79%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>EG</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>W-B</td> <td>92</td> </tr> <tr> <td>W-O</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Black</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Asian</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mixed</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NR</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><25</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25-34</td> <td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>35-44</td> <td>27</td> </tr> <tr> <td>45-54</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>55-64</td> <td>18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>≥65</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Pay equality – see below</p>	Male	Female	21%	79%	EG	Percentage	W-B	92	W-O	3	Black	1	Asian	1	Mixed	2	NR	3	Other	0	Age	Percentage	<25	1	25-34	14	35-44	27	45-54	40	55-64	18	≥65	1			
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December 2021 – Pay equality*NB Calculated using FTE salaries*

	Teachers - Main		Teacher - Upper		Support staff	
	Number	Average salary	Number	Average salary	Number	Average salary
Male	8	£28,721	7	£41,497	7	£22,893
Female	5	£30,853	37	£41,188	46	£23,798

December 2021 – Analysis of managers by gender

	Teachers – TLR holders		Support staff – designated line manager	
	Number	Average TLR	Number	Average salary
Male	6	£8,099	2	£28,461
Female	18	£5,409	7	£32,467

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