

# Aboyne Lodge School

## Governors' newsletter for 2015/16

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### *Summary*

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The governors are pleased to issue our summer newsletter, which also serves as our governors' report covering activities during the 2015/16 year and includes a summary of our annual parent survey.

The year began with fantastic news, with the best 2014/15 SATS results of any primary school in Hertfordshire. Clearly, this reflects the hard work of the pupils and teachers concerned (as well as the parents!), but the governors believe this also demonstrates the excellent standard of teaching and learning throughout the school.

Alongside this, we are delighted that the school has achieved the "Inclusion Quality Mark" during the year. This involves a complete audit of what is happening in the school and demonstrates that we are offering genuinely inclusive education. The school has also made good progress towards the "Arts Quality Mark".

Pressures on school finances continue to be a key challenge for the governors. The school's income has been affected by cuts in funding, whilst its costs are increasing due to pensions changes and the national living wage. Further details of how we have sought to address these challenges are included below.

We have also continued to seek additional funds to repair the roof and windows. Last year's newsletter explained that we had been approved for a grant from central government, but it was not clear when we would receive this and it seems that funds are unlikely to be available for several years. In the meantime, we continue to make urgent repairs as required, which places further pressures on our finances.

Finally, the governors would like to thank the teachers, parents and carers for their hard work making the school one we can all be proud of.

**On behalf of the governors of Aboyne Lodge School**

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### *Activities during 2015/16*

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The governors have continued their work overseeing the academic performance of the school during the year.

A key part of the role of a governor is to carry out "governor visits". These are formal visits made to the school by individual governors to study a particular subject or theme. When governors make formal visits, they report back to the full governing body.

Where relevant, governors ensure their visits focus on how the school's development priorities are being addressed. For the 2015/16 year, these were to:

- develop a growth mindset;
- achieve the Inclusion and the Arts Marks; and
- develop an understanding of sustainability.

Several visits have been carried out that focus on these areas, and governors have also carried out visits to observe SATs, the nursery and regular meetings with parents of children with Special Educational Needs.

In addition, governors have visited the school with a local Crime Prevention Officer to understand what measures might be taken to improve security following several break-ins.

Governors have also attended regular training sessions through the year, including a session for all governors on health & safety.

During the year the government announced that they will require all schools to become academies. This was subsequently softened, such that becoming an academy is unlikely to be mandatory, but the landscape appears to be changing nonetheless. The governors will continue to monitor developments in this area in the coming year.

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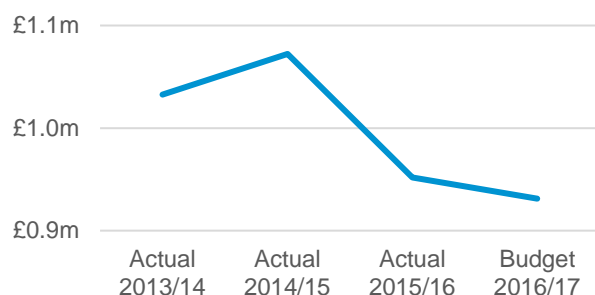
### Resources

A second vital area of governor oversight covers the budget, which runs from April to March each year and is monitored by the Resources Committee.

The school receives the majority of its funding from the local authority, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC). Our final income for 2015/16 was £952,000, and includes pupil premium income of £18,400 and a sports grant of £8,900.

As can be seen from Figure 1, our income for 2015/16 has fallen by around 13% compared with the previous year, and is expected to fall further for next year. Therefore, there have been and will be considerable pressures on spending this year and next.

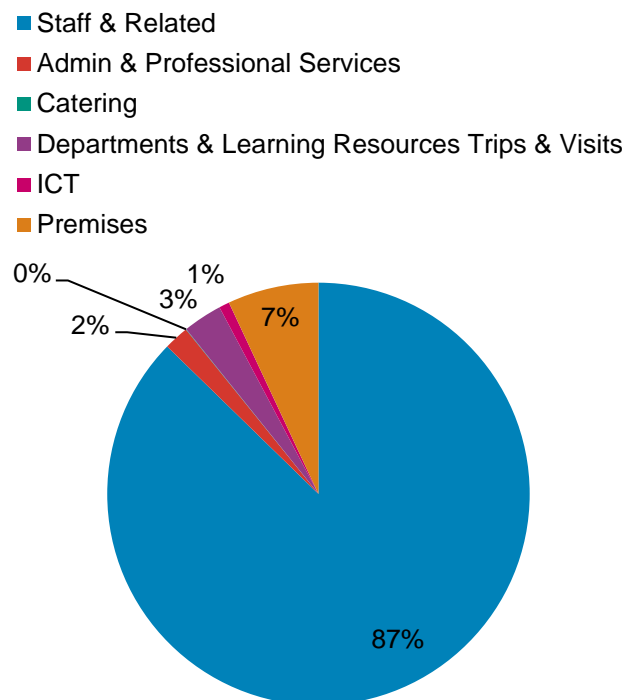
**Figure 1: income over time**



Staff costs are our major expenditure, which has increased to around 87% of total income compared with 74% for the previous year, largely as a result of the decrease in funding described above. This has necessitated a serious review of staffing and some difficult choices being made. In particular, it has been necessary to cut back on classroom assistants, to focus on providing support where it is most needed.

Apart from staff, the other main cost relates to premises. Together, these two account for around 94% of our spending, in comparison with 80% for the previous year. Further details of how our funding is spent are set out in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: how the money is spent**



In absolute terms, staff related costs of £849,000 were unchanged from the previous year. Variances for the other areas of revenue expenditure are compared against the budget in Figure 3 (catering expenditure and trips and visits expenditure are shown net of related receipts).

The cost of maintaining the premises whilst waiting for the capital grant work to be done remains a significant pressure and this is likely to continue while HCC and central government decide how to prioritise the capital bids.

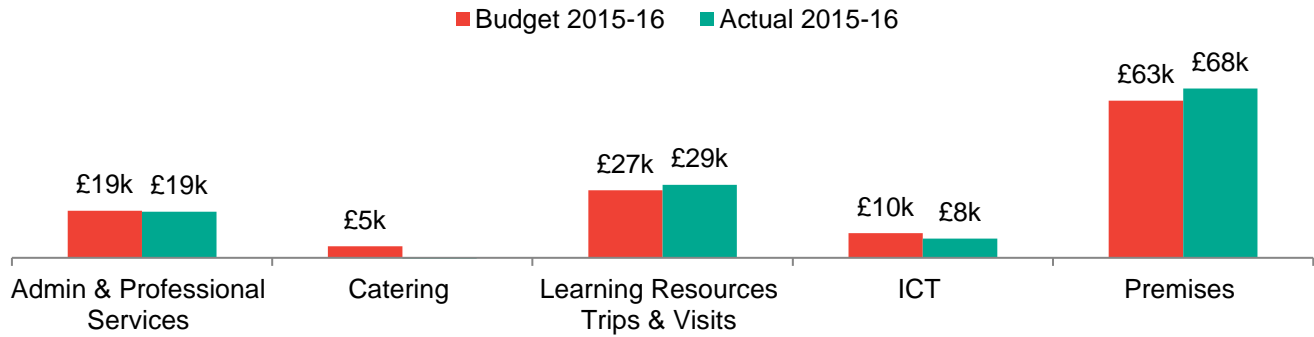
In anticipation of the tight year, budgets for other areas were closely monitored by staff and it is to their credit that we have finished the year with a small surplus.

Looking ahead, we will need to consider alternative ways of raising funds, as budgetary pressures are only set to increase.

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**Figure 3: variances versus budget**



Having 'saved' our capital budget for a couple of years, in anticipation of needing to "make good" following the planned replacement work on the roofs and windows, we have spent just over £8,000 this year to improve the school environment. It is still expected that the work on the roofs and windows will be funded by a grant from central government. However, it has now become clear that these funds are not expected for a number of years.

We still have a carried forward capital budget of £12,000 to take into 2016/17 and the governors and head will be considering how we manage the capital

and revenue budgets going forward to make the most significant impact on the education of our children who remain our highest priority.

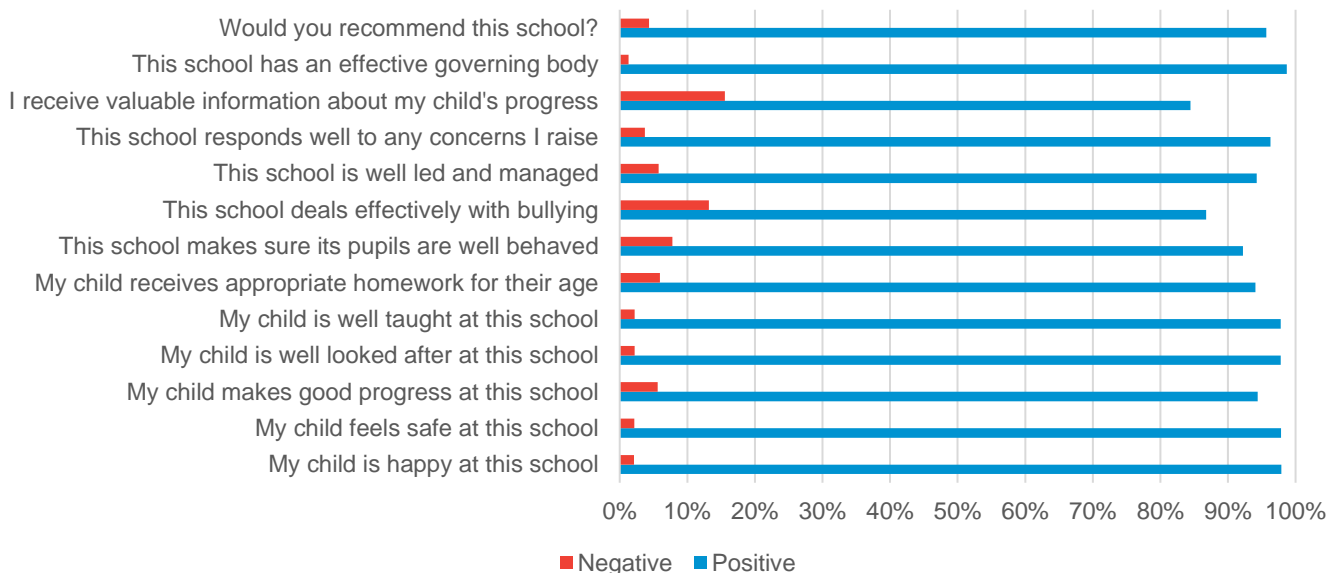
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### *Parent survey*

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Thank you to those parents and carers who responded to the parent survey. A summary of the percentage responses (excluding "don't know" responses) is shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Results of the parent survey**



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Whilst the results of the survey are positive overall, there are areas where a number of respondents have expressed dissatisfaction. The results of the survey are being considered in further detail by the School Improvement Committee and by the head, to identify where improvements can be made. However, if you have any specific concerns or suggestions for improvement we do encourage you to contact the school or the chair of governors in person, as this would be extremely helpful for us.

One particular concern which was also highlighted in last year's survey is receiving information about children's progress. During the year, this has been a topic for discussion at a meeting of St Albans' primary heads. As part of this, the school has benchmarked itself against the activities carried out by other schools and concluded that we are already doing everything that other schools are in this area.

It should also be noted that class teachers are available to discuss any aspect of children's progress with parents and carers. However, if you have particular concerns or ideas please share these with the school or with the chair of governors.

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### *Governor details*

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There have been a number of changes to the governing body during the year. Rajeev Kaja and Ruby Yates have stood down as co-opted governors, and have been replaced by Deirdre Lyons Le Croy and Cecilia Fenech Brincat. Also, Sally Hayes and Sue Noon have reached the end of their term as parent governors, and have been replaced by Robert Blok and Tom Irwin. We are sure that everyone is grateful to the departing governors for their contribution and we wish the new governors every success in their role.

Further, Sal-Cameron Griffiths is stepping down as chair of governors and will be replaced by the current deputy, Steve Hitchiner, for the 2016/17 year.

It is good practice to list attendance by governors at meetings. Table 1 shows Full Governing Body meetings attended by each governor who served during 2015-16.

Table 1: Governor attendance	
Amanda Abley	6/6
Anna-Ruby Yates	1/3
Cecilia Fenech Brincat	2/2
Christy Roach	4/6
David Hope	5/6
Deirdre Lyons Le Croy	2/4
Deryn Grisenthwaite	4/6
Nikki Loan	4/6
Rajeev Kaja	1/1
Sal Cameron-Griffiths	6/6
Sally Hayes	0/1
Robert Blok	4/4
Steve Hitchiner	6/6
Sue Noon	4/5
Tina Shaw	6/6
Tom Irwin	1/1