



Governing Board Annual Report Academic Year 2022/23

John Rankin Schools
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The academic year has once again raced by. Our new executive head teacher, Flora Cooper, her brilliant senior leadership team and our outstanding staff have focused on providing the best possible experience for all our children, in and out of the classroom. I would like to express the governing board's thanks to everyone involved for their hard work.

Ms Cooper arrived in September, taking over from Felix Rayner who left JRS after six years. We have an inspirational new vision: “Igniting Passion; Empowering Learners; Transforming the Future” and values: “Courage, Creativity, Curiosity, Compassion, Composure”. Our aim is to develop brave and resilient individuals prepared for an ever-changing world.

Our children have once again enjoyed a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including residential visits to Rhos-y-Gwaliau and Ufton Court. An exciting feature of the year has been our remarkable sporting success. From cross-country to netball, from swimming to football, John Rankin competitors have performed exceptionally, both individually and as part of their team. At the Quadkids Festival in May, featuring 500 young athletes from across West Berkshire, John Rankin came first overall with our B team not far behind in third place. Our girl footballers have enjoyed incredible success and who knows, we may have seen future Lionesses begin their careers here.

In March, Ofsted undertook its first inspection of the Infant School since June 2017. The school retained its rating of “Good”. The inspection was carried out against the controversial backdrop of the suicide of a head teacher at another Berkshire school and attracted widespread attention as part of a continuing debate about Ofsted's role and methods. The reaction, locally, nationally and even internationally, has been overwhelmingly positive for John Rankin (including teachers contacting us to inquire if we have any vacancies).

On the subject of staffing, we are sad to see the departure of Matt Percy, deputy head teacher, who has made a fantastic contribution to the school and is as popular with his colleagues as he is with the pupils. Mr Percy is moving on to become head of Winchcombe School and we wish him every success. The leadership team and governing board are keen for our local schools to work more cooperatively, sharing knowledge and resources, so we look forward to a closer relationship with Winchcombe, as well as Falkland and other local schools.

The process to recruit a replacement for Mr Percy attracted an exceptionally strong field of candidates. We are delighted to welcome Sarah Amin who takes over as deputy head alongside Neda Stephenson. Miss Amin was employed in a similar senior role at English Martyrs Catholic Primary School in Reading and we look forward to her starting at JRS in September.

We are fortunate to have an excellent teaching staff at John Rankin and, despite the challenges facing the profession, they tell me they love working here and would not want to go anywhere else! Of course in a school of our size there will be some comings and goings and we say goodbye, with our very best wishes for the future, to Mrs Micallef, Mr Taplin, Miss Atkins,

Mrs Auckland and Miss Bartholomew. At the same time, we warmly welcome Mrs Atkins and Miss Watts – a former John Rankin pupil who now returns as a teacher.

Financially, JRS continues to be in a robust position thanks to shrewd management by the school business team. There is uncertainty over the government's stated policy of requiring teachers' salary increases to be met from schools' own funds, but we do have a contingency in place if required. The school's lovely new library was opened in July and we thank the PTFA for its support. The main capital project for the next financial year will be the much needed upgrading of computer hardware across the school, including new laptops for the children.

The Board of Governors has itself seen a number of changes over the year. Tessa Roots, our dedicated and hard-working chair, stepped down after seven years' service. She will be a hard act to follow. We thank Katie Kearney and Chris Adams, former co-chairs, and Rebecca Brophy for their contribution and welcome Sarah Whatmore, who returns to the board as local authority governor and vice-chair, Andy Green, staff governor, Andrew Bradshaw, co-opted governor, and Graham Steere-Smith, newly elected parent governor. Two additional co-opted governors will join the board in September.

After many years of involvement with John Rankin, it feels like a family to me – albeit a very large family, with 650 children, more than 100 staff and over 1,000 parents and carers. Like all families we may have our occasional differences but this is natural and healthy. At the end of the day we share one aim: for all our children to find their voice and fulfil their potential. We should all take pride in their achievements.

Thanks to everyone in the John Rankin community for your contribution to our wonderful schools. Have a lovely summer and see you in September.

David Marsh
Chair of Governors
July 2023