



Dear Parents, Carers, Staff, Members, Directors and Governors,

What a fabulous term it has been and how wonderful it has been to culminate the calendar year with magical and special Christmas events ranging from fairs, nativities, services and Christingles. It was a privilege to be able to attend and see staff, children and families and to connect with you all – Ralph loved it too as he gets so much attention!

I want to express gratitude to our staff for ensuring a wonderful education for our children, for the fantastic enrichment and extracurricular experiences provided and which we have enjoyed and used to support our learning and, I want to thank our parents, carers, families and communities for supporting our schools so wholeheartedly and ensuring they are beautiful places for our staff to work and children to learn.



Directors, Ralph and I were so pleased and proud to attend the opening of The Howard's Forest School which is just one of our amazing learning environments. We are so blessed to have such exceptional surroundings at all of our schools and this is a fabulous example of PTFA and community support. I am so grateful to all of our PTFAs for their wonderful events and activities for our children and school funds.



It seems like such a long time ago but staff were extremely supportive of the second day of training of Metacognition and the 'science of learning' continues to be part of our development. A family at Anson won the raffle for joining in with their thoughts as to what a good TSSMAT learner looks like. We work hard across the trust with senior and middle leaders to ensure that the curriculum is continually monitored and reviewed and feedback is dovetailed into our staff meetings and training sessions. We are continually looking at how

we can improve and develop together and have enjoyed some supportive peer reviews this autumn. I am grateful to staff for their support and commitment to continual improvement.

We are thrilled to notify you that we have worked closely with Directors and Anson's Governors to develop our Governance Structure and have appointed seventeen Governors for our new Local Governing Committees (LGCs). We are so excited about the range of fantastic skills the applicants have to support and challenge St Marys, Richard Crosse and The Howard and, we look forward to our training and induction sessions ready to begin meetings and school monitoring and support work early in the new year. Our Directors have been really visible and it has been wonderful to see them at many of our events, they too will be linking with our LGCs to support communication and development. Additionally, we have undertaken an external review of Governance by the National Governance Association (NGA) and this was really successful. Positives outlined were extensive and verbal feedback was excellent outlining that we were strong and ready to grow. Key positives were:



- Vision and values
- Strategic direction
- Headteacher / CEO strategy
- OFSTED reports
- Excellent relationships
- Team working/motivation
- Commitment and hard work
- Recognition on a journey
- Focus on children

The headline areas for development were:

- The structure of trust governance (we have already recruited 3 new boards for St Marys, The Howard and Richard Crosse and are in a transition phase)

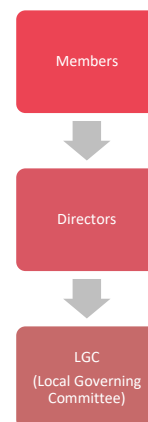
- Recruit new trustees - preferably legal and primary expertise – *is anyone interested?*
- Clarity of roles Members / Trust board (Directors)
- Develop Training

One of the key outcomes from the audit and questions from potential Governors was that the structure of Governance and leadership of Academy Trusts wasn't clear and so I hope the following helps. Attached is a document which is more detailed but the basic outline is as follows:

**Members:** TSSMAT Members play a limited but crucial role in safeguarding TSSMAT governance. They ensure they do not stray into undertaking our Academy Trust's Directors role whilst assuring themselves that the governance of our Trust is effective, that Academy Trustees/Directors are acting in accordance with TSSMAT's charitable objects and that they, the Members, use their powers to step in if governance is failing. They have a few, key responsibilities and meet a few times a year.

**Directors:** The Trust Board is the decision-making body of TSSMAT and is accountable and responsible for all of our academies equally in the MAT. The Trust Board is the employer of all staff and makes decisions to further the academy Trust's charitable objects and the general control and management of the administration of TSSMAT. They

- Ensure clarity of the vision, ethos and strategic direction.
- Hold the CEO and LGCs to account for the educational performance of the schools and their children and the effective and efficient performance management of staff.
- Oversee the financial performance of the schools and make sure that its money is well spent.



**Local Governing Committees (LGCs):** LGCs offer strategic guidance rather than getting involved in the operational aspects of a school. They:

- Hold senior leaders to account, ensuring that they provide the best education for the children. Ensuring that the curriculum, the quality of teaching and the outcomes are the best they can be.
- Provide assurances to the Trust that the above is as expected.
- Provide advice to the Trust Board about the strategic direction of the school and how to make best use of the resources the school has available to them.

We also had a superb and clean finance audit and were pleased with the outcomes.

All schools have new interactive whiteboards, we have new Wi-Fi infrastructure booked to go into all schools in the spring and our chrome book strategy marches ahead. Buildings have been surveyed and we have a clear strategy to support the development and security of the fabric of our buildings and await the outcomes of some significant grants. Our decarbonisation plans are outlined and we continue to work with a range of people to try to make changes we can and long term strategies for the more expensive options to support this important area of development.

Outcomes at the end of last year have finally been released by the Government and whilst much of our data is suppressed due to small numbers in our cohorts and the fact that the Government advise caution with comparisons to other years, it is important to celebrate that the results are fundamentally above national standards in almost all areas and across the schools with some areas which we have been focussing on this year which have been highlighted in the results. All schools have achieved highly and Richard Crosse and Anson were significantly above national and in the highest 20% of schools in 2022.

So much has happened in such a short period of time and this is just a little flavour for you and comes with huge gratitude to you all.

Directors, Ralph and I want to wish you a wonderful, happy and special Christmas and a healthy and exceptional 2023!

Kind Regards,

*CS Gethin*

Charlene Gethin (CEO)  
and Ralph.

*Merry Christmas*

