

Earl Sterndale C of E Primary School
Chair of Governors' Report (July 2026)

Dear Parent/Carer/Stakeholder

As we reach the end of the 2025/26 academic year, it is once again time to reflect on what has been another busy, rewarding and challenging year for our school.

School improvement planning has remained our primary focus following our last Ofsted inspection, with several areas requiring significant development to meet current educational standards and Ofsted expectations.

Our Headteacher, Sarah, has worked closely with Staff to undertake a comprehensive curriculum audit, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Throughout this process, the staff, under Sarah's leadership, have worked tirelessly to implement these changes while preserving the unique character and special qualities that make Earl Sterndale CE Primary such a fantastic school.

I would like to thank all of our Staff, Governors, parents and, of course, our pupils for their continued commitment, support and positive contributions throughout the year.

Highlights from 2025/26

- SATs results – we're very proud of the Y6 children, who worked very hard and achieved amazing SATS results.
- Excellent progress in the Phonics Screening Check.
- Appointment of Charlotte Burton as Teaching Assistant (September 2025).
- Appointment of Katie Cross as Class 2 Teacher (September 2025).
- Continued investment in Staff and Governor training.
- Further improvements to curriculum delivery and pupil progress monitoring.
- Ongoing improvements to the quality of education across the school.
- Continued development of SEND provision and support. Improvements to SEND monitoring and evaluation processes.
- A wide range of enriching opportunities including our whole-school trip to Chatsworth, Gulliver's Valley residential, climbing and watersports at White Hall, Forest School and participation in Making Space.
- Continued collaboration with other local rural schools to share expertise, best practice and achieve greater value for money.
- Strengthening the effectiveness of the Governing Body following an external governance review.

School Improvement

Sarah and the team remain fully committed to driving improvement across the school. Key developments this year include:

The continued development of a clear and cohesive curriculum, with subject leaders now established and regular reviews ensuring continuous improvement.

The Pathways to Writing scheme has been successfully implemented across both classrooms, while the Kapow curriculum has strengthened teaching and learning across the foundation subjects.

Improving the quality of education through greater curriculum continuity between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. While these changes will take time to fully embed, significant progress has already been made.

The introduction of the Little Wandle phonics programme, alongside ongoing staff training and regular monitoring, is strengthening the teaching of early reading and helping to foster a love of reading from an early age.

Sarah has brought her extensive experience as a SENCO to further develop adaptive teaching strategies, ensuring pupils with SEND continue to receive the support they need to thrive.

Behaviour expectations have become more consistent across the school. Our READY – SET – GO approach is helping pupils develop greater emotional awareness and self-regulation so they are ready to learn.

Staff development and retention continue to be priorities, with Sarah working closely alongside all members of Staff to ensure they feel valued, supported and have access to high-quality professional development.

Continued development of our inclusive provision so that every child is supported to reach their full potential.

Further enhancement of our enrichment offer through the introduction of WOW Wednesdays from September 2026.

Sarah and the Staff also remain committed to tailoring each child's learning experience, ensuring every pupil feels safe, happy and supported while achieving their full potential during these important early years of education. This personalised approach continues to be one of the school's greatest strengths.

Ofsted and School Development

The school continues to hold its Ofsted judgement of **Good**. Since the previous inspection, leaders and Governors have remained focused on addressing the identified areas for development and strengthening provision across the school following the interim inspection in December 2024.

This work takes considerable time, dedication and patience, together with the continued support of all stakeholders. From my perspective, we have the right people, leadership and resources in place, and I am confident that we will continue to make the necessary improvements. Our ambition is not simply to achieve external recognition, but to continue building a school where every child flourishes academically, socially and emotionally, whilst retaining the distinctive character that makes Earl Sterndale CE Primary School such a special place to learn.

Parent and Staff Feedback

Governors recently carried out questionnaires for both parents and staff, and I would like to thank everyone who took the time to provide feedback.

The responses were overwhelmingly positive. Parents reported that the children feel safe, enjoy coming to school and believe they are receiving a good education. One area identified for improvement was that some parents were unfamiliar with the Governing Body. As a result, Governors will be making themselves more visible around school to help strengthen relationships with families.

If any parent or carer would like to speak confidentially with a Governor, please do not hesitate to get in touch. We are always happy to listen and help wherever possible.

School Finances

The school's financial position has stabilised over recent months. Despite continued reductions in government funding and increasing financial pressures facing small rural schools, Governors continue to plan carefully to ensure the school's long-term sustainability.

We have invested in new resources where necessary to support school improvement and provide valuable assessment information for both Staff and Governors. This data enables us to monitor individual pupil progress more effectively and ensure children receive the support they need.

We are also continuing to develop a more targeted approach to deploying Teaching Assistants and, where appropriate, Teachers, so that we can meet the increasingly diverse needs of our pupils while maintaining our inclusive ethos and achieving the best possible outcomes for every child.

Where budgets allow, we remain committed to providing exciting and enriching learning experiences.

Like many small rural schools, we continue to face financial challenges. Government funding arrangements continue to change, making long-term planning increasingly difficult. Governors therefore monitor the budget carefully to

ensure resources are directed where they have the greatest impact on pupil outcomes while maintaining the school's long-term sustainability.

The Governing Body has continued to focus on its core responsibilities: providing strategic leadership, holding school leaders to account for educational performance and ensuring effective financial oversight. Through regular visits, monitoring activities and ongoing training, Governors continue to support and challenge school leaders in equal measure.

Increasing pupil numbers remains one of our priorities. From experience, the best form of marketing continues to be positive recommendations from our own parents and families. Please continue to share your experiences with friends and neighbours and encourage anyone considering Earl Sterndale CE Primary School to come and visit us. We are always delighted to welcome prospective families into school.

Governing Body

The Governing Body remains a committed and balanced team of volunteers, strengthened this year by the enthusiasm of our new Parent Governors.

Following a recent National Governance Association (NGA) external review, Governors received very positive feedback along with valuable recommendations that will help us continue to improve our effectiveness and strategic leadership.

This year we also say goodbye to several long-serving Governors: Fred, Angela, Susan and Jenny. Between them they have given more than 60 years of dedicated service to Earl Sterndale CE Primary School. On behalf of everyone associated with the school, I would like to thank them sincerely for their commitment, hard work and unwavering support over many years. They will always be welcome members of our school community, and we wish them all a long, happy and well-earned retirement.

Our Pupils

Our children remain our greatest asset.

Monitoring throughout the year shows that pupils continue to make very good progress and, most importantly, are happy, safe and thriving within our small rural school.

We wish our Year 6 pupils every success as they move on to secondary school. They leave us well prepared for the next stage of their education and will always remain an important part of the Earl Sterndale family. We also look forward to welcoming our new Reception children and their families in September. We know they will receive a warm welcome from everyone in our school community.

Christian Vision and Values

Earl Sterndale CE Primary School continues to place its Christian vision and values at the heart of everything we do. Pupils participate in daily Collective Worship and have enjoyed special celebrations throughout the year, including Harvest Festival, the Nativity, Easter Service and the forthcoming Flower Festival.

Fundraising

Our School Fundraising Committee continues to work wonders, organising a wide variety of events that not only bring our community together but also raise vital additional funds for the school.

Every pound raised goes directly back to benefiting our children through new resources, educational opportunities and memorable experiences. Thank you to everyone who continues to support these events throughout the year.

Thank You!!

My sincere thanks go to all of our invaluable existing and new Classroom Teachers (Mrs Clayton and Mrs Cross) and Teaching Assistants (Miss Cartwright, Mrs Critchlow, Mrs Stainer and Miss Burton) for their continued hard work, flexibility, willingness and dedication throughout the year.

Thank you to our School Cook (Janie) for tirelessly running our school kitchen and keeping everyone fed.

A very special thank you must also go to Mrs Hicks in the school office, whose continued hard work, organisation and unwavering support have helped keep everything running smoothly for us all, while providing invaluable assistance to Sarah throughout her first year as Headteacher.

I would also like to thank our new Clerk to Governors, Mary Griffiths, for her invaluable guidance in ensuring we meet all Local Authority and Governance requirements, while also acting as a trusted critical friend to the Governing Body.

Finally, my sincere thanks go to Sarah. Her dedication, leadership and commitment during her first year as Headteacher have been exceptional. The Governing Body is confident that, under her leadership, Earl Sterndale CE Primary School will continue to grow, improve and flourish for many years to come.

Looking Ahead

As we reach the end of another successful year, we have our whole-school production of **'Grimm'** to look forward to, followed by the **Year 6 Leavers' Church Service** celebration and the annual **Earl Sterndale CE Primary School Leavers' Party**. Everyone is warmly invited to attend.

I would like to thank all parents, carers and families for your continued support of Earl Sterndale CE Primary School. We couldn't do it without you, and wish you all a happy, safe and relaxing summer holiday!!

We look forward to welcoming everyone back in September for another exciting year at Earl Sterndale CE Primary School.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Swindell
Chair of Governors