



Reading School Academy Trust

Trustees' and Governors' Annual Report to Parents – 2014/5

October 2015

This is the third Annual Report to parents by the Governors since the School converted to academy status in 2011 (Governors’ reports have previously been included in the School’s financial statements). It is intended to continue with regular Annual Reports to parents.

The report includes some background information on the Academy Trust and the Governing Body, as well as reporting on achievements and events in the 2014/15 School year and the challenges the School faces in the years ahead.

1. HOW IS THE SCHOOL RUN?

Status of the School and the Governing Body

Reading School is an Academy Trust which operates as an exempt charity and a company limited by guarantee, not having share capital. It is currently a selective secondary day and boarding boys’ school. It was previously a Foundation School, and converted to Academy status on 1 February 2011.

The Governors have responsibility for setting and monitoring the overall strategic direction of the Academy Trust and the School, approving decisions reserved to Governors and appointing key members of staff.

How are Governors appointed?

The Academy Trust has agreed that the Governing Body will comprise 19 members:

- 4 elected parent governors
- 2 elected staff governors
- 2 governors appointed by the Reading Foundation
- 10 governors appointed by the Academy Trust
- The Headmaster as an *ex officio* member

All Governors are appointed for a period of four years. At the end of their initial term of service, all Governors are eligible for re-appointment for a further term (or to stand for re-election as staff governors or as parent governors if they still have a student at the School).

Staff vacancies on the Governing Body are filled by election, the electorate comprising all teaching and associate staff. The staff governors in 2014/15 were Andrea Materlik and Sophy Rogers. A new staff governor has been elected for the start of the 2015/16 school year, with Jasbir Chhokar taking the place of Andrea Materlik.

To ensure a proper representation of parents, four places on the Governing Body are reserved for parent governors. These places are filled by election, following notification of vacancies and invitation of nominations. All parents and carers of students at the School are eligible to stand and the electorate comprises all parents and carers. The next elections are due to be held in November 2016, unless any casual vacancies arise in the meantime.

The Reading Foundation (the landlord of the School's main site) appoints two governors from amongst its membership.

Appointments to other vacancies on the Governing Body are made by the Academy Trust. Most new Governors will be drawn from the local community and/or will have shown an interest in the well-being of the School and its students. In appointing Governors, there are also procedures for taking account of the mix of skills that should be available to the Governing Body. Vacancies are advertised on the school website, and by other means if appropriate. Potential new Governors are required to

submit a letter of interest and CV and are interviewed by the Chair of Governors, the Headmaster and at least one other Governor, before a recommendation for appointment is presented to a meeting of the Academy Trust. One new appointment was made in 2014/15 – Dr Beth Reynaert. In addition, Mr David Jubb, Dr Martin Parsons and Professor Stephen Nortcliff were re-appointed to serve for a further term. Miss Deirdre Smith will join the Governing Body at the start of the 21015/16 school year.

Dr P C H Mitchell and Mr I Martin

Dr Philip Mitchell retired from the Governing Body in February 2015, after nearly 40 years’ service, many of them as Chair of the Governing Body. The school and the Governing Body would like to record their thanks to Dr Mitchell for his loyal service and contribution to the school’s success over the years. Mr Martin will leave the Governing Body at the end of the 2014/15 school year, after 16 years’ service, latterly as Vice Chair, and the Governing Body would like to acknowledge and thank Ian for his contribution.

The current Governing Body

The School currently has a full complement of 19 governors. As from September 2015, they are:

J.Bannister *
S Bowen
J Chhokar +
R Childs *
M Faulkner
D R Fisher *
R P Huggins §
D A Jubb
A Kay (Vice Chair)
R J Kenwick (Chair)
R Manghnani
S Nortcliff
M L Parsons §
B Reynaert
A M Robson #
S Rogers+
D Smith
M. Stock *
C Toms

§ Governor appointed by the Reading Foundation; * Elected parent governor; + Elected staff governor; # Headmaster and *ex officio* governor.

The Chair of the Governing Body in 2014/15 was Mr Bob Kenwick, and the Vice-Chair Mrs Angie Kay. More details of each Governor’s background and areas of interest are available on the school’s website.

The Clerk to the Governors is Mr Steve Vale.

How do the Governors operate?

The Governing Body meets six times each year, including an Annual General meeting. All decisions reserved to the Governors are taken by the Governing Body as a whole.

Governor committees also meet five times each year to consider detailed matters and recommend decisions to the full Governing Body. There were four main committees in 2014/15:

- Curriculum
- External Relations and Pastoral Care
- Finance
- Property

Additionally, a committee, designated the Chairs Group, comprising the Chair of Governors, the Vice Chair, the Chairs of the above four committees and the Headmaster, met on occasions in 2014/15 to organise business, make recommendations to the Governing Body and to consider personnel matters.

Governors' committees are also appointed (and meet when required) to hear and adjudicate complaints from parents (and others) and appeals against disciplinary decisions (relating to staff and students).

An Admissions Committee is responsible for agreeing the Admissions Policies and non-routine admissions arrangements.

A committee of Governors, with the participation of an external advisor, undertakes the annual performance review of the Headmaster and monitors his performance and achievements against targets.

Also, *ad hoc* groups of Governors are established as and when required to consider specific issues and make recommendations to the Governing Body. These currently include the Development Board, which is responsible for raising funds to provide benefits to Reading School for which there is no provision made through public funding, including the improvement of facilities, educational and enrichment opportunities, and other projects that will advance the work of the School.

Decisions are taken at meetings of the full Governing Body in consideration of reports and recommendations from Governors' committees, the Headmaster, the Business Manager and other staff members. In addition to the Headmaster and Deputy Headteacher, members of staff attend committee meetings when required, to present reports in their areas of responsibility, for example curriculum development and special educational needs.

Periodically, development days are held with Governors, senior staff, Trustees of The Reading Foundation (the owners of the main School site) and other specialists. A record of each development day is kept and fed into the work of the committees and the Governing Body.

The Chair of Governors and the Headmaster meet regularly to monitor decision implementation and to review matters affecting staff and students and issues affecting the School.

A Working Party set up to review the operation of the Governing Body and its effectiveness began work in the autumn of 2013, and submitted its final report and recommendations in March 2015. These were accepted by the Governing Body, and, as a result, there will be changes to the Committee Structure in 2015/16, with revised terms of reference for the Committees, the abolition of the Chairs Group, and a new Staff Pay and Performance Committee.

Individual Governors (known as Link Governors) are allocated to academic subjects within the School, and visit departments, sit in on classes and report back to the relevant Committees on the outcomes. Other link governors assume responsibility for particular areas of School life, for example health and safety, special educational needs, information technology, the CCF, facilities management, sporting activities and boarding. The Link Governor system has continued to prove very effective in 2014/15, and has enhanced staff/governor relationships and enabled governors to be better informed of the teaching and learning and other activities in the School.

One governor, Mr David Fisher, acts as the School’s Responsible Officer and has an oversight role in relation to all the financial systems and processes of control and risk management that operate throughout Reading School.

The Headmaster is the Accounting Officer and works closely with both the other governors and the senior staff of Reading School.

The day-to-day management of Reading School rests with the Headmaster who has overall responsibility for the School. The Headmaster is responsible for establishing a leadership team, which currently comprises the Business Manager, the Deputy Headteacher and the two Assistant Headteachers.

All aspects of the management of the School and the conduct of the Governing Body focus on openness, accessibility and accountability. Governors are encouraged to participate fully in the work of committees and the Governing Body, and are encouraged to bring matters of concern before Governors and to raise any queries with the Headmaster. Annually, after the publication of examination results, Governors undertake a thorough review of the outcomes, and consider implications for the curriculum and pastoral activities within the School.

The detailed administrative work of the Governors is undertaken by the Clerk to Governors, reporting to the Chair.

Risk management

The Governors have a robust attitude to risk management. The risk register defines and considers risk under the headings of Strategic and Reputational Risks and Operational Risks. All Governors have received training in Safeguarding, and the Chair is the designated link Governor with responsibility for child protection. Governors undertake site visits and receive regular reports from staff and the Governors' Health and Safety representative.

A number of policies have been adopted by the Governing Body covering risk and health and safety matters. These are reviewed regularly, including annual reviews of the following policies:

- Health and Safety Statement and Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Register of Risks

The Governors are also responsible for ensuring that proper accounting records are kept and that these disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Academy Trust and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with Companies Acts 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Trust and for taking steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Governor attendance at meetings in 2014/15

The record of attendance by governors at Governing Body and main committee meetings in 2014/15 is set out in the table below:

Governor	Possible attendance	Actual attendance
J. Bannister	16	10
S Bowen	16	15
R Childs	16	15
M Faulkner	16	16
D Fisher	16	9
R Huggins	11	9
D Jubb	16	14
A Kay	26	25
B Kenwick	24	22
R Manghnani	16	7
I Martin	11	8
A Materlik	16	9
P Mitchell	10	9
S Nortcliff	16	16
M Parsons	16	9
B Reynaert	6	5
A Robson	26	24
S Rogers	16	13
M Stock	16	14
C Toms	11	8

Performance measures

The primary measures used by the Governors to assess the success of the activities of the School are a 5-year strategic plan, covering 2013 to 2018, which was approved by the Governing Body on 1st July 2013, together with a series of annual Operational Plans (the Operational Plan for 2014/15 was approved by the Governing Body in July 2014).

These plans were viewed and discussed by all committees in advance of adoption. The Operational Plan is monitored as a standing agenda item at each committee meeting. The plans continue to place student and staff wellbeing and development at the heart of the School’s vision, supported by a robust programme of Continuous Professional Development, as well as a system of peer reviews of the various departments.

The Headmaster is required to report to the Governors regularly at committee and Governing Body meetings on progress in meeting the targets set out in the Operational Plan, on any corrective actions required in pursuit of the Plan, as well as on Academy performance, personnel matters, university entrance and staff training.

In addition:

- Regular budget monitoring reports are submitted to each meeting of the Finance and Property Committees;
- The Curriculum Committee receives a detailed report on performance in external examinations each year, and commissions appropriate actions as a result, including looking at comparative data for other Schools and undertaking self-assessment of School performance;

- All school policies are reviewed at appropriate intervals, in accordance with a schedule agreed by Governing Body, including consideration of their value and effectiveness in delivering the aims of the Academy.

Relationships with other bodies

Reading School has a close working relationship with The Reading Foundation (Registered Charity number 294640) which is landlord of the School's main site and has as its own charitable purpose “to advance the education of the public, and in particular, to endow Reading School”. The Headmaster is a trustee of The Reading Foundation.

It also cooperates on a regular basis with the Old Redingensians Association, which comprises alumni of the school, and seeks to support the school in appropriate ways.

The Governing Body is affiliated to the National Governors’ Association, and has a contract with Reading Borough Council for governor services, which covers training, procedural and legal advice, and good practice matters.

2. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

2014 examination results

In reviewing the outcomes for 2014 at its September 2014 meeting, the School’s Curriculum Committee noted that Reading School continues to excel in terms of the academic results achieved by its students. GCSE results were again the best ever for the school, with a 2% increase in the percentage of students achieving A or A* grades over the 2013 level. At A-level the proportion of students achieving A* grades increased.

In more detail:

- At A-level in 2014, 95.7 % of students were awarded grades A* to C across all examinations taken, and 88.1% of A-level examinations undertaken by Year 13 students were awarded A*-B grades. 30.1% of students were awarded A* grades. Performance was particularly strong in Economics, Geography, History, and Mathematics.
- At AS level in 2014, 85.1% of students achieved A or B grades, with 67.5% of entries achieving A grades. This was a considerable improvement on 2013.
- At GCSE in 2014, students were awarded grades A- C in 100% of all examinations undertaken, and 97.6% of pupils achieved 5 or more GCSEs (including English and Maths) at grade A or A*. There were particularly strong performances in Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Geography, Latin, Physics, and Mathematics.

2015 examination results

Initial results for 2015 indicate that:

- at A-Level, 98.4 % of entries achieved grade A* to C, with 93.8% gaining A* to B grades – a marked improvement on 2014
- at AS level, 81.1% achieved A or B grades.
- At GCSE, just over 50% of all entries scored A*, 86.1% of all entries were graded A*-A, and 96% of boys each achieved at least 5 A* to A grades. 99.6% of all grades in all subjects were A* to C grades. 50.8% of students gained eleven A* to A GCSEs.

According to *The Daily Telegraph* analysis, the school was the 8th best state school in terms of GCSE performance. Analyses by both *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* ranked the school as the 4th best performing state school at A-level.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2014/15

The Governors have reviewed the performance of the Academy Trust and the school in 2014/15, and have highlighted significant progress and achievement during the year.

Curriculum

Work undertaken in the year included:

- Continuing to monitor the successful Link Governors Scheme where each Governor is linked to a curriculum or other area of the School. The links to curriculum areas have proved exceptionally useful, both in establishing closer ties between Governors and Staff, but also enabling the committee to be more knowledgeable about changes and challenges across the whole curriculum.
- Preparing for changes to the curriculum at both GCSE and A-level, which has led to a review of whole of curriculum at Reading School in the light of the changes to GCSEs (with the focus on the English Baccalaureate), to the relationship between AS and A-levels, and to the OFSTED framework, with its new emphasis on careers options and career path development.
- In conjunction with the Admissions Committee, drawing up plans to increase the entry to the school in Year 7 to 5 forms (150 pupils in total) from September 2016, which will both improve the school’s financial position and assist in its plans to support social mobility by increasing scope to admit more pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Reviewing key documents and policies produced by the School under the broad headings of Achievement, Quality of Teaching, Behaviour and Safety and Leadership and Management. These provide a challenging framework for the School and a key task is monitoring their implementation and success.

Admissions

The Governing Body’s Admissions Committee has carefully reviewed the school’s admissions policies the course of 2014/15. Given that the school is a selective school, and given its record of outstanding academic success, the school does not wish to change either the criteria for entry (based on performance in the admissions tests) or its current catchment area. However, the governors wish to support social mobility, and to encourage more applications from and admissions of students from vulnerable and deprived backgrounds. To this end, the Committee has:

- Endorsed arrangements to increase admissions in Year 7 to 5 forms of 30 students each from September 2016;
- Made plans to abolish Year 9 admission to the school with effect from 2017/18, subject to public consultation;
- Changed the way the admissions tests are set and administered, in order to make them a more fairer and accurate measure of the abilities and potential of those seeking admission;
- Supported the Future Stories Community Project, working with primary schools (particularly within Reading Borough) who are in need of support to raise awareness of, and aspiration towards, the opportunities offered through application to the school.
- Continued to look for other opportunities to encourage pupils from all backgrounds to apply to the school, and to maximise on the opportunities it offers, once admitted. The school supports a Saturday morning school known as the Community Education Trust and a Gifted and Talented Academy for Year 5 and 6 pupils in local primary schools.

External Relations and Pastoral Care

Work undertaken in the year included:

- A review of the school’s Careers Guidance arrangements, leading to significant improvements, through the appointment of a new careers consultant (Fiona Corby), and new partnerships with Reading University and Capita;
- Ensuring that measures and policies are in place for the promotion of British Values, and the prevention of extremism and radicalisation;
- A review of all medical polices coinciding with the opening of a new medical centre in the school, to serve both boarding and day students
- The completion of a comprehensive behaviour review, resulting in measures to improve rewards, sanctions and the general standard of behaviour throughout the school
- Review of safeguarding policies and a comprehensive safeguarding audit, undertaken in July 2015, the results of which will be reported in October 2015.
- Commissioning a review of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision, with a report to be produced early in the 2015/16 school year.
- Taking a more organised and rigorous approach to governor training, and meeting the training and development needs of governors in the future, so as to ensure a good balance of skills and expertise within the Governing Body.
- Beginning work on Self Evaluation of the Governing Body, aiming to improve the effectiveness of governors’ meetings and governors themselves
- Successfully implementing new arrangements whereby student representatives (the School Captain and Vice-Captains) regularly attend meetings of the Committee and have input to its work.

Finance

Work undertaken in the year included:

- Successful completion of the 2013/2014 audited accounts, with an unqualified auditors’ assessment.
- Careful monitoring of 2014/2015 income and expenditure, in a tight financial environment, and ensuring that targets were hit.
- Monitoring the School’s financial control environment successfully, through Responsible Officer reports and a swift response to audit recommendations for minor improvement.
- Setting a balanced budget for 2015/2016, in an extremely challenging financial climate in which the funding provided to the school is not keeping pace with rising costs.
- Contributing to major capital projects from a finance perspective (Computer Science, Science Development etc.)
- Renewal of the school’s cleaning and grounds maintenance contracts in line with value-for-money principles.

Property

Achievements in 2014/15 included

- Completion of the Computer Science Development Projects on time and on budget, with a major improvement in class rooms and the refurbishment of the lecture theatre.
- Initial work on the major Science Development Project, with work commencing in April 2015, and on target for completion by March 2016.
- Work on plans for a new Sports Hall to the point of submitting a planning application to the local authority (although this project is subject to funds becoming available, following an unsuccessful bid for grant funding – see Future Challenges below).
- Resurfacing of the paths and roadways around South House, with work on the school terrace and other areas scheduled, once the major works on the Science Project are complete.

- Replacement of guttering and downpipes and repairs to chimney stacks in the East Wing during the summer of 2015.
- Improvements to boarding facilities.
- Improved arrangements for reporting to governors on fire drills, accidents, and security incidents
- Continued work on a premises development plan, and cooperation with the Reading Foundation (the school’s landlord) on progressing and funding the priority works in the plan.

Boarding

Boarding at the school has gone from strength to strength, and there are now 80 boarders. New facilities (such as the medical centre), better maintenance and security, and improved staffing arrangements have contributed to the success of Boarding.

Development Fundraising

The School’s fundraising campaign, led by the Development Director and supported by the Development Board, continues, and has met with considerable success in the academic year 2014/15. Following the success in securing funding for the Computer Science Development Project from the ACMF and from a major donor (the Thomason fund), the emphasis has moved on to raising funds for the Science Project. Whilst this project has secured ACMF funding, this does not cover its full costs, and the school is mounting a major fundraising campaign to secure the funding for the parts of the project not covered by the ACMF grant.

The school was disappointed that the application for CIF grant funding, (which replaced ACMF grant funding in January 2015), for new Sports facilities, did not succeed, and is very conscious of the urgent need to raise funds for the improvement of existing facilities and the development of new ones. Fundraising will have to take place alongside and in addition to that for the Science Project, which will be challenging. There is likely to be a further opportunity to bid for CIF funding in 2015/16.

Donations and bequests have also continued to fund a rich programme of extra-curricular activities for students, as well as the Inspire Awards, which are designed to encourage staff to take on additional responsibilities to enrich the school’s offering in specific areas of activity.

Partnerships

The Governors approved a new International Partnership Strategy in May 2014, and this has guided activities in 2014/15. Key international partnerships include:

- The European Union Comenius project, with students and teachers benefitting from the opportunity to learn from different practices in assessment in European schools.
- The link with Kenyan schools, via Touraid and Sure24.
- The partnership with Welham Boys School in India, including proposed staff visits.
- The International Boys School Coalition

At UK and local level, key partnerships include:

- the informal partnership with the John Madejski Academy, focussing on staff development and middle leadership in the two schools;
- The Future Stories project involving local primary schools;
- The State Boarding Schools Association and links with other state boarding schools for self-evaluation purposes.
- The SSAT (Schools, Students and Teachers Network) Leading Edge Partnership Programme, which the school has joined for the year 2015/16

In addition, the Headmaster is involved in Reading Borough Council’s project to improve standards in local primary schools.

Sporting, musical, cultural and other achievements

As well as its academic excellence, the school is proud of its record in encouraging its students to achieve their potential in sport, music, cultural and other enrichment activities. Some of the highlights in 2014/15 were:

- Pupils at Reading School achieved 54 gold, 56 silver and 52 bronze certificates in this year’s UKMT Senior Maths Challenge, which was held in November 2014
- The biggest ever House Music Competition held at Reading Town Hall in November 2014
- The school team’s victory in the Geographical Association WorldWide Quiz in December 2014
- The School Book Festival held in December 2014
- The school Big Band Ball in February 2015
- The school’s success in the Public Speaking World Championships in Hong Kong in April 2015
- The Mind for Maths competition held at RGS, High Wycombe and won by one of the Year 9 teams from Reading School.
- Reaching the Final of the National Chess competition for the second year running
- The KS3 Badminton Team achieved 4th place in the National Finals, out of 1500 entries.
- A team from the signals section of Reading School CCF claimed victory at “Exercise Rolling Thunder”, the national cadet signals competition held at Blandford Camp in April.
- 6 students achieving Gold standard in the Biology Challenge, an online competition, run by the Society of Biology, to encourage an interest in Biology beyond the school curriculum
- The Japan Day in July organised by a member of staff, with support from boys, parents and staff along with our partner Kyocera

Conclusions

The academic and other successes in 2014/15 show that Reading School continues to be one of the highest performing state schools in the country. We are pursuing our aim to develop it into a ‘World Class School’, which nurtures integrity and academic excellence through the development of leadership potential, and which measures up to international benchmarks.

We pride ourselves as an Academy on our commitment to sustain a high academic tradition and a willingness to embrace change in the interests of our students. We regularly attract over 700 applications for day places at the School at Year 7 and a further 30-40 for boarding places, also at Year 7. For 2016 entry, we received a total of 739 direct applications for day and boarding, with a further 790 sitting at other centres who wish their results to be shared with Reading School. The range of our feeder schools is diverse geographically. Our student population is ethnically and socially diverse with 41% of students coming from ethnic minorities. Most Year 13 leavers gain admission to leading Universities.

But, in our Strategic and Operational Plans, and in identifying the other challenges we face, we recognise that sustained success depends on continuous improvement, effective leadership, strong partnerships and effective learning environments. Excellence in the classroom and development of the whole person in students is crucial.

We are committed to serving our local community and to playing a role in increasing social mobility, as demonstrated by our support for a Saturday morning school known as the

Community Education Trust, the Gifted and Talented Academy for Year 5 and 6 pupils in local primary schools, and the Future Stories Project.

Key Performance indicators

Academic performance and other achievements are covered in the Review of Achievement 2014/15 above.

Other performance data for 2014/15:

- Number of permanent exclusions: 0
- Number of fixed-term exclusions: 4
- Number of racist incident: 2
- Number of incidents of bullying: 8
- Overall school attendance: 97.5%
- Pupil Lateness: 0.89%

Overall, these figures are very positive and trends from previous years are good, but a number of learning points have emerged from the extensive behaviour review undertaken this year, resulting in recommendations and action points, which the senior leadership team, working in partnership with staff, pupils, parents and governors, will implement.

4. FUTURE CHALLENGES

The school’s long-term strategy is currently set out in the Strategic Plan 2013-2018 which is available on the school’s website. There is also a detailed Operational Plan for 2015/16, which was approved by the Governing Body on 7th July 2015, and is too detailed to set out in full here. The following summarises key elements of the latter:

Academic Aims

Reading School is outstandingly successful when measured by examination results and the successful placement of leaving students in their chosen universities and occupations. The Governing Body aims to maintain this success. Additionally the Governing Body aims to:

- Continue to drive up further student attainment, particularly at A-level. We aim for:
 - 90% of A-levels at grade A* to B
 - More than 85% of GCSEs at grade A* to A
 - Academic Departments to be ranked in the top 10 of Boys Academic Selective Schools in England at GCSE
- Continue to develop a World Class Curriculum, and to ensure that, notwithstanding the challenges of funding and government-driven curriculum change, the school’s curriculum exhibits breadth, depth and quality, focusing on consistency, flexibility, quality and appropriateness, and on preparing students for life after school.
- Strengthen the local, national and international standing of Reading School by developing strategic partnerships which benefit learning, the development of staff expertise and the operations of the School.
- Implement a consistent educational ethos, philosophy and culture encompassing the academic, pastoral, spiritual and physical dimensions of our school, and review the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision so that it maximises the potential of every Reading School student.

- Develop our capacity as a leading academic school to promote excellent approaches to teaching and learning, and develop strategies for ensuring excellence in the quality of teaching across all subject areas, with the target of Excellent status in all areas.
- Continue to seek imaginative approaches to recruiting teachers of high calibre, especially in relation to subjects where there are acknowledged nationwide recruitment problems, e.g. Physics.

The breadth of the curriculum

The breadth of the school curriculum is more dependent than ever on the on the subject choices of students, especially at A-level. The school will therefore take all opportunities to promote those subjects needed to sustain curriculum breadth and promote and encourage take-up of them. It will also seek better engagement with parents on the issues of option choices.

The Science Project

Following the grant funding from the ACMF, the School is doing well in meeting the challenge of building new science facilities between now and the funding deadline of March 2016. The school has also to ensure that it raises the additional £300,000 funds required to complete the project. The success of the project will have a major impact throughout the school, impacting strongly on its world class ambitions.

Sports facilities

The Governing Body has agreed that alongside the Science Project, major improvements to the school’s sports facilities are a high priority. Developing proposals and obtaining funding for these will demand the highest levels of effort and creativity. Plans for a new Sports Hall have been drawn up, and planning permission is being sought, and the school will again seek to bid for government funds for the new Hall at the first realistic opportunity. However, whether or not government funding is available, there is an urgent need to upgrade many of the existing facilities, and governors and staff will be working together, with support from parents, to identify affordable improvements.

The effectiveness of the Governing Body

Following the review begun in 2013/14, the Governing Body will implement a new Committee structure with effect from September 2015, with some changes to the responsibilities of committees and more delegation of decision-making to them. The new structure will need to be monitored carefully to ensure that it delivers the anticipated improvement in the effectiveness of the Governing Body. In addition, governor training and the effectiveness of link governors will be improved.

Admissions and social mobility

There is a need to prepare for the increase in the number of Year 7 admissions in September 2016, in terms of both logistics and of ensuring that opportunities are taken to support social mobility by admitting more students from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Fundraising

The funding requirements for Science and Sport, alongside other demands such as the Inspire awards and the extra-curricular programme, will mean that fundraising will be more important than ever. Effort will need to be made to ensure that the energies of staff, governors and other stakeholders are channeled in the most productive manner.

Financial Risk and Uncertainty

Principal risks and uncertainties are:

- Major efforts have been made to bridge the funding gap caused by reductions to revenue funding. Revenue expenditure has been progressively reduced to the minimum level compatible with sustaining academic standards and meeting all the ambitions set out in the Strategic and Annual plans.
- Given this position, and fact that there are elements of costs which the school cannot control (e.g. pension contributions), it is vital that the school increases its level of income in future years. The main means of doing so is through increased pupil numbers, and the school has already increased student numbers in the 6th Form, and plans to increase admissions in Year 7. The latter plans are challenging in terms of the logistics of accommodating the additional pupil numbers, but the school is confident at this stage that, with new science facilities coming on stream in 2016, the higher numbers are a workable option.
- A related issue is that the school’s funding position is such that subjects which few students opt for, particularly at A-levels, cannot be offered economically. Given the current pattern of student choices, there is a potential threat to the breadth of the curriculum.
- The need to manage and control the financial risks associated with the Science Project, given the scale of the project, the need to meet the deadline to secure the ACMF funding, and the need to raise additional funds of £300,000 at local level.
- There is a pressing need to obtain other development funding for sports facilities, co-curricular activities etc, with a need to ensure that the school’s Development Office is firmly focussed on new and existing fundraising options.
- Given the nature of the school site and buildings, the risk of unforeseen and expensive repair work is substantial and can lead to urgent funding needs, as recent experience shows – in this context, Governors acknowledge the contributions made by the Reading Foundation.

Other challenges:

- Improving careers education
- Sustaining the current successes in boarding, with a minimum 75 boarders on roll in September 2016
- Ensuring the sustainability of the school’s popular Combined Cadet Force (CCF)
- Implementation of the outcomes of the review of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision
- Sustaining and enhancing the beneficial partnerships with the Reading Foundation and the Old Redingensians Association (ORs)
- Completing the continuing programme of high priority repair and refurbishment projects, including efforts to ensure that the school swimming pool remains operational.

5. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Financial performance in 2014/15

Most of the Academy’s income comes from the Education Funding Agency (EFA), in the form of recurrent grants for particular purposes. These grants and the associated expenditure are shown as restricted funds in the Statement of Financial Activities. In 2014/15 Reading School received the following grants:

General Annual Grant:	£4,494,724
Devolved Formula Capital Grant:	£ 22,219
Academies Annual Maintenance Fund Grant:	£1,646,108
Pupil Premium Funding:	£ 9,416

For accounting purposes the Boarding department is fully integrated within the Academy Financial Statements whereas at operational level Boarding is run entirely separately from the School.

As at 31 August 2014 the net book value of fixed assets was £ 11,423,561. The School’s operating surplus for 2013/14 was £225,641. (The equivalent figures for 2014/15 will be published in the Annual Report and Financial Statement for 2014/15)

Reserves Policy

The Governors’ policy is to generate reserves to provide funds to continue to enhance the educational and boarding facilities and to fund future development projects. The Governors review the reserves policy annually to ensure this aim can be achieved.

At the end of 2013/14 the balance sheet showed that the Academy Trust had free reserves of £326,148. (The equivalent figures for 2014/15 will be published in the Annual Report and Financial Statement for 2013/14)

Investments Policy

The Academy Trust’s current policy is to invest surplus funds in short term cash deposits. At present available deposit rates are minimal so the Trust’s cash balances generated interest of £ 2,730 during 2014/15.

Funds held as custodian

Reading School holds funds as agent on behalf of parents in relation to the running of educational visits and on behalf of staff as custodian of the Common Room Fund. Educational visits are run on a non-profit basis with material surpluses being refunded to parents on completion of the visit.

This report was prepared on behalf of the Governing Body of Reading School by the Clerk to Governors, Mr Steve Vale.