

St Nicholas' Church Blundellsands  
St Nicholas' School Blundellsands

Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council  
and of the Governors  
for the year ended  
31<sup>st</sup> December 2021

## Reference and Administrative Information:

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Nicholas Blundellsands is a registered charity, Registration Number 1158819.

St Nicholas' Church is situated in Bridge Road, Blundellsands, Liverpool and is part of the Diocese of Liverpool within the Church of England. The official correspondence address is:

St Nicholas' Vicarage,  
Nicholas Road,  
Liverpool,  
L23 6TS.

### **PCC Membership:**

For the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 until the date of the approval of this report, the following people served as members of the Parochial Church Council:

Ex-officio members:

Chair	Revd E Anderson
Lay Chair (from May 2021)	Prof P Batey
Assistant Priest	Revd K Thornborough
Churchwarden	Mr D Parkinson (until May 2021)
Churchwarden	Mrs L Utley
Deanery Synod Representative	Prof P Batey
Deanery Synod Representative	Mr S Green

Co-opted members:

Hon Treasurer	Mrs E Sinker
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Elected Members:

PCC Secretary	Mrs G Enstone
Mr S Bailey (until May 2021)	Mrs R Doyle
Miss A Dobie	Mr N Scarborough (until May 2021)
Mr MJ Kilpatrick	Mr R Kenny
Mrs G Cain	Mrs M Bird (from May 2021)

The Revd E Anderson was appointed Incumbent by the Bishop of Liverpool (Patron of St Nicholas' and Diocesan Bishop) and is an ex-officio member of the PCC.

The Liverpool Diocesan Board of Finance acted as Custodian Trustee for the inalienable property of the church.

Bankers - Church:  
Santander UK plc  
Bootle  
Merseyside  
GIR OAA

Bankers - Governors:  
Barclays Bank plc  
337-339 Stanley Road  
New Strand  
Bootle  
Merseyside  
L20 3EB

**Independent Examiner:**

Mr David Roughley  
2 Crondall Grove  
Liverpool  
L15 6XD

**Structure, Management and Governance:**

St Nicholas' Blundellsands PCC is a body corporate and operates under the Parochial Church Powers 1956 and the Church Representation Rules.

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All church members are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

**Related Trusts:**

St Nicholas' CE Primary School Blundellsands: Foundation Governors are Mr J Howell (Chair), Mrs G Cain (Vice chair), Revd E Anderson, Mr E Paling, Mrs G Enstone, Mrs N Wilson, Mr P Bonnett.

**The PCC and its sub-committees:**

During 2021 the PCC met 8 times, with an average attendance of 12.

The PCC operates eight sub-committees, which meet regularly and report back to the PCC: Standing Committee, which acts for the PCC when urgent matters arise and need decision or action between PCC meetings, (subject to subsequent ratification by the PCC), and also prepares for PCC meetings; Worship and Mission; Finance; Under-18 Ministry with Safeguarding; Building and Plant with Health and Safety; Social; Heritage; Restoration. Membership comprises:

**Standing Committee:** Incumbent, PCC Lay Chair, Churchwarden, Treasurer and PCC Secretary.

**Worship and Mission:** Mrs G Cain, Mrs G Enstone, Mrs M Bird. Co-opted members: Mrs J Batey, Mrs J Parkinson Mr D Parkinson

**Finance:** Treasurer, Churchwarden, PCC Secretary, Revd K Thornborough, Prof P Batey, Mr M Kilpatrick. Co-opted members: Mr J Rankin, Mrs A Rankin, Mr N Scarborough.

**Under-18 Ministry:** Mrs L Utley, Mrs E Sinker (Safeguarding Officer), Mr R Kenny. Co-opted members: Mrs L Martin, Miss J Dray, Mrs J Honess, Mr P Warren (DBS Verifier), Mrs H Pennington.

**Building and Plant with Health and Safety:** Mr S Green, Miss A Dobie, Mrs R Doyle. Co-opted members: Mr P Levick, Mr A Sinker, Mr C Rooney.

**Social:** Membership paused from March 2020.

**Heritage:** Prof P Batey, Mrs G Cain, Mr S Green, Mrs L Utley, Mrs G Enstone Co-opted members: Mrs J Batey.

**Restoration:** Mr S Green, Prof P Batey, Mrs G Enstone, Mr M Kilpatrick. Co-opted members: Mr T Johnston, Mr D Parkinson

PCC members, both individually and collectively, receive training as and when deemed appropriate by the PCC. In recent years this has included Churchwarden and Treasurer training, trustee responsibility, safeguarding, child-friendly church, health and safety, Parish Giving, Shared Ministry, sidespersons training and pastoral care. Members who are also Foundation Governors of St Nicholas' School regularly complete local authority governor training courses.

### **Risk Assessments:**

The PCC has undertaken a programme of risk assessments to identify major risks.

Procedures have been put in place to manage those risks and minimise their impact on the life of the church. Areas of risk covered have included: finance, first aid provision, PAT testing, food hygiene, with the kitchen currently rated 5, safeguarding and disclosure and barring. The Church's Health and Safety Policy is reviewed and updated by PCC annually, with Health and Safety checks carried out monthly. PCC also reviews the Safeguarding and Volunteer Policies yearly.

### **Electoral Roll:**

#### **ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT – APRIL 2022**

Number on roll 2021/22 – 178

Number on roll at start of 2022 recruitment – 173

New to ER April 2022 – 12

Current ER - 185

## **Objectives and Activities 2021:**

The general functions of the PCC are stated within Section 2 of the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956. St Nicholas' PCC has the responsibility of jointly operating with the Incumbent in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has maintenance responsibilities for the Church, a Grade 2 listed building, and for St Nicholas' School.

When planning our activities for the year, the PCC gave consideration to the **Charity Commission's guidance** on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance to charities concerned with the advancement of religion.

**Note on Covid 19:** From March 23rd 2020, provision of activities was modified in accordance with current government Covid security regulations and subject to stringent risk assessment. This situation continued throughout 2021.

- **Regular public worship, open to all:** During periods of lockdown, services have been held remotely, either pre-recorded or live streamed, and accessed via the church's website or through Facebook. When infection levels have permitted, regular in person Communion services have been held. Monthly Toddler Church has been live-streamed regularly since the start of the pandemic. A full programme of traditional Christmas services took place throughout December, many attended by those who are not regular members of the congregation.
- **The provision of sacred space for personal prayer and contemplation:** Opening the church for private prayer has continued to be a priority when permitted by Covid regulations.
- **Pastoral work, including visiting the sick, the elderly and the bereaved:** Although the ability to do this has been severely restricted by the pandemic, it remains a priority as life returns to normal.
- **Teaching of Christianity through sermons, courses and small groups:** While regular children's Sunday School classes remain suspended, small group courses for adults, either in person or online, have taken place.
- **Taking of religious assemblies in local schools:** Throughout 2021, it has been important to maintain regular worship contact with the staff and children of St Nicholas' School. Once Covid regulations permitted, clergy took weekly assemblies in school. During lockdown, a regular series of worship films were provided.
- **Provision of a youth club with a Christian ethos:** The recent appointment of a youth worker across churches of the L23 Partnership is expected to be able to support our continuing efforts to resume a regular Sunday evening youth club, which remains a priority.

- **Promoting the whole mission of the church through provision of activities for senior citizens, parents, carers and toddlers and other special need groups:** Monthly live-streamed Toddler Church for parents, carers and young children has been maintained throughout the pandemic and plans are currently underway for JaM (Jesus and Me), a weekly afternoon activity for the same group. The St Nicholas' Singers, a community choir open to all, have now begun to meet again and a drop-in coffee morning providing conversation and companionship will begin in the New Year.
- **Supporting other charities, at home and overseas:** This is often through joint projects with our church school, with whom we support the work of the Children's Society and the Crosby Foodbank. Through the Church Mission Society, St Nicholas' Church provides financial support for the work of our church mission partner, Stephen Hatch, in Tanzania and we also support Christian Aid and the Salvation Army Christmas appeal.
- **Promoting links with our ecumenical partners in Churches Together in Blundellsands:** This activity is currently suspended due to local church reorganisation.
- **Reaching out to our local community in ways which make a positive difference to the lives of our neighbours:** In addition to the above, St Nicholas' Church held a well attended Welcome Day in September for the whole community, offering opportunities for reflection and commemoration in the wake of the pandemic, in addition to a variety of family and children's activities. The church hall continues to be open for hire at subsidised rates to a range of community groups.

## **Achievements and Performance 2021:**

### **January-March 2021: Locking down, staying together**

There was a hopeful start to 2021 with the prospect of vaccination against Covid but, yet again, on 4th January, the country entered its third national lockdown in 10 months. Our preoccupation then, as it had been since March 2020, was to reconcile the need to keep each other as safe as possible with the determination to continue church life as fully and as richly as we could. We took the opportunity to do some behind-the-scenes work and revised our policies, reinvigorated our PCC sub-committees and promoted the Parish Giving Scheme once more. Thank you to all who worked on these and responded to them.

We went back online and made full use of our website, the expanded bulletin and, of course, Zoom. Although public worship was still permitted, the decision was taken to close the church until infection levels had decreased sufficiently to allow a relatively safe return. Schools were to reopen on 8th March and the subsequent progress of the infection would be monitored closely. Sunday services were recorded and broadcast on Facebook and the website with as much participation from members of the congregation as possible. These were followed by Zoom fellowship where people enjoyed the breakout rooms and the chance to chat. We had fortnightly Friday online

socials with quizzes and bingo, monthly live streamed Toddler Church and weekly evening and night prayer on Wednesdays and Sundays. We also completed The Prayer Course on Zoom over 8 weeks.

We followed a Sunday sermon series on our Diocesan Rule of Life which calls us to Read, Pray and Learn and sends us to Tell, Serve and Give. We also provided Lent in a Bag to over 200 families with readings, reflections, prayers and a gift for each week of Lent and the days of Holy Week. We re-opened the church to provide funerals and continued to enjoy the Bible together on Zoom practising the Lectio Divina method of reading God's word.

As March drew to a close and the anniversary of the first national lockdown approached, it seemed like a good time to take stock of what had happened to us over the last twelve months. In a broad consultation process, PCC and members of the congregation were asked to consider four questions:

- What have we gained and want to keep?
- What have we lost and want back?
- What have we lost and don't want back?
- What have we gained but would be happy to lose?

Everyone was also invited to make suggestions of how we can fulfil our Rule of Life together.

Most missed was the total experience of unrestricted worship in church, from Communion and the structure of the liturgy, music and singing to the simple opportunity to light a candle or put a prayer on the prayer tree and the opportunities to be together. This loss was closely followed by regret for our valued engagement with the wider community, through events such as concerts, fairs, quizzes and heritage activities, to interaction with the wide array of community groups who hired the halls.

Different ways of meeting and communicating were appreciated for the possibilities they offered and we were able to look forward with positive ideas for the future as the prospect of a slow opening up of church life began to approach, bringing what might have been a dispiriting few months to an unexpectedly positive conclusion.

### **April-September: Opening up, looking out**

In April, the process of evaluating and putting into practice the findings of our survey began. High quality live streaming of services was a priority, and some generous donations in the months that followed helped to provide a camera, an improved laptop and new microphones. A team was also put in place to facilitate live streaming of services on a regular basis.

As April moved into May and a gradual easing of lockdown regulations began to gather momentum nationally, a controlled reopening of church took place, beginning with private prayer before moving to socially distanced worship. It was such a joy to gather again in church for worship together on 2<sup>nd</sup> May and meant we could have our APCM in person as well as on Zoom the following week.

Our midweek communion service restarted on Wednesday mornings, school visits to church resumed – another joy as classes came to explore the church - and ministry team meetings were now in person.

By June the children's corner was reinstated, on the third Sunday of each month the 10.30am service became our all-age family service and the baby and toddler group (renamed JaM for Jesus and me) restarted. We followed a sermon series on The Kingdom of God, held an evening Healing service and revisited our commitment to inclusion and diversity, prompted by the Deanery initiative. We were also overjoyed to provide wedding services once more.

In July Archdeacon Pete came to preside at a service for Beth's installation and Keith's licensing as associate priest.

In August, church social life began again: two family picnics were held in the grounds, along with a lunch at the West Lancs Golf Club. It was also with real pleasure and a heightened sense of anticipation that plans were begun to welcome our wider community properly into the church for the first time since the start of the pandemic. A Welcome Day, for all our community to come together to commemorate their losses and celebrate being together was organised for September. This had been postponed a couple of times from early summer and was eventually a wonderful opportunity for people to reconnect, enjoy tea and cakes in the garden and take part in the games, crafts and reflections available. The Heritage team decided to participate in the national Heritage Open Days scheme for the first time since the start of the pandemic. We began monthly Sunday evening services which include choral evensong, and services of music and reflection and embarked on our first Living in Love and Faith course.

Regular prayer and Bible study courses became a weekly feature of church life and we launched our Knowing Jesus course for anyone wanting to explore and ask questions.

### **October-December: Living with Covid, preparing for Christmas...and beyond**

Throughout these months, St Nicholas' kept Covid precautions in church under regular review, retaining social distancing, hand sanitising, a one-way system and the wearing of masks. We celebrated Harvest and held a Service of Hope and Remembrance.

We continued taking advice towards being fully inclusive in our welcome and altered some of our signage around church to be more dementia friendly.

Throughout December Beth and Keith provided daily online Advent reflections. We supported and provided some refreshments for the In Another Place live action nativity play. We had our own all-age, all dressed-up action Nativity and our Carols by Candlelight service. Covid precautions meant that our two Christmas Eve Christingle services were moved outside into our church garden. The rain stayed off and it was rather wonderful.

There can be little doubt that the continued presence of Covid 19 in our midst gave 2021 more than its fair share of false starts, delays and disappointments. Nevertheless, the end of the year at St Nicholas' felt very different from its beginning. The resilience, determination and sheer hard work of both clergy and congregation produced not only a welcome return of many aspects of normal church life but also a host of new ideas and possibilities for the future, all of which will stand us in good stead as we face the serious challenges which await us in 2022 and beyond.

## **Reports from the committees and uniformed organisations:**

### **Worship and Mission 2021**

Due to the pandemic constraints of 2021, the Worship and Mission Committee held their meetings on zoom. However, the committee continued its commitment to our mission partners and hope to enhance links with our school and with our CMS Mission Partner, Stephen Hatch in Tanzania.

We have endeavoured to maintain church services and efforts have been made to provide as wide a variety of genuinely diverse opportunities for worship as possible.

In September a Welcome Day took place to show the community that the church's doors were open to everyone. New opportunities are constantly being sought to enable new and established members of the congregation to grow in their faith and to offer service to others.

### **Under 18 Ministry And Safeguarding by Lesley Utley**

In 2021/22 the position for the Under 18s Ministry with Safeguarding Committee has been fairly static. Groups for our children and young people remained suspended, although checks on leaders and volunteers through the Disclosure and Barring Service were updated as required by Pete Warren, our verifier. There are currently 45 church members with DBS clearance and thanks are due to Pete for his diligence.

No safeguarding incidents have been reported to Liz Sinker, our Parish Safeguarding Officer and we also thank her for carrying out this role on behalf of PCC.

With uncertainty and concern around the pandemic and the transmission of new variants, PCC erred on the side of caution and groups stayed on hold. By autumn a decision had been made to launch a new group in November 2021. Jesus and Me (JaM) Club is aimed at children under school age, alongside their parents and carers. With a team of newly recruited volunteers and new resources, the group was promoted in church and the community. To date uptake has been on the low side but it's hoped that new publicity will address this in coming months.

The Children's Corner reopened offering books, puzzles, crafts etc. Families have made use of it during services and it has been lovely to hear a little buzz of activity again.

Plans are now underway to revive Church@School, with the first service to be held in May.

Hopefully other groups will be introduced in the coming months to meet the needs of other age groups.

### **Building and Plant with Health and Safety and Restoration reports for 2022 APCM by Stephen Green**

Both the church and halls independent heating systems, the roof alarm and fire extinguishers have been serviced. The organ has been tuned twice.

There were two issues with the church boiler: The low pressure gas supply input was addressed by increasing the size of the supply pipework. Secondly, the boiler outlet readings indicated a blockage remained in the system either in the chimney or the outlet ducting. An access hatch was recommended in the ducting to both inspect and then clear any blockages. Subject to PCC approval, this has been carried out.

Men's Working Party operations were limited by the pandemic to a small group who carried out essential but important tasks until full group operations resumed in November 2021.

The damage created by Storm Ciara in 2020 was addressed via an insurance claim when repairs to the main roof were carried out and completed in May 2021

Storms Dudley and Eunice in February 2022 created extensive damage to our hall roofs, their skylights and the valley between the halls. An insurance claim resulted in eight ridge tiles, fifteen skylights and many slates being replaced to the cost of £5,340 including the costs of temporary repairs.

The Health and Safety policy has been updated, and approved by the PCC and duly signed by our vicar Beth.

The restoration application for the East end of the church and St. Barnabas' chapel is to be edited to reflect the impact of the pandemic now and in the future as required by the new NHLF guidelines.

A project enquiry form was submitted.

We are still on the Heritage at Risk register.

### **14th Crosby and District (St Nicholas) Scout Group by Andy Davidson**

Lockdown. Zooming. Face-to-face.

What a year, and yet we have continued to deliver scouting to our sections.

We have "**Been Prepared**" and "**Done our Best**" and are now slowly getting back to normal.

Sections have been doing badges and having fun in the process.

**Beavers** have done: Experiments, crafts, quizzes, scavenger hunt and challenge activities, Knot tying, First Aid. Had a visit from the Police and an art therapist. Gone to visit the coastguards and done a hike in Formby Pinewoods. They also had a mum's tea and cake night. Occasionally they have done outdoor activities.

**Cubs** had one cub achieve his Chief Scout Silver Award. (Highest award a cub scout can achieve) They made balancing parrots and robot hands. They've updated their Code of Conduct (Can be seen on the Cubs Board in the hall). Badges have included Book reader (on world book day), Money skills. They've done Chinese New Year and tangrams, done backwoods cooking in the Waterloo Forest Garden. Had some joint nights with the Scouts such as Laser Quest and an activity night at CHET.

**Scouts** have been working towards badges, practised putting up tents. Campfire and toasting marshmallows with the cubs. Built a raft at Southport Marine Lake and paddled it to the island in the middle. (Nobody fell in!). Made pancakes and put on a puppet show for Chinese New Year. Done Christmas crafts and bingo and worked towards their astronomy badge.

All the activities sections take part in go towards badges in some way.

We have planted trees in the church grounds for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Green Canopy, and members of all sections have taken trees home to plant in their own gardens.

Numbers in the three sections are steady, however, we are struggling with only 3 Leaders (One for each section) and I am having to go to each meeting to ensure there is enough cover. Cubs have a Young Leader (Henry) who is a great help. We have DBS'd all parents so we can ask for help in the sections if needed.

We probably won't start camping until next year when Richard has been able to gain his Camp Permit.

## **Objectives and Activities 2022:**

### **St Nicholas' Church**

While still finding ways to emerge safely from Covid restrictions, we seem to be entering a time of re-visioning and re-building. Some of this may be restoring what has been and some will need to be finding different ways of doing things for the new time or discovering different and new things to do.

People have suffered, times have changed and none of us are unscathed by these last two years. It seems right that our focus going forward is **building connections** – with our God and with each other, with those we know and have missed, with those we don't yet know.

The Liverpool Diocese Fit for Mission initiative has 4 basic mission priorities. Our deanery is not yet a part of this process but it seems right to be already looking towards the future and so our planning and development for the coming year will focus on these four areas.

1. Introducing people to Jesus

- Regular public worship that is open, welcoming and accessible to all (with on-going consideration of the depth and variety we can offer)
- Provision of accessible sacred space and occasions and resources for prayer and reflection
- A focus on children's provision

2. Deepening discipleship

- Reading, teaching and learning together – (exploring what faith in the God of love means in our context and place and finding ways to put it into practice)
- Growing connections with school families and staff – inside and outside the school day
- Developing prayer ministry

3. Developing Christian leaders

- Building up the pastoral visiting teams
- Resourcing people with training and provision
- Working together with ecumenical teams – L23, Sefton Faith Forum

4. Working for justice

- Supporting charities at home and abroad
- Finding ways to serve our whole community and
- Finding ways to advocate for people in need

These 4 areas of intent will guide our prayers, inform our planning and help us assess how we work out God's mission in our community in this next year.

**St Nicholas' CE Primary School:**

**January-May 2021:**

By the end of the Autumn Term 2020, staff at St Nicholas' School had begun to feel confident that almost all children had both recovered academically from the effects of the first Covid lockdown and had returned to feeling happy and settled in school. By January, however, the third national lockdown had closed schools yet again to all except vulnerable children and those of key workers. Once again, it became a priority to ensure the safety of those in school while at the same time managing as little damage to academic progress as possible for all pupils, whether their learning took place in school or at home. With the lessons of 2020 still fresh in the mind, mental health too was an overarching priority for every child.

Remote learning was now back for the majority and positive parental feedback confirmed that considerable progress had been made in improving and refining provision since the first lockdown. Two whole-class googleclassroom sessions were held with the class teacher each day, after which teaching assistants supervised the recorded lessons set for those in school and children at home followed the same recorded work according to their own schedule, which was often dictated by the fact that some were having to share devices with siblings. Class teachers, meanwhile, prepared and recorded the next tranche of lessons. This system by and large worked well, although it became more difficult as time went on and critical workers were called back in growing numbers, increasing the number of children requiring socially distanced supervision in school.

As the scheduled date for full reopening in May approached, careful planning was also put in place for the catch-up measures which would be needed to limit the inevitable damage to pupil progress resulting from such a protracted period of lockdown. The most significant decision, which seems to have been amply justified in the light of recent developments, was that any catch-up programme would be delivered by school staff themselves, on the grounds that it would be better for pupils to be tutored by qualified staff who know them, rather than by external agencies.

### **May-July 2021:**

The first consideration upon full reopening in May was, of course, Covid security and risk assessments were fully revised and updated beforehand. Equally important, however, was safeguarding in its widest sense. Special focus was placed on e-safety, sexual harassment and peer on peer abuse and the personal development, wellbeing and behaviour of all children were carefully monitored. During this time, it became apparent that, for some children, the second period of total lockdown had clearly been harder to cope with than the first.

Nevertheless, once again, the children were happy to be back in school and attendance rates were high, contributing to what staff termed an 'attainment bounce back'. Although statutory assessments were suspended for the second year running, St Nicholas' carried out its own internal assessments, to provide a good foundation for the next steps for each class. In all year groups, children exceeded national averages from 'normal' times and, yet again, staff were able to feel confident that school had managed at least to limit the academic damage to pupil progress.

From May onwards, staff were also pleased to be able to offer children opportunities for in person extracurricular activities. Some sports could resume and Years Five and Six were also able to participate in two very successful residential trips to Kingswood. It was clear to all concerned how much they had missed being able to take part in activities and spend time with friends, and staff were touched too by unprecedentedly high levels of parental appreciation for their hard work in enabling these experiences to take place. Year Six were also able to enjoy a fuller, although still modified, programme of leavers' events than had been possible in 2020: the Diocese created an online service from the Cathedral, to be watched simultaneously across all schools and the traditional Year Six play, in the absence of a live audience, was filmed.

Meanwhile, progress was also being made on other elements of school life: work was finally finished on the roofing project, plans were drawn up to update the Garden of Prayer and Reflection, to be carried out over the summer, and St Nicholas' also completed the Diocesan Decarbonisation Audit. Last, but by no means least, In

spite of the inauspicious timing of her arrival little over a month before the beginning of a prolonged lockdown, Revd Beth rapidly built a warm relationship with staff and pupils alike. Although unable to visit school in person, she produced a series of weekly worship films to replace normal assemblies, which were much enjoyed by the whole school, and every class was also able to visit church to explore the building and ask their own questions.

### **September-December 2021:**

The final term of 2021 presented a different and, in many ways, more acute range of challenges from those encountered during the previous two terms. On the one hand, a number of Covid precautions had by now been scrapped for schools, particularly mask wearing and social distancing. On the other, in the wake of the summer holiday and increasingly as winter drew on, rates of infection among both staff and pupils began to rise steadily, causing disruption to teaching and learning. The number of children who again needed access to remote learning grew and supply arrangements also had to be put in place to cover staff absence. Strenuous efforts were made to minimise transmission, including regular testing, additional ventilation, rigorous emphasis on hand sanitising and thorough cleaning. The wellbeing of pupils remained a priority, but that of staff was also a cause for concern as they battled the continued extra workload, disrupted classes and, in some cases, the debilitating after effects of infection for themselves and their families.

Teacher assessments, however, reassured staff that the school's recovery plans were working, although they also revealed that the age groups who had been most affected by lockdown were the very youngest, whose experience of both school and pre-school had been so limited during two of the most formative years of their lives. This made the generosity of a grandparent in donating £1,000 for the supply of new Phonics reading resources for Reception and Key Stage One classes all the more greatly valued.

One of the most welcome features of this term, was the renewed opportunity to provide curriculum enrichment in the form of in person museum visits, for example, in addition to continued use of Zoom to bring the outside world into school. Vital exploration of ways to combat gang culture was one particularly valuable initiative which was able to take place as a result. Extracurricular activities also flourished, with teams and individuals enjoying success in inter-school sports competitions and a number of new after school clubs beginning.

As the end of term approached, a return to qualified 'normality' was marked by the welcome number of Christmas activities which were now possible. Although the spread of the new, more transmissible Omicron variant made live audiences in school unwise, every child had the opportunity to take part in a Youtube Premier nativity performance and it again became possible to hold the school Christmas service in church. This brought to a conclusion a term in which the close relationship between school and church had been emphasised by Revd Beth's renewed ability to take weekly whole school assemblies in school, by joint activities such as the school / church harvest and toy appeals and by plans to restart Church@School as soon as practicable in the New Year.

In spite of the uncertainties introduced by Omicron's arrival, 2021 ended for St Nicholas' School on a positive note. A second year of Covid had passed with a sense that all concerned, staff, children, parents and governors, had risen to its many challenges by means of a superhuman joint effort and would face the

undoubted arrival of yet more Covid surprises in the same spirit of kindness and positivity which, in her review of the year, Mrs Woods identified as the special ingredient which had made it all possible and would continue to carry the school through in the year to come.

**From The Vicar:**

A huge well done!

And a heartfelt thank you!

Thinking back through this last year has highlighted just what a challenging time it has been for each of us and for our church family and community. So, well done – for your faithfulness, patience, resilience and care for each other.

And thank you for your welcome, friendship, persistence and openness to opportunities to serve, to grow and to learn together.

In the Bible we are referred to as the body of Christ – each with our abilities and our needs, each with our gifts and our part to play in order to help build God's kingdom here in Blundellsands.

This is a lifetime's journey as, in each season, we seek God and what he has for us and what that means for us. It is a joy to be here, for us to be in this together, as we continue to explore God's amazing love for us and grow in faith together.

Beth

**The Church of St Nicholas Blundellsands**

**St Nicholas' CE Primary School Blundellsands**

**Belonging Believing Becoming**