



Annual Governance Statement for Parents and Carers

St Stephens CofE Junior School - Governing Body - January 2016

Phil Webb
Chair



Matt Gait
Vice Chair



Nicola Read
Vice Chair



Abby Warren
Vice Chair



Louisa Wilson
Head Teacher



Carina Sime
Clerk to the GB



David Hanks



Alan Walters



Hannah Baker



Lynsey Lowrie



Kristina Parfrey



Sara Dyte



Lynsey Sheppard



Mandy Woolley



for

School Year

2015 - 2016

Introduction

This document has been produced as a result of guidelines issued by the Department for Education (DfE) which suggest that school governing bodies should make an annual statement to parents (or carers) to explain how it has fulfilled its responsibilities.

The DfE has defined a number of responsibilities which apply to all governing bodies. The three core ones are:

- Ensuring the school's clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

In addition, there are some duties defined in law which are the responsibility of the governing body including:

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
- Catering for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Catering for children with disability
- Promoting equality and removing prejudice or discrimination
- Content of the curriculum

In carrying out its duties the governing body operates at a strategic planning, monitoring and oversight level while being a "critical friend" to the headteacher and the school leadership team, who are responsible for the day to day operational running of the school.

This document includes:

- A message from the Chair of the governing body
- The governance arrangements that are in place, including the remit of committees and the attendance record of individual governors at board and committee meetings
- An overview of the school's aims
- An assessment of the effectiveness governing body and committees in meeting their responsibilities with information on the particular challenges that have arisen.

A Message from the Chair – Philip Webb

I am coming to the end of my first school year as Chair of the governing body and I look back at what has been an eventful period with considerable pride and satisfaction in what the governing body has achieved.

I took over the Chair role from Becky Drake shortly after she led the governing body in contributing to the achievement of an OFSTED rating of 'Outstanding' in the Leadership and Management category of the assessment.

Becky is hard act to follow but I have been working with the governing body to further improve on the structures and disciplines that were in place at the time of OFSTED inspection. I believe in the past school year the governing body has met its core and statutory responsibilities in an effective manner and in doing so has helped provide the very best outcomes for the children and continued to help make the school a positive, supportive learning community.

We have had to cope with some changes and challenges:

- There were problems caused by the introduction of new assessment requirements, related to the National Curriculum, which complicated defining measures of pupil progress and meant we could not compare attainment in this school year to previous years and judge how well the pupils and the school were progressing.
- The DfE published a statutory document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', to place more emphasis on the safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils. We have incorporated the requirements of the document into our school practices including the safe recruitment of staff and certifying the suitability of governors to work with and around children.
- We saw some personnel changes in the governing body. Although we lost Becky Drake and Hannah Baker from full time membership, we welcomed Lynsey Sheppard, Sarah Dyte and Kristina Parfrey as parent governors, and Hannah agreed to stay connected to the governing body as an associate.

In going forward, I feel we are very fortunate to have a governing body consisting of individuals with a wide range of applicable skills and experience who are committed to our school community and achieving the best outcomes for our pupils.

I hope that you find this document useful. If you have any comments, or you feel you would like to be involved as a governor you can contact me through the school office.

The Governance Structure and Attendance

The governing body of St Stephens (C of E) Junior School (SSJS) is made up of volunteers who were elected, or appointed, by organisations that all have a stake in ensuring the success of the school.

From September of 2015 until July of 2016 the membership of Full Governing Body (FGB) was as shown below.

The figure after the governing body member's name indicates the ratio between the number of FGB or committee meetings the individual attended and the total number of meetings at which they should have been present.

Louisa Wilson [19 / 20]	- Head Teacher
Philip Webb (<i>Chair</i>) [15 / 16]	- Co-Opted
Matthew Gait (<i>Vice Chair</i>) [11 / 11]	- Co-opted
Alan Walters [9 / 11]	- Co-Opted
Lynsey Lowrie [8 / 9]	- Co-Opted
David Hanks [10 / 11]	- Local Authority
Abigail Warren (<i>Vice Chair</i>) [9 / 10]	- Foundation
Nicola Read (<i>Vice Chair</i>) [13 / 15]	- Foundation
Hannah Baker [4 / 6]	- Associate (Foundation Committee)
Amanda Wooley [9 / 10]	- Staff
Lynsey Sheppard [7 / 12]	- Parent
Sara Dyte [7 / 9]	- Parent
Kristina Parfrey [8 / 10]	- Parent
Carina Sime [19 / 20]	- Clerk

The parent governors were selected by the parents / carers of our pupils; the Local Authority governor was approved by South Gloucestershire Council and the Staff governor was chosen from the school teaching staff.

The co-opted governors were appointed by the governing body, where a specific skill set or specialised knowledge was required. The governing body also appoints Associate governors to serve on one or more committees and provide specific skills or experience, on an ad hoc basis. The foundation governors were appointed by the Church of England Diocese of Bristol.

The headteacher, by virtue of her position, is a permanent member of the FGB but is not a governor. The same applies to the Vicar of St Stephens Church but during the period covered by this document there was no permanent holder of the office.

Governors all have the same responsibilities; they do not represent their appointers, but are intended to be representative of them.

The Clerk to the Governing Body was appointed by the FGB to provide it with services including, minute taking; record keeping and information distribution.

Governors are not educational specialists but bring experience and skills from other professions that help to form an effective governing body. Attendance at meetings is only part of the role, reading and preparation are also required for each meeting and the various actions require following up, often via regular email correspondence.

Further information about the governors and their roles can be found on the school website.

Overview of the school's aims

The school's vision is to enable each child:

- to reach their academic potential and be equipped with the skills to be lifelong learners
- to develop into a resilient, well rounded, respectful individual
- to be a positive member of their local and global community
- to have a knowledge of Christian faith and have respect for the beliefs of others
- to come to know themselves, learning to reflect on experiences, exploring important questions of how to live and treat others, and to reach a set of beliefs and values by which to guide their lives
- to be equipped with life skills in order to achieve ambitions and overcome challenges
- to understand the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle.

These aims will be achieved within a Christian ethos which promotes the values of:

- Friendship
- Honesty
- Perseverance
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Trust

The governing body keep this vision at the forefront of all of the work they do. Any aims and objectives set contribute in some way to achieving this vision for all our children and their families.

Effectiveness and Impact of the Governing Body

Governors role in promoting school improvement

Challenge provided by governors and input from pupils, via Pupil Voice, and parents and staff consultation, through questionnaires and meetings, means that the whole school community is part the process to identify opportunities to improve learning and to raise standards. The headteacher also works with OFSTED and the Local Authority and Church advisors to identify improvements and assign priorities. These are documented in the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

The governing body monitors achievement of the SIP through regular committee meetings which have clear agendas that include headteacher reports on the completion and impact of SIP actions.

Governors also visit the school take part in learning walks, talking to staff and pupils on different aspects of the curriculum and school life as well as watching the children at work, to see first-hand the impact of the school's improvement initiatives.

Meeting our responsibilities

In the past school year responsibilities for effective governance were shared between the FGB and four sub-committees; the Achievement and Provision Committee, the Finance and Resources Committee, the Community Committee and the Foundation Committee

The main achievements were as follows:

- Full Governing Body
 - Reviewed and confirmed the membership and organization of the governing body, the special responsibilities of individual governors [Special Educational Needs, Health and Safety, Safeguarding, e-Safety, Pupil Premium, Equality], and the terms of reference under which the governing body and the committees operate
 - Completed a review of governor skills to ensure that the governing body had the capability to meet its responsibilities
 - Successfully supported the OFSTED inspection which resulted in the judgement that the school is 'Outstanding'
 - Arranged the head teacher's performance review and agreed the recommendations
 - Reviewed and approved the School Improvement Plan
 - Put in place a 'Code of Conduct' to which all governors signed up
 - Reviewed the work of the sub-committees and, where required, formally endorsed their actions and decisions especially those related to staffing structure and budget
 - Arranged and received briefings to increase governor's awareness of:
 - Schools Financial Value Standard
 - Changes to the Assessment System
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education
 - Changes to the school teaching organization

- Reviewed as the basis of challenge:
 - The Self Evaluation Form - which is a review of the operation and performance of the school produced by the head teacher who gathers evidence based information from a range of sources and makes judgements about improvements in students learning, school leadership and teaching
 - Reports from the Local Authority School Improvement Advisor who visit the school and report on status of various aspects of its operation
 - Head teacher's reports on Racial Incidents and Bullying and Safeguarding & Child Protection
- Attending training - It is important that governors develop, or refresh, the skills required to perform their role. Last year a number of governors attended formal courses provided by the Governor Services section of the Local Authority. They covered:
 - Safer Recruitment of Staff
 - Chairing Committees
- Conducted Policy reviews

The governing body has in place a set of some 40 policy documents which define the statutory / LA recommended processes that need to be conducted by the school and the rules to be applied when carrying out the process.

As statutory requirements and working practices change over time it is necessary, periodically, to review policies to ensure that they still comply with statute and are still effective and relevant.

This year the FGB (or Committees) reviewed / updated several policies and introduced a number of new ones:

 - Supporting Learners with Literacy Difficulties
 - Presentation
 - Handwriting
 - Spelling
 - Premises Management
 - Leave of Absence
 - Parent / Carer Code of Conduct
 - Equality Information and Objectives.
- Achievement and Provision Committee
 - Analysed academic performance data, from both internal and external sources, and questioned /challenged the headteacher on areas where the need improvement was indicated
 - Received and analysed regular reports on the provisions in place for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), and the impact of these provisions
 - Received and analysed regular reports on the provisions in place for children who qualify for Pupil Premium, and the impact of these provisions
 - Monitored the implementation of the elements of the School Improvement Plan relevant to the committee's scope of responsibility
 - Reviewed and endorsed proposed new assessment methods to measure progress and attainment using the criteria established by the new National Curriculum (NC)
 - Reviewed and endorsed proposals for changes to the larger school curriculum of which the NC is a part

- Community Committee
 - Analysed pupil attendance and behavior data and questioned / challenged the headteacher on areas where the need improvement was indicated
 - Ensured that the school policies and procedures met the DfE requirements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as defined in their publication 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. As a result, some governors and staff received education in techniques for 'Safer Recruitment of Staff'
 - Ensured the school was compliant with a change in legislation requiring all maintained school governors to hold or to obtain an enhanced criminal records certificate (i.e. a DBS certificate)
 - Reviewed the implications to the school of the DfE requirements for protecting children from the risk of radicalisation (PREVENT), ensuring required staff training had been received
 - Analysed the results of a pupil survey on use of the Internet in relation to e-Safety requirements and planned actions to address some of the concerns raised
 - Monitored the implementation of the elements of the School Improvement Plan relevant to the committee's scope of responsibility
 - Reviewed the schools approach to promoting equality and removing prejudice / discrimination and checked that it met the requirements of the 2012 Equality Act
 - Reviewed endorsed and monitored adoption of the THRIVE initiative, a dynamic developmental approach to working with children that supports their emotional and social wellbeing. All children with troubling or challenging behaviour are helped to develop emotional resilience and engage with learning. It is based on the latest research in neuroscience.
 - Analysed the results of pupil, parent and staff surveys and planned actions where the need for improvement was indicated
 - Received briefings on the curriculum activities relating to sporting and other activities where our pupils have been involved with the wider community
 - Reviewed the continued accuracy and relevance of the information on the school website
- Finance and Resources Committee
 - Reviewed and endorsed required staffing numbers and experience levels
 - Reviewed and approved the school budget proposals
 - Monitored ongoing spend against budget plan and reviewed the impact of any potential underspend / overspend
 - Agreed additional / unplanned spend including the provision on a new all-weather play area and enlarging the school allotment
 - Reviewed progress against and maintained an ongoing (3 year) plan for maintenance and refurbishment of grounds, buildings and equipment
 - Reviewed and agreed recommendations for the upgrade of the Information Technology (IT) equipment
 - Ensured value for money was obtained for any expenditure
 - Conducted an audit to ensure compliance to the Local Authority Schools Financial Value Standard
 - Ensured an audit of the School Fund took place

- Reviewed the services provided the Local Authority and investigated if alternative suppliers would deliver better value for money. As a result, the provision of school meals was contracted to a new supplier
- Changed the rules regarding provision of meals where payments have not been received
- Reviewed and endorsed proposed and actual use of the Pupil Premium Grant and monitored the impact of the spend
- Monitored the implementation of the elements of the School Improvement Plan relevant to the committee's scope of responsibility
- Reviewed and endorsed staff performance management targets
- Endorsed Pay Committee recommendations for staff pay increases
- Conducted Health and Safety inspections

- **Foundation Governors Committee**

The role of the committee is to:

- Monitor of the school's position as a Church of England school and the promotion of the school's Christian foundation and links within the community
- Offer pastoral support to the school
- Promote the importance of the Church of England School ethos
- Ensuring that the school operates correctly particularly in respect to the provision for collective worship, provision for Religious Education and preservation of the assets of the school.

The Vicar of St Stephens Church is a key member of this committee and the absence of an appointment to this role severely limited its activities in the past school year.

The Achievement of our Pupils

For the 2015-16 school year the results achieved by our pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 (year 6) were above the national average in almost all subjects.

In reading there was an increase in the proportion exceeding the expected attainment level. In mathematics and writing there was Increase in the proportion of pupils working towards and at the expected standard.

In terms of progress made, it was good or better in reading and maths and expected or better in writing.

More information about pupil achievements and progress can be found on the school website.

Our support for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The governing body have a legal requirement to ensure the needs of children with SEN are met. The school SEN Coordinator (SENCO) provided regular reports to the Achievement and Provision Committee which enabled the governing body to monitor the provision for SEN and the results achieved.

Initial figures show that in the last school year our SEN pupils performed well.

Attendance

There is a proven link between good attendance and making good progress. Therefore, governors take this very seriously and monitor it closely. At every Community Committee meeting we discussed lateness and attendance and the school's approach to tackling issues.

In the last school year the governors supported the school in implementing measures to reduce lateness by changing the time band within which a pupil arriving is considered late to between 8:55 am and 9:05 am. A pupil arriving after 9:05 am is registered as absent. The school met its attendance target for the 2015-16 school year with a figure of 96.1%. This was an increase of 0.4% on the previous year. The attendance figure was in line with the average for the Local Authority area and exceeded the average for the country as a whole.

We will continue to apply the provisions of the Attendance Policy to improve our attendance figure.

Working with pupils, parents and the community

The governors value the work of parents and carers and are keen to seek their views. Pupil voice and parent consultation, through the parent staff questionnaires mean that the whole school community is part of consultation and the decision making process. The Headteacher has worked with the whole school community to respond to concerns, plan improvements and identify priorities.

Our current priorities

Our recent planning activity has identified the following as the main priorities for the 2016-17 school year:

- Governor Recruitment - To keep the required level of skills and experience available to us we need to continue to recruit volunteers to serve as governors. As a new governor, it takes a while to understand the role before becoming fully confident and effective, so it is essential that we fill our vacancies as soon as possible in order to build our capacity for the future.
- Governor Induction – Having recruited new governors it is important that they receive training, information and orientation to ensure that they can be effective as soon as possible. There is a need to improve our induction process.
- Engagement with staff and parents – Surveys and other feedback indicates that there is a lack of awareness among staff and parents as to who the governors are and what they do. We will be taking steps to rectify this.
- School Visit Programme –Governors need to visit the school and meet with teachers and pupils to review the progress and impact of improvement initiatives and ensure statutory requirements are being met. There is a need to increase the number and frequency of these visits.

Contacting the Governors

We always welcome suggestions, feedback and ideas from parents – please contact the Chair of Governors via the school office.

A list of Governors is available on the school website and photographs of them can be found in the vestibule of the school.

Minutes of the FGB and Committees meeting are public documents and are available to view at the school office on request.