

# **Hardenhuish Governing Body Report to Parents 2018-19**

## **Introduction**

This is the first ever report to parents reflecting the activities of the governing body across an academic year. The aim is to provide parents and the wider community with better information about the work of the governing body in providing oversight, support and challenge to Hardenhuish School.

The report is in three parts. The first explains the structure and function of the governing body, the second reflects on changes to the governing body and the second describes the work of the governors during the course of the last year.

## **Part One – Structure and Function**

The Governing body of Hardenhuish school is made up of a mix of community, parent and staff governors. The Headteacher also sits on the board with full voting rights.

The governing body has three core functions determined by the Department for Education:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction;
- holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- overseeing and ensuring effective financial performance.

The full governing body meets six times a year at the end of a cycle of Policy and Resources, Staffing, Curriculum, and Pupils and Parents committee meetings. The governors also form panels to deal with matters such as admissions, pay, and the Headteacher's appraisal.

Outside the meeting cycle, governors visit faculties within the school, attend events, interview potential staff, and liaise on finance, attendance, equalities, and other areas. There are also governors dedicated to Special Educational Needs, Pupil Premium, Child Protection, and Health and Safety.

Governors work closely with the headteacher and senior leadership team and also play a key role in monitoring the school finances with the Chair of Policy and Resources actively involved in the audit and preparation of the annual report. The Chair of P&R also attended seminars hosted by our auditors Bishop Fleming. The Responsible Officer, an appropriately qualified governor, also carries out internal audit checks and reports those to governors.

An additional tier of governance provides oversight of the work of the governing body. This tier is comprised of the members of Hardenhuish School and was established when the school became an academy in 2010. Documents explaining their role more fully can be found in the Governor section of the school website.

## **Part Two – Changes to the Governing Body in 2018-19**

Long-standing chair of governors Geoff Wells stepped down and left the board at the beginning of the school year. In October, Kirsty Martin was elected Chair of Governors and Rob Head was elected Vice Chair.

Three community governors were recruited with regard to their specific skills:

- Isabelle Semichon – a parent with extensive governance experience at Hardenhuish and in other local schools and education settings. Isabelle speaks a number of languages and is working closely with the Modern Foreign Languages faculty,
- Nicola Wood – has had a long career working in a senior position in a major international company. Nicola has extensive experience of running a large team, managing a budget and handling HR,
- Anneliese Hillyer-Thake – a regional safeguarding lead for the NHS. Anneliese has been a governor in a number of schools across the country. She has taken over as safeguarding governor.

An election was held for a parent governor and Lisa Titcomb was re-elected to the board for a further four years.

Naomi Tomlin left the board for business reasons during the year and Isabel Blackburn retired as a governor in July. Both had significantly contributed to the work of the governors over the years with Naomi chairing the Curriculum Committee and Isabel acting as link governor to Special Educational Needs.

The governing body has conducted a major review of its working practices and at the July meeting voted through a series of changes which will come into force for the next academic year.

One change has been to reduce the overall number of governors and to follow government guidance to remove staff governors other than the Headteacher. The governors recognise the importance of hearing from the staff and will in future co-opt staff as governors to help with the work of the committees but they will no longer attend full governing board meetings as governors. This decision has led to the departure of Jackie Todd, Paul Fox and Debbie Bennett as staff governors.

When Hardenhuish converted to an academy in 2010 it was accepted that five governors could also act as members and this was standard practice in the whole sector. The Department for Education has now made it clear that there should be a degree of separation between the members and governors with the majority being non-governors. This separation allows the members to have independent oversight of the work of the governing body. As the members have oversight but are almost entirely hands-off and serve an indefinite term it was deemed critical to replace three governor members with people who understood the school and who had the appropriate level of skills to provide effective oversight.

Geoff Wells resigned as a member on stepping down from the governing board. Governors Phil Townsend and Spencer Shaw also resigned as members to create vacancies.

The members in place at the end of the academic year are:

- John Cairns – Hardenhuish deputy head who retired in 2010
- Linda Stuart – retired School Business Manager
- Naomi Tomlin – company director with many years' experience of school governance
- Kirsty Martin – Chair of Governors
- Trevor Eddolls – long-standing governor and original signatory to the Articles of Association of Hardenhuish Academy.

## **Training and learning opportunities**

All governors received their annual safeguarding training and several attended additional courses such as Child Protection, Safer Recruitment, Good Governance, New Governor, Wellbeing and Headteacher appraisal.

## **Part 3 – Impact Statement**

The work of the governing body has been measured against the three core functions of governance and the additional key features of effective governance outlined in section 1 of the [Governance Handbook](#). The final section captures some of the other work governors have undertaken.

### **CORE FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNANCE**

#### **Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction**

Governors have scrutinised the school development plan and received updates throughout the year. The plan contains the core objectives for the school which encompass teaching and learning; pupil progress; wellbeing, leadership and sustainability.

For more detail in relation to teaching and learning and pupil progress see the core function, below, relating to educational performance.

Regarding the Wellbeing objective - support was provided following the death of Ellie Gould. Governors were present at key moments immediately following the tragedy and provide ongoing pastoral and strategic support. A Wellbeing governor was appointed to work with the Assistant Headteacher leading on wellbeing. She attended a Staff twilight session and was part of the presentation team to launch the Wellbeing Award. The SMSCE governor has been involved in lessons. The Staffing Committee provides ongoing consideration of staff wellbeing, and of recruiting well and at the right level with wellbeing in mind to enhance the work life balance of staff. This can be evidenced by a lack of stress-related absence. The committee has also scrutinised exit questionnaires in relation to wellbeing. Workload is a constant consideration in committees and private conversations with staff and the Senior Leadership Team and governors try to make sure their work does not add unnecessarily to that load.

Governors have adopted Ethical Leadership principles and have worked on this at a number of meetings. The Chair of Governors attended the launch event of the Pathfinder project in London, the Ethics Exchange and Forum hosted by the University of Birmingham and gave a talk to Wiltshire Governors. Decisions have been taken with the principles of Ethical Leadership in mind in areas such as consideration of flexible working requests, long term sickness absence and staff redundancies. Ethical principles are being written into codes of conduct and will continue to permeate our work.

The governors have also undertaken a number of leadership objectives within the School Development Plan as follows:

- Carry out a review of the functions and structure of the governing body to ensure the governing body is working strategically and is legally compliant – see Effective Governance (below)
- Continue work to raise the profile of the governing body - Governor messages have been sent via the Hardenhuish Headlines to parents and the wider community. This included information regarding the work of the governing body in the previous calendar year. Governors have been visible at a number of school events – including

World War 1 Centenary Service, Sports Day Art, DT, Music, Dance and Drama events. They have taken part in faculty events and awards ceremonies. They now have lanyards making them more readily identifiable. The Chair has communicated directly with the staff regarding some matters and attended, with others, both a TD day and a staff briefing. The Chair has joined the board of the Wiltshire Governors' Association and will be working on a governing board pairing ideas exchange. She has also attended National Governor's Association annual conference in London and the Schools and Academies Show in Birmingham. The Pupils and Parents Committee has had regular updates from student representatives on the School Parliament

- Monitor the effectiveness of the governing body in relation to the ethos and vision of the school – see Core Functions (above)

For additional evidence relating to leadership and sustainability please refer to the remaining core functions.

### **Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff**

The Headteacher was appraised by a panel of governors in the autumn and had a mid-year review with the Chair.

Departmental and School Development Plans – governors attended meetings with their linked faculties across the school. This included a curriculum leader or Learning Manager and the Head. The Curriculum Committee monitored progress and reports were also given to the full governing body. The Head has been questioned at the full governing body meetings about progress. The Curriculum Committee supported the school in establishing a rigorous quality assurance process to ensure ongoing evaluation of the work of the school to feed in to the self-evaluation and development plan cycle.

Link Governors made visits throughout the year to evaluate progress in their faculties.

The Curriculum committee has considered performance reports and requested a survey of Y9 students to better understand why there is a very low uptake of MFL at Hardenhuish. This has been highlighted as an area of consideration in Ofsted's inspection data summary report (IDSR). Exam results are analysed by school and are rigorously scrutinised by governors who work with the staff to ensure the best provision possible for pupils and students. The committee ensures areas are identified where results and Value Added are not as they should be, and to ensure progress is made in these areas. The committee also has termly updates of pupil progress with reference to special interest groups such as pupil premium and SEND and has governors with responsibility for those areas who make regular visits or sit on a strategic group within school.

The committee has challenged the school on numerous occasions to seek reassurance that certain actions are taking place and issues deliberated on internally. At the request of the committee, the Work Experience Policy now ensures a Safeguarding booklet is sent to each host employer. The Curriculum committee has also helped ensure best practice is shared within school.

**Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.**

The Headteacher was set an appraisal objective to arrest the pattern of deficit budget-setting in order to preserve reserves. This was supported by previous discussions by the Policy and Resources committee. This led to four support staff posts being made redundant.

Chair of Governors attended auditors' seminars. Chair of P&R witnessed the opening of tenders. Responsible Officer, a governor, has redrawn the checking routine and conducted inspection visits.

The Chair of Governors and Chair of P&R receive monthly budget reports and every meeting of P&R scrutinises the accounts. The budget proposal and revisions have been considered by the P&R committee and taken to the full governing board.

The Staffing Committee scrutinises the Pay Policy and the Pay Panel conducts a review of the pay award for teaching staff. The committee was involved in supporting decisions concerning both the recruitment and non-replacement of staff in order to ensure adequate staffing. The committee has provided appropriate challenge of CPD offering to enhance staff skills and qualities.

Governors have been involved throughout the year in interviewing prospective teaching staff, often at short notice due to the pressures of recruiting in some subjects, and also in selecting the new Business Manager. They have also participated in disciplinary and redundancy panels.

**EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE**

**People with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity**

Governors have undertaken a skills audit which is being scrutinised to identify gaps and training need. Based on a previous audit, targeted recruitment, including via Inspiring Governance, has been used for new members of the governing body.

A review of the committee structure has been undertaken by a team of Governors led by the Deputy Chair of Governors. Governors have been assigned to committees and link roles to play to their strengths. Workload for some governors has been adjusted. Governors have undertaken a range of different training appropriate to their role and a governor with responsibility for training has been appointed to ensure governors continue to build their skills.

**Structures that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities**

The Codes of Conduct for governors and members have been reworked. A move to separate governors and the majority of members has been undertaken.

The Scheme of Delegation has been rewritten with roles and responsibilities further clarified

The Link Governors procedure has been redrawn. Work is commencing on a procedure for disciplinary and redundancy panels to add clarity to the process.

**Compliance with statutory and contractual requirements**

The Musts from the Governance Handbook have been rewritten and reviewed to ensure compliance. The Musts from the Academies Financial Handbook have also been reviewed and the school risk register examined.

The Clerk has ensured Companies House has been updated when necessary. The Chair of P&R was involved in the accounts audit. One governor acting as Responsible Officer carried out financial checks in school.

A general safeguarding review was conducted. A new Safeguarding Governor has been recruited with specialist professional expertise and has provided support and guidance to the school in the re-drawing of policies. All governors have completed appropriate training.

A number of policies are being reviewed at the request of governors and throughout the year governors have contributed to policy review.

Safer recruitment training has been undertaken by selected Governors to provide the necessary skills required for sitting on interview panels to ensure the school has recruited well.

The Staffing Committee has ensured that school adopted conditions of employment are consistent with statutory requirements.

It has also provided careful consideration to flexible working requests.

#### **Evaluation to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance.**

This impact statement is an opportunity to evaluate the activity of governors. The internal review of governance, which has also involved working with other governing bodies, has resulted in a full restructure and refocus of the board in order to ensure governors work in a more effective way and with improved focus.

#### **Additional items**

Governors have attended a variety of events – including World War 1 Centenary Service, Art, DT, Music, Dance and Drama events. They have taken part in faculty events and awards ceremonies.

The Chair represented the Headteacher at a meeting with Michele Donelan, MP, and other heads regarding school funding and was joined by the Chair of P&R at a lobby of Parliament.

A governor worked with the school and applied successfully for 20mph signs and improvements to crossing points at the bottom of Hardenhuish Lane.

Two governors attended a Women Leaders in Education event.

Other governors have come into school to speak to pupils about a variety of topics or to participate in other activities.