



## **Hardenhuish Governing Body Report to Parents - 2021-22**

### **Introduction**

This report to parents reflects the activities of the governing body in the academic year 2021-22. 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. It is to ensure governors have been performing their statutory tasks and that they have had an impact in supporting the 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 third describes the work of the governors during the last year. The coronavirus pandemic and its legacy has continued to have an impact on governor activities and is described in the third part.

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

The Governing body of Hardenhuish school is made up of a mix of community, parent and co-opted 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 Resources, Education, and Community committee meetings.

The Strategy committee met four times this year. 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. Due to the pandemic the majority of all meetings and visits have been conducted via Teams with some attendance at school for recruitment etc. 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 play a key role in monitoring the school finances with the Chair of Resources actively involved in the audit and preparation of the annual report.

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 and Members in 2021-22**

Kirsty Martin was re-elected Chair of Governors with Nicola Wood becoming Vice Chair. Rob Head, the previous Vice Chair, stood down early in 2022 when his term as a Community Governor came to an end.

Parent Governor David Roussell stood down at the end of his term and was replaced by Paul Lortal. Mr Lortal works in higher education and teacher training and brings that experience to the board in addition to being a parent. Sally Dellar was re-elected for another term although she has reluctantly decided to step down at the end of this academic year.

The board now has fewer full governors than when it became an academy, and the intention is to shrink the number smaller over time. The governors recognise the importance of hearing from the staff and co-opted teacher Adam Ovens to the Community Committee.

Isabel Blackburn was appointed as a Member to replace Kirsty Clark.

## **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. There is a final section to capture some of the other work governors have undertaken.

### **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

The school and governors have seen their work impacted by the coronavirus pandemic with a significant amount of time spent discussing recovery and readjustment as life returns to normal.

Lessons learned have been considered in all areas. For the governing body this means that meetings and link governor visits will take place both face to face and online. The full board will always meet face to face but committees will opt for a blend, governors can catch up with their school links quickly on Teams in addition to visiting school. Adopting this mix is better for all parties.

A focus for the board this year has been catch-up for pupils who may have fallen behind.

More detail below.

### **CORE FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNANCE**

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

Governors scrutinised the school development plan (SDP) and received updates. The plan is the roadmap for all development of Hardenhuish and contains the core objectives for the school which encompass teaching and learning; pupil progress; wellbeing, leadership and sustainability. This year governors were again able to attend Departmental Development Plan meetings, these are useful as they feed into the SDP, review the year which has passed and look at the challenges ahead. This provides focus to governor meetings with Curriculum and Year Group leaders.

The Governors set themselves three objectives, which can be summarised as:

- to monitor pupil progress following the pandemic, including the stabilisation of GCSE and A Level preparation for assessment with the reintroduction of examined

components. To also consider the lessons learned from pupil learning during the pandemic i.e., online teaching, independent learning;

- to continue monitoring staff wellbeing and to ensure the new wellbeing lead in school takes staff and LT wellbeing into account;
- to monitor the financial sustainability of the school and to ensure surplus reserves are spent in a timely way to support the school community.

During the year the progress against the objectives was monitored. Examples of how the board met the objectives include ongoing conversations with staff about wellbeing, discussions about progress and exams and regular budget monitoring with reserves spent on beneficial projects in areas such as IT.

### **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 a midyear review was held with the Chair. Governors recommended the appointment of a School Improvement Partner (SIP) to work with the school to provide checks and balances in operational areas which are outside their scope. The SIP's report, which provided positive assurance, was shared with the Strategy Committee with further plans for meetings in the coming year.

Governors attended review and target setting meetings with their linked faculties across the school in Term 1. These fed into the School Development Plan which the board then approved.

The Education Committee monitored progress, and reports on the School Development Plan were also given to the full governing body. Governors reviewed the exam results and discussed any issues within the results. The Education Committee spent a lot of time considering post-Covid catch-up especially for those who had their last year at primary and first year at secondary badly disrupted and are now in Year 8. Another area of concern was the preparation for public examinations at A Level for those who had not sat exams at GCSE. It is important to stress these discussions focussed on the whole pupil, their wellbeing and school experience as well as academic performance. This was an issue discussed across the board committees and at full board meetings.

Governor Sheila Copeman sits on the group ensuring that pupil premium funding is being spent appropriately with the aim of providing the best support to allow disadvantage young people to progress.

The SEN governor, Sally Dellar, and SENCO Debbie Bennett reviewed provision and provided a full report to the Education Committee.

SEN and Pupil Premium remain standing items on agendas.

The Community Committee held extensive discussions on the exclusions and behaviour report and concerns about the availability of Alternative Provision in north Wiltshire. They also held supportive and challenging discussions about detention and attendance.

The Safeguarding Governor, Sophia Swatton, met frequently with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Jo Glossop. The Safeguarding Audit was scrutinised by the Community Committee.

Admissions have been discussed at some length especially with regard to 6<sup>th</sup> form capacity. There have also been discussions about the provision for displaced Ukrainian children and how they are settling into school.

The Education Committee has had presentations from learning managers and curriculum leaders with the opportunity to question them about key issues in their departments.

The Strategy Committee led a project on parental engagement which involved members from across the board.

Regarding staffing, the Resources Committee examined the staff exit survey, governors took part in appointment panels, approved flexible working requests, discussed recruitment and departure and considered pay awards following staff appraisal.

Across the year many policies in all areas from staffing to SEN, Sex Education and Aspirations have been reviewed and posted on the website. These policies, some statutory, provide the framework for the operation of the school and to help maintain high standards in all areas.

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

The Chair of Governors and Chair of Resources receive monthly budget reports and every meeting scrutinises the accounts. The budget proposal and revisions have been considered by the Resources committee and taken to the full governing board. Due to extremely careful budget management the school still holds a reserve but energy costs and general inflation, which have not been funded centrally, will result in some reserve funds being used. This is a huge disappointment as the board and school have been rigorous about the budget. It is recognised that the war in Ukraine and the impact on the global economy was not something the school could have planned for. Governors Prior to the war, the governing body released funds from the reserve for new computer equipment and cooling to prevent computers overheating.

Governors took part in the preparation of the annual accounts and ensured they were provided to the Members and filed prior to the deadline. New internal auditors were appointed to provide monitoring and ensure financial systems are all properly in place. There were no red flag concerns.

A new finance system was introduced and governors lobbied and received a refund when it was found to have glitches caused by a software upgrade. These have all been resolved. A school resource management self-assessment was completed with positive answers. The Finance Manual was reviewed.

#### **EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE**

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

Kirsty Martin was re-elected Chair of Governors and Nicola Wood as vice-chair.

Governors have undertaken the annual skills audit to identify gaps and training needs and some have undertaken tasks based on their professional experience.

Governors are offered training opportunities to improve the quality of governance. New parent governor Paul Lortal took part in three LA run induction sessions. The clerk, Claire Brown, undertook specific training related to her role. The Chair and Head joined regular LA briefings. In addition to routine safeguarding training, some governors followed additional courses such as for safer recruitment. Other training included areas such as SEND, Ofsted inspection, the implications of the government schools' white paper and board reporting.

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

The Codes of Conduct which clearly spell out the function of the distinct role of governors and members were signed in September. Governors are reminded that their role is strategic and not operational.

The Scheme of Delegation has been reviewed and revised for 2022-23.

**Compliance with statutory and contractual requirements**

The Musts from the Governance Handbook and from the Academies Financial Handbook are subject to rolling governor and staff review and the school risk register is regularly reviewed.

The Clerk has ensured Companies House has been updated when necessary. The policy review cycle has been checked to ensure statutory policies are all in hand and others are reviewed at appropriate intervals.

In September governors approved the Safeguarding Children Policy and, during the year, undertook the required training in both Safeguarding and E-Safety.

Mrs Martin took part in the Admissions Appeals process when the school was again oversubscribed for Year 7 entry.

The governing board is satisfied it is compliant in all areas.

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

This impact statement is an opportunity to evaluate the activity of governors.

The Chair has been elected Chair of the Wiltshire Governors' Association and uses this network to provide a benchmark to governance at Hardenhuish. She is leading networking and training through the WGA and continues to host an offshoot group purely for secondary school chairs from single academy trusts and maintained schools. She continues to participate in Wiltshire Council-led chairs groups and training as well as numerous National Governors' Association meetings. She has recently taken part in a governor recruitment initiative with Inspiring Governance. Due to a change in her work circumstances, she has also joined the board of a maintained primary school, in order to develop a better understanding of education from 4-18.

The governors have undertaken an internal review this year using an official framework and are satisfied the board is functioning as it should. By the final meeting of the year there had been elections for chairs and vice chairs for the coming year, committee composition had been reviewed and an agenda planner was in place for 2022-23.

The Clerk has resigned and a new clerk with significant experience has been recruited and a comprehensive handover is being completed in preparation for the new school year.

***Additional items***

Governors attended the Year 13 awards and careers fair.

Governor Michael Smyth, who is an external teaching professional, has provided support on Oxbridge applications including helping with mock interviews. In their link roles governors attended events such as the Celebrating Success assemblies and held meetings with leaders in History, MFL, Geography, Science, English, ICT, Maths, PSRE, Safeguarding, SEN, Support Staff and Years 7, 8/9, 10/11 and Sixth Form.