



## **Hardenhuish Governing Body Report to Parents – 2023-24**

### **Introduction**

This report to parents reflects the activities of the governing body in the academic year 2023-24. 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.

We reported last year that we were hoping to be at the forefront of establishing a Chippenham-based multi-academy trust (MAT) which represents our values and aspirations. We are sorry that we have not been able to progress this, but there have been considerations beyond our control. Following the General Election, we are waiting for a new government to bed in and we will then reassess the educational landscape. Our priority is to preserve the character of Hardenhuish and to work with the community of schools in and around Chippenham to the benefit of all our children.

The school remains a very popular choice for pupils moving from primary to secondary. We have been very oversubscribed again for September 2024 and it was with a heavy heart that many appeals were heard for children who had missed the cut. There have also been appeals during the year for children who could not get into other year groups. We are very proud that so many children put Hardenhuish down as their first choice but full of regret that we don't have room for everyone.

Ofsted paid a long overdue visit at the end of October. A large number of governors met with the lead inspector on the second day. We were asked a number of challenging questions to evidence that we were performing our duties correctly, understood our roles and the school and were holding the school leadership to account. Ofsted carries out two kinds of inspections, one where the grade might change and the other is an ungraded inspection. We were delighted by the report which confirmed we continued to be "good". The report can be found online [here](#). There were two recommendations, over both of which the school has limited control. The inspector felt children were not choosing to access enrichment opportunities and that more should be done to encourage a breadth of reading in and out of school.

The school is already acting on the recommendations. Governors will be monitoring the actions taken. We would invite parents to encourage their children to participate in the many extra-curricular activities at school and to read for pleasure at home. This will support us and the school in evidencing progress against the points raised.

## **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 three 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 departments 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 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.

## **Part Two – Changes to the Governing Body in 2023-24**

Kirsty Martin was re-elected Chair of Governors with Nicola Wood continuing as Vice Chair.

Parent governor Liz Allen stood down, long-serving parent governors Spencer Shaw, Sheila Copeman and Steve Elsby saw their terms come to an end. Community governor Michael Smyth resigned.

New parent governors were sought. There were four candidates for the vacancies so there was no need for an election. Steve Elsby was reappointed and has been joined as a parent governor by Sandra Gonzalez, Neil Craig and Adam Lees. Sheila Copeman, Spencer Shaw and Sophia Swatton have been reappointed by the Members.

The full governing body is:

Staff	Community		Parents	
Lisa Percy	Sheila Copeman	Claire Smith	Neal Craig	Andrew Wilson
	Trevor Eddolls	Sophia Swatton	Steve Elsby	
	Kirsty Martin	Phil Townsend	Sandra Gonzalez	
	Isabelle Semichon	Viv Vines	Adam Lees	
	Spencer Shaw	Nicola Wood	Paul Lortal	

All leadership team members attend committees or the full board. All governors serve for four years.

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. During the year, Linda Stuart resigned from the Members and has been replaced by Michael Smyth

### **Part Three – 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.

<b>CORE FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNANCE</b>
<b>Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction</b>
Governors scrutinised the school development plan (SDP) for the upcoming year and received updates as the year progressed. This is the roadmap for all development of the school and contains the core objectives encompassing teaching and learning; pupil progress; wellbeing, leadership and sustainability. Governors attended the Departmental Development Plan meetings for each of the departments and Year Teams, which feed into the SDP, provide a review of the year which has passed and look at the challenges ahead. This provides the backbone to governor meetings, with Curriculum and Year group leaders, held throughout the year to assess progress against goals and strategic direction.  A governor action plan was also drawn up and monitored throughout the year, which drives strategic projects and objectives for the governors.
<b>Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff</b>
The Headteacher was appraised by a panel of governors in the autumn and a midyear review was held with the Chair. School Improvement Partner (SIP) reports continued to be presented to the board. The role of the SIP is key to the governors' understanding of the school as they provide checks and balances in operational areas which are outside governors' scope. They also provide support in areas which need to be targeted. It should be noted that the SIP continues to consider the school and, the governing body to be in a strong position, following various meetings held though the year.  The Education Committee monitored progress throughout the year, and reports on the School Development Plan were shared with the full governing body. Governors monitored expected results via mock exam reviews, highlighting any areas for strategic improvement. Exam results were scrutinised, and progress reviewed against pre-Covid results. Governors requested presentations on A Level performance and the Sixth Form, Science, History and Politics, reading across the curriculum, Year 10 mock results.  Andrew Wilson took over as Chair, with Phil Townsend as Vice Chair.  Nicola Wood continued as SEND link. She worked closely with the SENCO Debbie Bennett to review provision and reported regularly to the board.  SEND and Pupil Premium remain standing items on agendas and there was considerable discussion and monitoring of both.  The Community Committee held extensive discussions on the exclusions and behaviour report. The committee also hears from pupils who are members of School Parliament in order to learn more about their experience in school and has continued to support the young carers. The committee has also played a key role in monitoring and scrutinising safeguarding matters.

The Safeguarding Governor, Sophia Swatton, met frequently with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Jo Glossop. The Safeguarding Audit was scrutinised by the Community Committee. The whole board received updates regarding *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and new governors undertook full training as part of the induction process.

The Strategy Committee continued its focus on MAT strategies and parental engagement. Ofsted readiness and strategic direction were reviewed in Term 1 and then improvement plans developed post results.

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. The committee is aware that there are sector-wide recruitment and retention issues due to low volumes of newly qualified teachers and an increase in those leaving the profession. The recruitment cycle has been busy and governors support the leadership in ensuring that early careers teachers receive the support they need, that the CPD programme is effective and that staff wellbeing is considered in all decisions.

Across the year many policies in all 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. The school ran at a small deficit but with extremely careful budget management the school holds a reserve. Energy costs, general cost rises, and pension increases, which have not been matched by central funding. This has resulted again in reserve funds being used in order to ensure the smooth-running of the school. This is a huge disappointment as the board and school have been rigorous about the budget with the intention of setting in-year balanced budgets. This is an added problem because the legal budget-setting timetable does not align with staff pay awards.

The school was the victim of a cyber-attack last year, which caused considerable disruption although the school remained open and operational throughout. Further IT security measures have been put in place this year, following funding approval by the governing board.

Governors took part in the preparation of the annual accounts and ensured they were provided to the Members and filed prior to the deadline. There continue to be no red flags raised by external auditors. 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**

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, and are expected to complete one training course a year which is monitored in the Governors' Action Plan. The new governors took part in three LA run induction sessions and

completed their Induction Training. The Chair and Head joined LA and Regional Director briefings. In addition to routine safeguarding training, some governors followed additional courses such as Ofsted inspection and finance.

**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 2024-25.

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

Internal auditors have also regularly visited the school and scrutinised governance amongst other areas to ensure it is best practice.

***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 stepped down from Chair of the Wiltshire Governors' Association but remains on the board and continues to use this network to provide a benchmark to governance at Hardenhuish. She continues on the board of a maintained primary school and has been chairing the Interim Executive Board at another school for the past year.

By the final meeting of the year there had been elections for chairs and vice chairs of all committees for the coming year, committee composition had been reviewed and a revised agenda planner was in place for 2024-25.

***Additional items***

Governors attended awards and open evenings and continue to be represented on the Hardenhuish Educational Trust. Governors were also present at the Christmas Fayre, Open Evening and New Year 7 Induction evenings.

In their link roles, governors attended events such as the Celebrating Success assemblies, and poetry slam and held meetings with leaders in Business and Social Sciences, English, History, MFL, Geography, Maths, Science, SEND, ICT, Art and DT, Music, Yr 7, KS3, KS4 and 6<sup>th</sup> Form.