



Governing Body Report to Parents 2024 - 2025

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Hardenhuish School

A High Performing Academy

Purpose:

This report to parents reflects the activities of the governing body in the academic year 2024-25. The aim is to provide parents and the wider community with better information about governors work in providing oversight, support and challenge to Hardenhuish School. It outlines how governors have performed their statutory roles and how 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 outlines changes to the governing body and the third describes the work of governors over the last academic year.

Report Summary:

- The governing body remains stable with an appropriate number of governors with targeted recruitment to fill specific skills gaps when vacancies arise.
- A new clerk, Katrina McCabe, has been recruited as the former clerk has moved out of the area.
- Governors meet as a full board six times a year and all attend at least one committee. In total there are 27 scheduled meetings.
- Governors have been involved in the recruitment of teaching staff throughout the year and have appraised the headteacher.
- They have also attended a variety of events and held targeted visits with various departments and faculties within the school.
- The biggest focus for governors this year has been managing the school budget in a climate of increasing costs and not enough government funding.
- Hardenhuish remains a very popular choice with families, and we remain oversubscribed for Year 7. There is a waiting list in many year groups.



Multi Academy Trust Update:

Parents will know we had been exploring the idea of establishing a Chippenham-based multi-academy trust (MAT) which would represent our values and aspirations. We believed this was the best route for the Chippenham community and the wider catchment area. Sadly we have been unable to progress the idea, but we do want to continue to deepen our relationship with schools in the area.

As a single academy trust we remain a popular choice for pupils moving from primary to secondary. We were very oversubscribed again for September 2025 and there have 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.



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 board, as determined by the Department for Education, provides:

- **strategic leadership** of the academy trust - the board defines the trust vision for high quality and inclusive education in line with its charitable objects. It establishes and fosters the trust's culture and sets and champions the trust strategy;
- **accountability and assurance** - the board has robust effective oversight of the operations and performance of the academy trust, including the provision of education, pupil welfare, overseeing and ensuring appropriate use of funding and effective financial performance and keeping their estate safe and well-maintained
- **engagement** - the board has strategic oversight of relationships with stakeholders. The board involves parents, schools and communities so that decision-making is supported by meaningful engagement.

The full governing body meets six times a year at the end of a cycle of Resources, Education and Community committee meetings.

In addition, the Strategy committee met three times this year. Governors also form panels for 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 & 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 the resources committee actively involved in the audit and preparation of the annual report.



Part Two: Changes in 2024 - 2025

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

Long-term governor Spencer Shaw stood down during the year when he relocated to a new job. His place was taken by James Paveley, recruited to bring school business management experience to the board. Parent governor Steve Elsby and Community governor Sheila Copeman left at the end of Term 6.

The governing body during the year was:

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

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.



[Our Governors – Hardenhuish School](#)



Part Three: Impact Statements

The work of the governing body has been measured against the three core functions of governance and the additional key features of effective governance.

CORE FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNANCE

Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction

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 departmental development plan meetings for each of the departments and year teams. These feed into the SDP and provide a review of the past year and look at the challenges ahead. This provides the backbone to governor meetings, with curriculum and year group leaders.

A governor action plan was also drawn up and monitored throughout the year, to drive strategic projects and objectives for the governors.

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 mid-year 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.

Across the year many policies 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.

Education Committee

Chair: Andrew Wilson

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 had presentations on A Level performance and the Sixth Form, Science, Maths, Geography, History and Year 10 mock results.

Nicola Wood continued as the special educational needs link governor. She worked closely with the SENCO, Debbie Bennett, to review provision and reported regularly to the board.

Andrew Wilson continued as the pupil premium link governor and attended review meetings with the pupil premium strategy group.

Pupil premium and special educational needs remain standing items on agendas and there was considerable discussion and monitoring of both.

Community Committee

Chair: Phil Townsend

The community committee held extensive discussions on the exclusions and behaviour report. The committee also heard from pupils who are members of school parliament in order to learn more about their experience in school and continued to support the work on young carers. The committee has also played a key role in monitoring and scrutinising safeguarding matters.

Sophia Swatton continued as safeguarding link governor and met frequently with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Jo Glossop. The annual 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.

Resources Committee

Chair: Nicola Wood

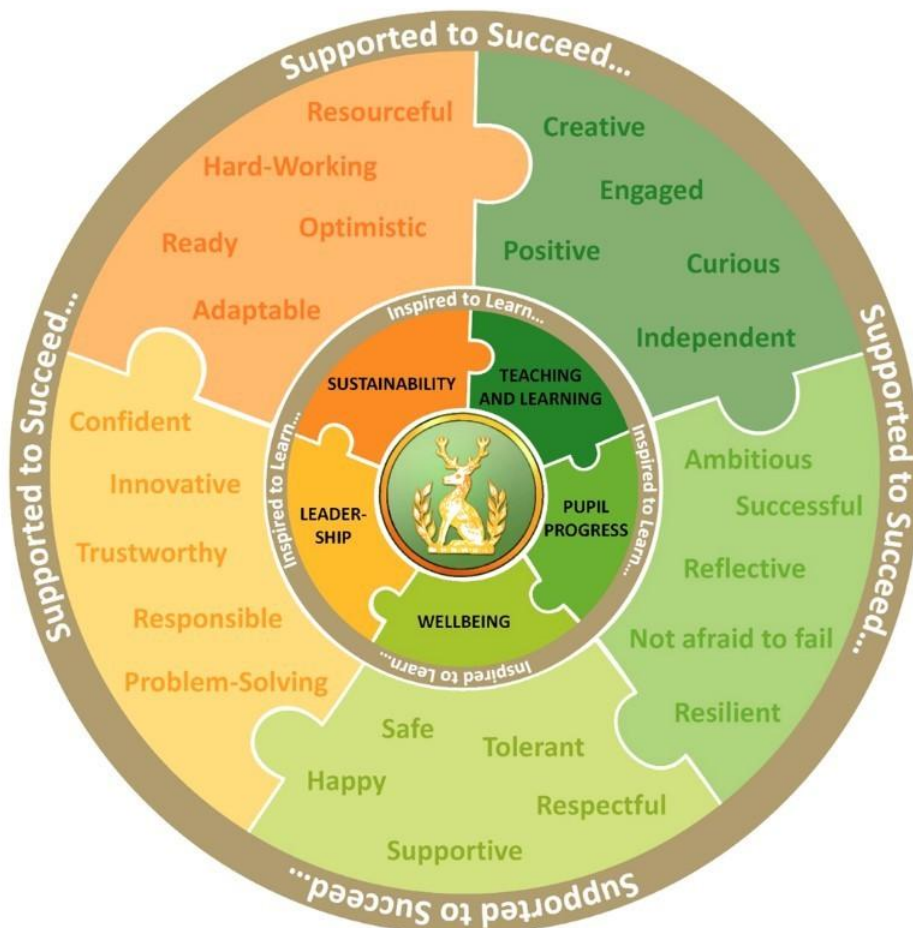
The resources committee examined staff exit surveys, took part in appointment panels, approved flexible working requests, discussed recruitment and departure and considered pay awards following staff appraisal.

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 team in ensuring that early careers teachers receive the support they need. Governors also make sure that the CPD programme is effective, and that staff wellbeing is considered in all decisions.

Strategy Committee

Chair: Kirsty Martin

The strategy committee continued its focus on multi academy trust strategies and parental engagement. Ofsted readiness and strategic direction were reviewed in Term 1 and then improvement plans developed post exam results.



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 scrutinise the accounts at every meeting. 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 have not been matched by central funding. This has resulted 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.

The school was the victim of a cyber-attack in 2023-24 which caused considerable disruption although no data was lost and the school remained open and operational throughout. Further IT security measures have been put in place this year, following funding approval by the governing body.

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.



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 local authority run induction sessions and completed their induction training. The chair and headteacher joined local authority and regional government 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 code 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 was reviewed and revised for 2024 - 2025.

Compliance with statutory and contractual requirements

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

The clerk has made sure 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 body 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

The chair remained on the board of the Wiltshire Governance Network and continued to use this network to provide a benchmark to governance at Hardenhuish. She resigned from the board of a maintained primary school and has been restoring governance at another in the county. During the year she indicated an intention to step down from Hardenhuish which led to a period of succession planning to ensure a smooth transition.

A new chair was identified to pick up the role in the autumn of 2025 and strategic recruitment to fill vacancies will follow.

Additional Impact and Contributions

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 all areas of the school curriculum, across the range of year groups and in specific focus areas such as safeguarding, special educational needs and pupil premium.





The school has a strong moral intent. Leaders make decisions in the best interests of pupils at the school. They are reflective in their practice and review the success of any changes that are made regularly and thoughtfully. Staff feel valued as professionals. Trustees share the passion of senior leaders. They know the school well. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the provision the school provides.

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