

Governance Impact Statement Full Report. March 2025- September 2025

Governing Role

The role of the Governing Body is an important one in relation to the leadership of the school. This impact statement is one way in which the Governing Body articulates their role in relation to the strategic leadership of the school and the impact that we have had on school improvement. The Governing Body is made up of a group of volunteers, who have a range of diverse skills. Their purpose is to ensure high quality education for every child in our school. The Government requires governing bodies to support the Headteacher and all the staff to shape the strategic direction of school. As Governors, we are accountable for the performance of our school and we are measured by three core strategic functions:

- Ensuring 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 the money is spent well

Governors work in partnership with the Headteacher and senior leadership team in monitoring the School Improvement Plan. (SIP). The SIP is a live document which sets out the objectives for the coming year. It is monitored and reviewed regularly by the Governing Body to ensure that priorities are progressed and actioned.

Training

All members of the Governing Body have a range of relevant training to support them in their role. A skills mix and gap analysis is undertaken each year and training needs are identified. The impact of this is that the Governing Body is kept abreast of their responsibilities regarding the latest requirements and expectations. New governors undertake induction training and are provided with a mentor to support them. All governors are required to undertake yearly safeguarding and Prevent training and then take relevant courses to up-skill themselves in areas of practice related to their responsibilities. All governors are also required to sign a Code of Conduct each academic year.

Impact of Full Governing Board Meetings

Governors attend two Full Governing Board (FGB) meetings each term. In addition, some governors meet three times a year as a Finance and Premises Committee. Governors are linked to areas of the SIP and have regular link visits and meetings with staff to monitor progress against the SIP objectives. Governor visit reports are recorded digitally and are available to all governors and senior academic staff. Opportunities to present these and address any issues is given at Full Governing Board meetings. The visits and reports impact greatly on the governing body's ability to effectively challenge and act as critical friends, and hold senior leaders to account.

School Policies

Governors review and approve policies on a regular basis and there are a group of governors with a remit to undertake this responsibility (Policy Committee) and to ensure that the policies are live and evidence based. Policies are regularly updated and those relevant to children and their parents/carers are uploaded onto the school website. The Chair of Governors has oversight of these policies and signs them off to ensure that current ones are in use.

Performance Management

Governors are responsible for undertaking the Headteacher's performance management reviews each year. Governors, supported by a local authority member, set annual targets, which are reviewed at points throughout the year. The governing body reviews the performance of the Headteacher and the regular meetings with the Chair provide an opportunity to explore areas of concern, and offer a supportive and listening environment to explore any challenges. The Governing Body as a whole meet regularly to act as critical friends and challenge where necessary to improve outcomes for both pupils and staff.

Monitoring the implementation of the Strategic Plan

Against the backdrop of the school's Strategic Plan (2023) the Governing Body have continued to uphold the Vision and Ethos of the school. The Governing Body have taken steps to revisit, review and evaluate the key pillars that make up the strategic plan and continue to scrutinise and monitor progress against each of these priority areas. This work is on-going to ensure that the plan remains relevant and up to date. As a Governing Body we are lucky to have a wide range of expertise to support this work.

School Improvement Plan and Governor Visits

Link governors have responsibility for specific areas of the School Improvement Plan (SIP). Each governor conducts monitoring visits to review their area, and they produce governor visit reports identifying strengths and offering recommendations for change/improvement. Reports are shared digitally and there is an opportunity to discuss these at Full Governing Board meetings resulting in greater accountability of staff. Monitoring visits are a mix of classroom visits and learning walks. Governors have found covering all these difficult, due to the number of governors who can access time from work during the day to undertake these. This is an area of concern and it is hoped that with the recruitment of two new governors to the team who can undertake visits during the day this situation will be addressed.

A particular area of focus of the Governing Board this year has been More Able Pupils. The Governing Body nominated a lead Governor to pay particular attention to this area, liaising with key staff and utilising school visits to understand and observe the school's approach. This monitoring will continue into next academic year.

Progress and Attainment

Governors have provided support and challenge throughout the year in relation to pupil progress and attainment.

Data is made available to governors at FGB meetings with verbal and written presentations followed by question and answer sessions with the Headteacher and members of the Senior Leadership Team. Governors have been provided with a range of data and the level of this has increased on the request of governors.

Governors ask questions to ensure the school's standards and expectations are high and that staff 'teach to the top'. Governors challenge the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team on the data, holding them to account, especially for pupils or groups of learners who may have lower attainment. Particular scrutiny is placed on pupil progress across all ability groups including the more able and on the effective use of the Pupil Premium Funding.

Capital Projects

Over recent years, security at the school has improved, with new high level fencing around the

whole school site. Old buildings have been removed and the site has been tidied. This has given more space for children to play safely and for additional resources to be put into place. Children are proud of their school and feel safe and this was noted in the last pupil survey. Future plans include a sensory garden and a Forest type space subject to funding. A new heating system was put into the old part of the school over last summer, which has improved facilities for Key Stage 2 pupils.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Governors are responsible for the data protection policy is in place and being followed. The policy is available on the school website and is monitored during safeguarding visits with the headteacher.

Impact of Finance and Premises Committee Meetings

The school budget is scrutinised and reviewed in detail at these meetings. On this committee, we have governors with strong finance skills who review end of year budgets, attend pre-budget meetings and question deficit/surplus balances. Using benchmarking information, the committee scrutinise the effect of pupil numbers on the budget and how this impacts on staffing and resources. There have been some challenges with pupil numbers in some classes but the picture is an improving one with the majority of classes full for the academic year 2025-6.

Through working closely with the School Business Manager and Headteacher, the Finance and Premises Committee continue to ensure that money is used effectively and that the school remains in a positive financial position. The financial position continues to be a concern as the budgets provided for schools in real terms has been reduced this year, however the school is thankfully in a better position than many. Delegated funding to support children with SEND continues to be an issue. The Government announced in March 2025 that 10,000 new school places would be funded for children with SEND supported by additional funding, however schools continue to struggle with underfunding to support the growing numbers. This is a national issue and the school SENCO is very proactive in relation to ensuring that children with SEND in the school are appropriately supported.

Managing the estate and the associated costs, particularly of the older part of the school continues to be problematic; Energy costs and building repairs continue to put a burden on school finances. Financing staff pay awards also puts a strain on the budget as recent pay awards have not been fully funded, which thus represents a 'further cut' to already stretched school budgets. The role of the Finance and Premises Committee and subsequently the Full Governing Board is to follow the money, and ensure that the budget works hard for every child and aspect of their education continues to be paramount. This has become increasingly difficult in the current economic climate.

Pupil Premium Funding

The Finance and Premises Committee approve the planned spend of Pupil Premium (PP) funding each year, and challenge the Headteacher and senior leaders on the impact of the spending. Governors scrutinise evidence of impact on the outcomes for PP Children. There is a designated governor for PP children who monitors evidence of impact and reports back to the governing board.

Sports Premium Funding

Alongside the PP funding, the Finance and Premises Committee monitors how the schools spends the Sports Premium Funding. The Primary PE and Sport Premium is ring-fenced and must only be spent on physical education and sport provision in schools. The funding aims to achieve improvement in all areas of PE, from the standard of physical education to introducing health focused physical activities and after school sports.

What were the significant challenges for the governing body?

One of the most significant challenges that the Governing Body has faced over the last six months has been the continuing change in governors. This turnover has been for very valid reasons, but this has meant that everything we would like to have achieved has not been possible. The loss of our Vice Chair has been particularly difficult, as she provided a lot of support and reduced The Chairs workload significantly. We, as a governing board, would like to offer her our very best wishes for the future.

Like with many schools across the country, the Governing Board currently still has vacancies. However, the quality of the team that we do have is exceptional, with a huge range of expertise and skills. This has been clearly identified in a recent skill-mix review, and it is hoped within the next few months we will be able to fill our vacancies with people who have the expertise to enhance our current team.

How were the challenges met?

Safeguarding

The 'Safeguard' software system, as a means of managing reporting, monitoring and training is now fully embedded and offers an effective means of safeguarding children. It has encouraged a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The Headteacher works closely with safeguarding governors in relation to monitoring, and the structure now in place to safeguarding visits is being used to good effect. Absenteeism is being closely monitored, as is the situation where parents remove children for the purpose of taking a holiday. This is still an area of concern which governors continue to monitor as children can lose out on learning and understanding new concepts by being absent from the classroom. The Chair of Governors who is also one of the safeguarding leads, meets fortnightly with the Headteacher to monitor any safeguarding issues as well as address any other areas of concern. An annual Health and Safety tour of the school is also undertaken by the safeguarding leads and offers a good insight into the work that the school does to ensure pupils safety. Governor monitoring visits, which are conducted by most school governors also include a focus around safeguarding.

Curriculum, teaching and learning

A focus for this academic year has been around teaching and learning. The Governing Body continues to gather, analyse and review a range of data that helps the board to have a greater insight and understanding of academic performance in the school. Teaching staff have presented aspects of their curriculum work to the governing board over the last few months. This allows the board to develop a better understanding of the types of packages used for teaching and offers the opportunity to challenge. A focus of the board has been around 'added value', 'teaching to the top', and evidence based practice.

Learning Walks where governors visit the school with a specific focus, have been undertaken recently exploring aspects of the curriculum as well as behaviour and mental health. Visits are

linked to the School Improvement Plan. These learning walks have been successful in providing more information to governors about how the curriculum is delivered and how the children in engage with the learning opportunities offered to them.

The school has recently been accepted for a research programme in relation to Science education. The Teacher Assessment in Primary Science (TAPS) project is based in Bath Spa University and funded by the Primary Science Teaching Trust (PSTT). TAPS aims to develop support for a valid, reliable and manageable system of primary school science assessment which will have a positive impact on children's learning. This project and its outcomes will continue to be monitored by the governing board. It is acknowledged that any new project/model of practice needs time to imbed, but it is important that ongoing evaluation of all aspects of the curriculum continue in order to ensure that it remains live, innovative and current.

Special Educational Needs

The new SENCO is now a firmly established member of the Senior Leadership Team. The school's involvement in a programme called 'Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools '(PINS) has been very positive and is helping to shape the current SEND provision.,

The Governing Body has welcomed this new initiative and will continue to monitor the impact that it has had. Breakfast clubs have been re-established following completion of the project to ensure that parents continue to share and support each other as well as benefit from ongoing discussions and outside initiatives.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

The Governing Body takes the mental health and wellbeing of staff and pupils extremely seriously and strives to monitor and support the school's work in this area. The most recent staff survey was very positive with staff feeling more supported. Surveys now use an evidence- based tool from the Anna Freud centre for undertaking staff surveys. One of the learning walks focused around child mental health and well-being, and the current one for this term noticed a positive change in the behaviour of children following the introduction of the new evidence- based approach. However, what was acknowledged was the number of children who do present with some behaviours which may suggest that they are struggling with their mental health. This is not surprising as research indicates that 4-5 children in a class have a mental health issue which often is unrecognised (NHS England, 2023). In light of this, as of next academic year children in Years 1-6 will be screened in an attempt to identify those that are struggling with a possible mental health issue. This is a very positive step forward, as mental health issues impact on a child's ability to learn and the sooner that they are supported, the more positive the outcome. It is also very positive that the school is now working with MIND in relation to this issue.

Leadership

The Headteacher has worked closely with the SLT, Chair of Governors and Governing Board to meet the current challenges faced by the school over the last six months. There has been a focus on staff development and she has proactively ensured that all staff are now trained in the new Paul Dix principles of behaviour management. Training will also be given on the Essex County Councils Trauma Perceptive Practice (TPP) approach in the coming academic year.

Sustainability

The Governing Body has continued to focus on delivery of the Environment and Sustainability Strategy (2023/23). One of the key elements of the strategy was to undertake a baseline audit of our energy use. This was completed in the previous academic year, meaning that we are close to having a full year – including replacement of the boiler and various energy efficiency interventions – through which we should be able to understand energy and cost efficiencies. The Governing Body will continue to monitor progress against the strategy and will undertake a review/update in 2025/26.

The Governing Body continues to ensure that there is a strong link between the Environment and Sustainability Strategy and the Finance and Premises Committee. It is keen to identify funding opportunities to implement more structural energy efficiency interventions (i.e. solar panels). The Governing Body is in contact with the Community Fund Board that is being established in conjunction with the proposed Hedgehog Grove Solar Farm. The intention is to engage the community fund and present a business case for solar panels and/or other energy efficiency actions at the school.

The Governing Body will also ensure that education around sustainability and the environment is driven through the curriculum and the School Parliament.

What have been the achievements of the governing body over the last 6 months?

- Ensuring that we continue to have a functioning Governing Body following the loss of two governors and our Vice Chair.
- Electing two new governors that can help the team to effectively act as critical friends to the Headteacher, SLT and teaching staff.
- Prioritising the well-being of both staff and pupils to support and effectively monitoring new initiatives.
- Developing confidence in the use of a range of strategies that are evidence based where possible for effective governance, training, monitoring and reporting.
- Rigorous interrogation of financial spending priorities and budget setting.
- Exploring and supporting life-long learning for all staff including training around behaviour management, communication skills and de-escalation.
- Using validated tools for stakeholder engagement
- Working to improve effective communication by listening to parents and offering changes in practice to improve communication.

How have these achievements improved areas of school life (impact)?

- Successfully establishing a governing board that has ensured that the School is better supported and constructively challenged whilst still coping with changes in the governor base.
- Ensuring that the governing board use evidence based tools for monitoring has improved the reliability and validity of the data collected and ensured a more rigorous approach.
- Having more rigorous reporting systems ensures a more rigorous approach to monitoring.
- Continued rigorous monitoring of the financial position of the School, by looking at spending priorities and budgeting.
- Prioritisation and monitoring of well-being should keep the School Community happier and healthier.
- Promoting CPD and life-long learning should impact on pupil learning and improve outcomes for children
- Stakeholder engagement is improving particularly in relation to effective communication and this needs ongoing work to ensure that stakeholders feel that they are being listened to and heard.

Yvonne Crome Chair of Governors September 2025