
Stillington Community Primary School

Governors' Report to Parents – Summer 2019

As Chair of Governors, I am committed to ensuring that all parents and carers are informed and kept up to date with the governance of our school; so, with the summer holidays upon us, I am pleased to be able to report on the work of the Governing Body during the last school year. And what a year it has been!

2018/19 has been a time of great challenge and change. The Governing Body and I are extremely impressed with how the children, staff and parents have embraced this time of transformation and have maintained their drive in wanting the best outcomes and quality of education. It is with great pride that the Governors would like to thank you all for your unerring commitment, support and belief in the school.

GOVERNORS

Our core functions as a Governing Body are to:

- ensure the clarity of [vision, ethos and strategic direction](#) of the school
- hold the headteacher to account for the [educational performance](#) of the school and the pupils
- oversee [financial performance](#) and make sure money is well spent

We held eight Full Governing Body meetings this year, after abolishing committees in September 2018 in favour of more regular Full Governing Body meetings. This has resulted in improved information-sharing and a greater collective knowledge of the school's needs and areas for improvement.

We have welcomed four new Governors: James Strangeway and Claire Allen as Parent Governors; Kate Thompson as Staff Governor; and National Leader of Governance, Peter Cannings. Mr Robinson (Headteacher) has been a member of the Board since his appointment in January, and the School's Local Authority Improvement Advisor (Amanda Bramley) supports us as an associate member.

During the year, we have reviewed and evaluated our own performance and impact, completing a Governing Body Skills Audit to ensure we have 'the right people around the table', a Governance Review, a Staff Survey and a Parent Survey, in addition to regularly monitoring our action plan and evaluating the impact we have had on school improvement.

In order to provide more effective, robust Governance, this year Governors have received training in: Core Roles and Responsibilities; Effective Challenge and Support; Monitoring Premium Funding; Understanding Data; Safeguarding Children; Driving School Improvement; Finance for New Governors; and Monitoring in Practice. In addition, Governors have attended the Local Authority Governor School-Improvement Network meetings to ensure we were well informed and up to date with the myriad of new education legislation and initiatives.

VISION, ETHOS AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Since January, Mr Robinson, the staff, children and Governors have re-visited the school's vision, values and ethos; the Governors' role is to ensure that these are central to the life of the school. To this end, we have reviewed our school policies and procedures to ensure they reflect our vision and the values that should underpin every aspect of school life. Our monitoring visits and comments from the staff, pupils and parents indicate that this is increasingly the case. Our Behaviour Statement and Policy have been rewritten to better reflect the school values and the increased expectations we have in terms of how the children tackle their learning. We have also ensured our vision is reflected in the School Development Plan which we review at each Full Governing Board meeting. The Governors recognise Mr Robinson's hard work and determination in re-placing the school's values at the very heart of the children's education and re-enforcing them through every interaction.

One of the main challenges for the Governing Body this year has been in 'setting the strategic direction' for the school. In September 2018, with a Directive Academy Order in place and HOPE Learning Trust identified as our sponsor, the way forward seemed clear. The Governing Board worked closely with the Local Authority, the Regional Schools Commissioner and HOPE Executives in order to facilitate a smooth transition into academisation. However, following HOPE's due diligence process, as you know, they withdrew from the sponsorship arrangement in December 2018. After HOPE's withdrawal, and it seeming unlikely that the Regional Schools Commissioner would identify another Academy Sponsor for the school in the near future, the Governors' focus turned to the challenge of finding an alternative structural solution for the school.

In March, as I wrote to you in the Spring Governors' Update, (*available in the Governor section of the school's website*) we entered into a formal consultation with local schools to establish whether they would be interested in forming a partnership with us, which would place education in Stillington on a more secure footing. We were supported in this approach by the Strategic Planning Team within the Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) at County Hall.

As a result of the consultation, in May we received expressions of interest from two local schools. However, following a period of discussion and information-sharing with the Headteachers and Governors involved, neither school was able to commit to any formal partnership with Stillington School. The Governing Board continue to reflect on the challenges we face in moving forward and are focused on securing a solution which can provide the best possible educational opportunities for our children.

EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

During the last year, in order to ensure that Governors could more rigorously hold the school leadership to account for implementing actions to improve educational performance, a comprehensive package of Governor training was undertaken. The January Ofsted report recognised the impact of this training: "This, along with changes to the leadership of the Governing Body, are bringing about immediate improvements to the way Governors work." And, "Governors are now asking the right questions about the school's performance [...]".

Ofsted reports can be accessed via the link on the school website.

In addition to the Ofsted judgements of the school's educational performance (at the HMI monitoring visit in October 2018 and the full Inspection in January 2019), the Governing Body have received regular, in-depth performance data reports from the Headteacher on pupils' progress, achievement and the quality of teaching. Reports of monitoring visits from Local Authority advisors have been considered and there have been regular opportunities for Governors to evaluate the school's educational performance with our School Improvement Advisor. Governors have also visited the school themselves to monitor the implementation of our improvement strategies, in particular: the impact on pupils' behaviour for learning of the new behaviour policy and reinforced school values; higher expectations and greater challenge by conducting pupil interviews and looking at work books; the provision for, and progress and attainment of, pupils with SEND; and the provision made to enable every child to perform to the best of their ability in the KS2 SATs.

In July 2019, Governors examined the school's statutory assessment data for 2018/19, which I am happy to report shows significant improvements in many areas, including:

- an increase, to 100% of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) children making expected progress since joining the school, with more than the National average achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) on the national assessment scales;
- an increase in the percentage of children achieving 'greater depth' at the end of KS2, in reading, in writing, and in maths.

Assessment data (2018/19) will be published (where applicable) on the school's website in the Autumn term and can be compared against other schools' results using the Gov.uk link.

In May, the Governing Body sought parents' views on the educational performance of the school (*the full Parent Survey results can be viewed on the school website*). 100% of respondents judged that: their child was making good progress; teaching was good; the school had high expectations of its pupils; and the school expected their child to work hard and do his/her best.

Whilst parents' views and the accelerated progress and improved achievement made by most pupils since January are extremely positive and pleasing, governors recognise there is still much to do.

The Educational Performance priorities for September (2019/20) are:

- 1) Improving the quality of teaching and learning, especially in Maths and Reading, so that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable
- 2) Developing challenge in all areas of the curriculum, ensuring that this is broad and balanced and in line with the new Ofsted expectations
- 3) Developing better behaviours for learning, especially around aspirations, independent learning skills, engagement with marking and feedback, and collaboration.

The School Development Priorities (in more depth) are available to view on the school website or on the Parents' noticeboard.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE.

As I reported in the Spring Governors' Update for Parents, the financial situation across education has been among the top issues on our strategic priority list for some time now. Governors receive detailed monthly budget updates from the school's bursar at each Full Governing Board meeting and regularly benchmark our spending against similar schools in the area. In March, we reviewed our management of the school's finances and completed the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) which is a mandatory requirement for local authority (LA) maintained schools to provide assurance to the LA that secure financial management is in place; we found that we conformed with best practice in all areas.

Throughout the year, we have regularly monitored the expenditure and impact of additional funding, 'Pupil Premium' and 'PE and Sports Funding' to ensure we are using them effectively ("The additional primary physical education (PE) and sport funding is used well to develop staff's skills and improve pupils' engagement in sport." Ofsted Jan 2019).

'Additional funding' reports are available on the school's website.

The Governing Board have reviewed and agreed the staffing levels throughout the year and approved the Teachers' Performance Review system and its outcomes.

In January 2019, following HOPE's withdrawal, we were facing a significant 'in-year' budget deficit for 2018/19. However, I am extremely happy to report that following close analysis and robust re-negotiation of our facilities contracts, careful scrutiny of our budgets and making cuts to save every penny we could without impacting on educational standards, we finished the year with a broadly balanced budget. Governors do recognise that some of the measures taken (raising school-dinner charges, trip contributions etc) have increased the burden on our families, but hope it is clear that every effort has been, and will continue to be, made to ensure we get the best possible value for money in order to be able to provide the resources necessary to drive the children's education forward.

In common with a great many other schools in North Yorkshire, our financial position becomes more challenging in 2019/20, with a small deficit predicted. However, the recent falls in our pupil numbers seriously impact on the 2020/21 budget, when we join the 42% of North Yorkshire schools predicting a significant budget deficit.

I would like to offer thanks to parents, families and FOSS for their financial support, fundraising in evermore imaginative ways, in order to provide opportunities that greatly enhance the children's learning, and to Mr Robinson and the staff team for their thriftiness. I know that the 'new and much improved' library/story area in the hall is appreciated by children and adults alike. The recent sponsored walk not only provided a valuable learning experience for the children in itself but also enabled them to have such a memorable and educational day out at Flamingo Land, without parents having to directly meet the full costs.

SAFEGUARDING

Governors have particular responsibilities to assist the Headteacher in ensuring that children are safe at school. We have reviewed policies and procedures, and have monitored their implementation to ensure safeguarding in school is effective, for example overhauling the school's Single Central Record which Ofsted later described as, "well designed and fully compliant with current requirements."

New governors have been given access to Safeguarding and Child Protection training as part of their induction process, which has enabled them to contribute to the "strong culture of safeguarding and vigilance throughout the school" (Ofsted Jan 2019).

In March the Governing Body participated in the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Board's audit of schools' safeguarding procedures and found our school to be compliant in all areas.

Our monitoring visits together with collated comments from children, staff and parents confirm our evaluation that safeguarding procedures and practice are effective.

AND FINALLY,

On behalf of the Governors, I would once again like to thank Mr Robinson and the staff for their dedication to the school and for their tremendous hard work during what has been a challenging year. They, you and of course your lovely children, make the school the special place it is.

Finally, it's a fond farewell to our seven Year 6s, may they continue to **aim high and be proud!** (And hopefully pop back to Stillington School to see us from time to time). I wish you and your families a very happy and sunny summer break.

Corinne Cross
Chair of Governors
