

## Chair of Governors Report for FGB July 2021

### Overview

I was really hoping to be writing a completely normal report this year, but instead we have gone through a whole academic year of stop-start schooling and lockdowns and have now experienced 18 months of pandemic schooling and governance.

Thank you to all governors who have continued to be regularly available on Zoom, for more meetings than we would usually have and for taking the time to complete Link Governor reports.

Thank you also to those Governors who have sent me a response to the questionnaire on our plans and thoughts for re-starting normal governance – these are included below.

The committees have met as follows:

**Admissions** has many times: (Chair Clare Swinhoe, Vinny T, Kathryn Mc, Clare B, Sarah B)  
Minutes to 10 Feb on One Drive

**Staffing & Finance** has met 4 times: (Chair Sarah Bell, Vinny T, David B, Clare B, David H)

- 12 November 2020 (via Zoom)
- 11 February 2021 (via Zoom)
- 25 March 2021 (via Zoom)
- 25 May 2021 (via Zoom)

All minutes have been distributed to all governors and are on the One Drive.

**Curriculum** has met 2 times: (Chair Clare Swinhoe, Vinny T, Kathryn Mc, Sarah Z, Clare B, Karl J, Rachel B, Claire H, Sarah B)

- 16 December 2020 (via Zoom)
- 5 May 2021 (via Zoom)

All minutes have been distributed to all governors and are on the One Drive.

**Headteachers Performance management** has met twice: (Chair Sarah Bell, Karl J, Claire H)

- 25 November 2020
- 16 June 2021

**FGB** has met 8 times:

- 30 September 2020 (via Zoom)
- 9 December 2020 (via Zoom)
- 13 January 2021 (RA – via Zoom)
- 4 March 2021 (RA – via Zoom)
- 10 March 2021 (Trust conversion – via Zoom)
- 31 March 2021 (via Zoom)
- 12 May 2021 (Trust conversion – via Zoom)
- 14 July 2021

All minutes (except most recent) have been distributed to all governors.

All governors have made considerable efforts to be available for a lot of Zoom meetings, sometimes at very short notice.

Link Governors were agreed at FGB meeting 30 September 2020 as follows:

- Safeguarding Clare Bell
- Child Protection Clare Bell
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) Rachel Brown
- Pupil Premium David Hastie
- PE / Sports Funding David Hastie
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Clare Swinhoe
- English Sarah Bell
- Maths David Baez
- RE Claire Hedley
- Science Karl Jankowski
- Computing Sarah Zarraga
- Pupil Voice Clare Swinhoe,
- Creative Curriculum Claire Hedley, Sarah Bell, Clare Swinhoe

**Link Governor visits & reports have taken place in the following:**

**Safeguarding:** (C Bell & VT) 4 Feb 2021 – report sent to all governors

**School Fund:** (C Bell & KMc) 10 June 2021 – report sent to all governors

**Literacy:** (Sarah B & KMc) Oct 2020 & May 2021 - reports sent to all governors

**Modern Foreign Languages:** (Sarah B & EK/AK)) Nov 2020 & May 2021 – reports sent to all Governors

**Geography:** (Sarah B & EK) Nov 2020 & May 2021 – reports sent to all governors

**Music:** (Sarah B & KMc) Oct 2020 & May 2021 – reports sent to all governors

**Link governor visits have also taken place in the following ( Action: Reports to be shared with all governors & uploaded to One Drive)**

**ICT:** (Sarah Z & GO)

**Maths:** (David B & LY)

**History:** (Clare S & RMc/HG)

**Art & DT** (Clare S & RG)

**SEND** (Rachel B & AJ)

**Science** (Karl J & GO)

Looking at our governance experience over the last year, three of our Governing body very helpfully gave me answers to my questionnaire and so with my input, that represents just over a third of the governing body. I have included the responses below, as it reflects the positive and negative of this year and some issues to consider going forward.

1) What have you found difficult about being a governor during covid?

*"I'm not good with IT so chairing Zoom meetings was challenging. Finding a balance between keeping the Governing body informed and not overloading them. Finding a balance between checking on Head, staff and governor welfare and being in touch too much or too little".*

*"I've personally found not having in-person contact with school difficult for a number of reasons such as the initial adaption to virtual meetings - quite difficult when agreeing big documents like the Risk Assessments. Sometimes sensitive/difficult conversations are easier done in person. Contact with the staff - chatting informally can give such a wonderful insight to how the school works, it also allows governors to gauge staff well-being as well as seeing the school in action. Pre COVID governors had worked hard at getting good links with staff; I hope this hasn't been set back. I miss the interaction with the children. As a governor I've always enjoyed spending time in school and felt part of the school family. Being in school gives you a real sense of what the school is about and you get a feel for what is going on. You are able to see the lovely things that happen and the enjoyment they bring. I think this element has been slightly lost since March 2020".*

*"I've found difficult not to be able to interact with key stakeholders (staff, parents, children) as we used to do before. Also, having to react to broad policy changes from a COVID point of view has been challenging, especially to support the head teacher in the difficult decisions we have had to make, which were unique and new for us as governors".*

*"Knowing how to/what to do to effectively support the school. This is an unknown and highly unusual time for everyone - both in school and personal. Interruption to link governor role due to changing priorities as a result of Covid. Unable to go into school for any link governor related tasks such as lesson observations/ learning walks. Personal circumstances - work extremely busy so limitations on availability to provide governor role/support".*

2) What changes to governance during covid would you keep, if any and why?

*"We have used a pre-meeting question & answer system particular for Staffing & Finance meetings but also for our Risk Assessment meetings which is very helpful. It speeds meetings up, gives a strong focus to the meeting, means everyone is well informed and still leaves space for on-the-spot questions and discussion".*

*"Some virtual meeting I'd like to see continue such as admissions. I prefer to meet in person as I've found some Zoom meetings difficult as sometimes it's tricky to speak and fully get points across. Also, my device doesn't always show everyone who is in the meeting".*

*"I think a refreshing change has been to be able to do many more things either virtually or via email. We used to rely heavily in face- to- face contact, but for some elements, being able to connect via Zoom presents benefits for everyone to close some topics in a quicker way".*

*"Use of virtual meeting technology for some meetings, probably not all - as this provides more availability/flexibility to attend meetings (having young children). Especially if there a need for a meeting at short notice".*

3) What do you think governance priorities should be in September?

*"Reconnecting as Governors and with the staff – preferably in person".*

*"COVID catch up. Pupil premium/SEN. Staff well-being. Child well-being/mental health. SDP focus as it's been tricky over the pandemic to really monitor where we are with it. Getting back to more normality, if possible, with governor visits and perhaps volunteers being able to get back in to school".*

*"Governance priorities should be to ensure our children, parents and staff feel supported, coming back to yet another year where it is still unclear whether we'll go back to normal. Being clear on what support to provide to pupils, especially those having now fallen behind in learning, would be key to ensure we deliver against our ethos to support children from all backgrounds to have the best education possible".*

*"Stock check on current status. Review of school development plan and any necessary or recent changes as a result of Covid. Review of child welfare - mental health and physical health. Review of any Safeguarding related issues".*

4) Any other comments you would like to add?

*"The governing body and the staff have all been fantastic throughout this period – in touch; available and going above and beyond on a regular basis".*

*"An appreciation of the fantastic staff we have. The pandemic has shown how wonderful they all are and that they truly have the best interests of the children and school at heart. They should all be applauded. On the whole I think as a Governing body we have risen to the challenge of COVID and adapted well. We should all give ourselves a pat on the back".*

*"I think an important reflection should be how to redefine "normal" in the first place - what is or should be "normal ", since we can also take this as an opportunity to learn and serve better the communities we support. Ultimately, we are part of a school, so if governors are not able to learn and improve, then we how can we expect others to do so, and ask them to lead our school life with confidence in the future?"*

Finally, I would like to echo the comments above and thank Vinny and all our school staff and all governors for their commitment to the school throughout an exceptionally challenging year.