

Suffield Park Infant and Nursery School Annual Governance Statement July 2021

Members:

Mrs Nichola Stewart
Dr Vivienne Lennox – Chair
Mr John Sansby – Vice Chair
Mrs Emma Borthwick
Mrs Sarah Woods
Mrs Alyson Appleyard
Cllr Tim Adams
Mrs Sarah Francis
Mrs Anne Ridley
Mrs Angela Bullock

All school governing bodies have three core strategic functions

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
2. Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils.
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure money is well spent.

Our governing body is currently made up of:

- 4 co-opted governors
- 3 parent governors
- the headteacher
- 1 staff governor

We have two vacancies for one co-opted governor and one local authority governor.

Co-opted governors are appointed by the governing body and are people who have the skills to help the governing body carry out its core functions.

The past year has been a challenge for governors as due to Covid restrictions only essential visits have been permitted in schools. As a governing body we therefore took the decision to conduct our meetings virtually by video conference. We have therefore managed to continue our usual programme of meetings and carry out our monitoring role in a different way. Governors have been able to keep in contact with the school staff via phone, video calls and email. We have also had the opportunity to join some of the school events via video link when these were being held remotely during lockdown. As restrictions eased some individual governors have been able to visit the school and we have made the most of reports back from our parent governors on how the children and staff were coping with the challenges both of home schooling and when the school reopened.

When I was able to tour the school, I was delighted to see how well settled and engaged the children were in their learning and how the staff had all managed to make the school feel as normal as possible, despite the Covid safety measures. Our children were all demonstrating how “confident, resilient, ambitious and brilliant” they are.

The full governing body has met via video call, six times during the past year and has received reports from the Head Teacher and our committees who also met regularly on zoom to monitor the work of the school.

Our committees are:

- The finance and personnel committee
- The curriculum committee
- The nursery committee
- The health and safety & buildings committee
- The strategy committee
- The headteacher's performance management committee
- The pay committee

Over the past academic year, the main areas for focus of the governing body have been:

- Supporting the Head Teacher to manage the school and nursery whilst she led the staff in their work to ensure continued safe high-quality education and support was accessible to all pupils and their families during the uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Scrutinising and approving the Risk Assessment for the safe running of the school during the Covid-19 pandemic both when fully open and during lockdowns.
- To ensure that funding for disadvantaged children is used to enable them to make accelerated progress and close the gap in attainment with other children, including supporting their continued education during the Covid-19 school closures.
- To monitor through the year, that the school was addressing the children's and staff wellbeing and emotional needs resulting from the instability and uncertainty brought about by the pandemic.
- To ensure that the school maintained the focus on improving the children's mastery of phonics and love of reading to improve their life chances. This has been aided by our continued partnership with The Wensum Trust a DfE literacy hub.
- To monitor the continued progress in developing a new bespoke curriculum for our children, designed to seamlessly build on their learning as they progress through education. We work closely with VNET, a local Norfolk educational organisation who provide a wide range of staff training and bespoke support and advice to the school.
- To ensure we offer the highest quality of education for our children whilst maintaining financial viability in both the school and the nursery during a time of reduced funding.
- Reviewing policies on a rolling programme.

The finance and personnel committee has worked with the senior management team and our finance officer to agree the school budget and spending priorities. It has monitored spending each month and adjusted the budget as required to ensure school priorities are adequately funded. It has successfully completed the Schools Financial Value Standard and ensured value for money. Staffing has been reviewed and adjusted according to pupil numbers, specific pupil needs and funding available.

The curriculum committee has looked at children's progress and the effects of home schooling on different groups of children. They have received reports from staff on how virtual home learning has been provided, evaluated, and improved following parental

feedback. They have monitored the school improvement plan, ensured safeguarding arrangements are robust, especially for those not attending during school closures and received reports of any complaints.

The nursery committee has received reports from the nursery manager and finance officer on all aspects of the nursery including opening safely during the pandemic, staffing, finance, safeguarding and the delivery of the EYFS. They have agreed the nursery budget and monitored staff workload and sustainability. They carefully considered the financial implications of the nursery closure during the pandemic and approved the use of reserves to maintain a safe environment for the children and staff.

The health and safety & buildings committee have received risk assessments and monitoring reports from the Head teacher and caretaker whilst unable to carry out the assessments themselves. They have scrutinised and monitored the ongoing Covid risk assessment and received updates whenever there was a possible case or bubble closure in the school or nursery.

The strategy committee has primarily been concerned with maintaining high quality teaching provision, both for children at home, and for vulnerable children and those of key workers who were in school. They have monitored staffing levels and wellbeing during the unprecedented workload this year when safeguarding concerns have been exceptional. They have been fully involved in strategic decisions regarding provision for the new intake of children in September 2021 and supported the Headteacher and finance officer in accessing necessary SEND funding to ensure this is in place for September.

Minutes of the governing body and committee meetings are public documents. If you would like to see any of the minutes please ask in the school office.

Priorities for governing body in the coming year include:

- To support and monitor the wellbeing of the Head Teacher and all the staff during the challenging time ahead whilst they settle children back into school and help them to catch up on missed education.
- To support and challenge where necessary, the senior management team to improve outcomes, both educational and emotional, for all children.
- Monitoring the progress of the school's development plan, which includes a focus on phonics and reading, a focus on high quality SEND provision via a Nurture Unit along with the implementation of the new school curriculum.
- Diminishing the difference in attainment between disadvantaged and other children
- To monitor the school's effectiveness against the Intent Statement
- Ensuring that sufficient funds are available to meet the needs of all pupils.
- To monitor that external partnership arrangements are the most beneficial available for our children.

We always welcome feedback and ideas from parents– please contact the Chair of Governors via the school office.