

Plaxtol Primary School

Governor's Annual Statement 2022 to 2023

As if often the case in schools this has been a year of ups and downs. One key event of the year was the Ofsted Inspection on 21st March 2023 which was one of the ups. Schools receive a phone call around midday with notice to expect inspectors the following morning. Inspectors met with three governors during the visit in addition to talking with parents and a rigorous inspection of all aspects of teaching and learning within school. The governing body were very pleased with result; that the school continues to be 'Good', which was reflected in the opening statement of the report:

"Pupils are well supported to become aspirational and independent learners in this welcoming school. Leaders create a nurturing environment, where pupils feel safe and are empowered to take risks in their learning. The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly. They are carefully considered, so that they can access the same curriculum and extra-curricular activities as their peers."

However, there were some serious challenges throughout the year due to staff sickness and absence. The governing body bore witness to how the teaching and learning team all worked above and beyond to ensure that children continued to receive the best possible education.

The purpose of Governing Body

- To ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Appointing and holding the Head Teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is spent in accordance with the school improvement plan

This is a strategic role and governors do not get involved in the day to day running of the school which is the Head Teacher's responsibility.

The Structure of the Governing Body

There were ten governors who included the Head Teacher, and one member of the staff elected by staff, one parent governor elected by parents, one local authority governor and six co-opted governors. The governors bring a wide range of skills and expertise from their professional lives to the governing board. This has included experience of finance, premises management and successful leadership in the field of education.

There are six full governing board (FGB) meetings each year and there is an independent clerk to the governors who is responsible for taking the minutes. Governance at Plaxtol Primary School follows the Circle Model which means that governors are appointed to Focus Groups.

Focus Groups

- Quality of Education
- Behaviour and Attitudes and Personal Development
- Finance, Staffing and Buildings
- Leadership and Management

Each academic year the Head Teacher and staff contribute to a School Improvement Plan (SIP) and a Self-Evaluation Folder (SEF) which is shared with governors. Governors undertake monitoring visits in their allocated area to observe the progress made in the areas identified in the SIP. A report is written which is shared with all governors and discussed at the FGB.

Monitoring visits

This year governors have completed monitoring visits for English, Maths, Writing, Phonics, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Behaviour and Attitudes with a focus on attendance, Pupil Premium, Sports Premium, Finance and Budgeting, Health and Safety of the Premises, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Safeguarding. The visits have provided a fresh perspective and help to encourage reflective practice. The school has moved forward and plans more effectively.

Head Teacher Briefings

The Chair of governors has met with the Head Teacher on a fortnightly basis to provide support and challenge.

Data

Progress and tracking data are shared with governors at key points throughout the academic year. Governors can question how data is collected and used to support learning and target setting. Staff may be 'provoked' to have deeper professional conversations about the quality of teaching and learning.

Behaviour and Attitudes and Personal Development

Attendance was a priority and was improved via a new monitoring system by the headteacher. This enabled the headteacher to identify at risk pupils and work with the whole family. Weekly attendance data is published in the school newsletter. There was also a focus on raising awareness of peer mentors in the playground to support children's wellbeing. High attendance has a huge impact on the outcomes of all children.

Financial monitoring

Members of the Finance, Staffing and Buildings Focus Group have had regular contact with the Bursar. They have been involved in scrutinising the budget and subsequently reviewing the financial outturn relative to the budget six times a year, including at each quarter end. These reports have been discussed by the FGB to ensure that the school remains on track financially. Governors have also reviewed significant contracts negotiated by the school to ensure value for money and looked at benchmarking reports to follow up any areas of income and expenditure which might be out of line with similar schools. The strong pupil numbers and prudent financial management have helped the school generate a modest surplus and thus strengthen its financial reserves.

Policies

The school has in excess of sixty policies many of which are reviewed on an annual basis. Draft policies are circulated within the appropriate focus group for feedback and then discussed at the next FGB prior to approval. Policies provide the strategic backbone of the school which inform the day-to-day operation of all areas of school life.

Informal visits

Governors have been invited to a range of school events over the course of the year. This has included the Macmillan coffee morning, assemblies including an assembly on Safer Internet Day and Anti-Bullying Week, sports day, school plays and end of term events. It is a great opportunity to see the school in action and marvel at how the staff achieve so much in addition to their teaching role. Governors have also had the opportunity to meet with parents at these events and appreciate the role of the P.T.A. in supporting social occasions and in fundraising. Their hard work supports the school in many ways.

Future Plans

The Head Teacher and staff will use the Ofsted report to inform their planning in the S.I.P. and S.E.F. for the next academic year. A new Assistant Head Teacher and Special Educational Needs Coordinator will be appointed.