

Plaxtol Primary School

Learning together - school, family, community

Governors' Annual Statement - 2020/2021

2020/21 has been another very unusual and difficult year for the school and we'd like to start our report by praising the leadership team and staff for their determination to deliver the curriculum to all pupils, whatever the circumstances.

We set out here some information on the work of the Governing Body (GB) and what it has achieved this past academic year. It is not intended to be a full report but highlights some of the key points which we hope will be of particular interest to parents, carers and the wider community. We welcome any comments or suggestions as we move into the 2021/22 academic year.

Governance Structure and Full Governing Body meetings

The GB is made up of 9 Governors as follows

- 2 parent Governors, elected by parents
- 1 Local Authority Governor
- 1 staff Governor appointed by the staff
- Headteacher
- 4 Co-opted Governors appointed by the GB based on a skills audit
- 1 associate governor

We have recently appointed a new governor to join the team in September 2021. If you are interested in joining the governing body please do make contact with the school office - office@plaxtol.kent.sch.uk.

During 2020/21 we had six Full Governing Body (FGB) meetings and one planning meeting with an almost full attendance record. All meetings were held remotely.

Governors' Strategic Role

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

More information on the structure and role of Governors is available on the school website: www.plaxtol.kent.sch.uk/meet-the-governors

The GB has adopted the circle model structure which means there are no committees, except for the Headteacher's Appraisal Committee and the Pay Committee. This allows the Governing body to take a holistic view of the school.

Governor Monitoring

In a normal year Governors visit the school at least three times a year for each of their monitoring areas. These visits allow Governors to communicate with staff, and very occasionally with pupils, to ensure that actions agreed in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) are being addressed. Following each visit a report is prepared and presented at the next FGB meeting.

In 2020/21 Governors were responsible for ensuring that the school's remote education programme fulfilled the requirements set out in Government guidance as well as monitoring in-school provision. The chair and vice chairs had regular meetings with the Headteacher and Governors continued to monitor their specific areas. Most of these meetings took place remotely. Health and safety, wellbeing of staff and pupils and safeguarding were particular priorities given the ever changing directives from the government and the disruption caused by staff absences and isolations.

Quality of Education

In a normal year Governors analyse data such as SATs and Phonics Screening Check results, Analyse School Performance, Making Figures Speak For Themselves (produced by the government) and the School Summary Sheet (KCC). In 2020/21 this data was not available but Governors were presented with in-school data enabling them to ask challenging questions on how gaps in attainment and progress were being addressed and how catch-up money was being used.

As part of their monitoring Governors continued to pay particular attention to the progress of vulnerable groups to ensure that the curriculum was made available to all pupils, whether in school or at home.

Premises/Health and Safety

During this academic year Governors have continued to witness works being undertaken to improve the H & S of the premises, despite the limitations brought about by Covid. All shrubs on the boundary with School Lane have been pruned and made safe, all C1 and C2 electrical works have been completed and improvements to the kitchen resulted in it being given a clean bill of health in its annual inspection. The Headteacher and staff worked hard to reorganise the use of the school premises and facilities during Covid to enable the safe functioning of the school. Their work was supported by the H & S Governors who continuously reviewed the arrangements and risk assessment prior to implementation.

Safeguarding

As well as monitoring visits during the year, Governors with specific responsibility for safeguarding spoke regularly with the Headteacher/Deputy Safeguarding Lead during lockdown, as safeguarding priorities evolved. Governors used the KCC self-review tool to monitor compliance with safeguarding policies and there was a particular focus during the first half of the year on ensuring that pupils understand what is meant by bullying, on-line safety, and also on staff well-being and workload. During lockdown, Governor focus included vulnerable children and their families, and staff and pupil well-being.

Finance

Informal visits to school The Governors monitored the school budget on a regular basis throughout the year, receiving explanations for variances from the Bursar and Headteacher. The budgets for 2021/22 and the following two years were scrutinised and challenged by Governors to ensure that the school can manage its resources to deliver on its plans over this period. The Governor with specific responsibility for finance kept in regular contact with the Bursar and also undertook monitoring to confirm that the school: has procedures in place to make sure that it receives value for money when it makes purchases; and has controls in operation to safeguard its finances. Monitoring results are reported and discussed at Meetings of the full Governing Body. The Governors supported the Headteacher in obtaining assistance and grants towards various maintenance costs and would like to acknowledge the very significant contribution to the school's finances made by the PSA once again this year.

Policies

All relevant statutory and non-statutory policies due for updates were reviewed during the academic year to ensure that guidance is up to date. A rolling cycle of policy updates, in accordance with KCC recommendations and statutory requirements, is in place. Child friendly policies written by the pupils are in place in a number of relevant areas.

Informal Visits to School

Generally Governors are invited by the Headteacher to visit the school for events such as assemblies and plays which provides an opportunity to see the school in operation and get to know staff and pupils. Unfortunately there were few opportunities in 2020/21 because of Covid but visits are taking place again in the autumn term, 2021.

School closures during 2020 / 21 academic year

During these periods the chair remained in regular contact with the Headteacher and staff whilst all Governors continued to monitor their respective areas, remotely where necessary. Parent governors reported on the quality of the school's remote learning programme and feedback was sought and obtained from other parents. Governors have been aware of the huge pressure on the leadership team in dealing with the difficult circumstances and have been keen to help and alleviate pressure wherever possible, whilst still carrying out monitoring of all key areas.

Governing Body Skills and Training

The GB recognises that in order to fulfil its role effectively it must ensure that Governors have the required skills. Annual skills audits are undertaken each year to establish where further training is needed and where Governor recruitment should be focussed.

New Governors are selected with this in mind and all Governors undertake training where there are gaps in skills. During 2020/21 many training courses were attended online. Key points from training were shared at GB meetings.

Our plans for 2021/22

We are looking forward to a more normal school year for staff and pupils but we will be prepared to support changes should they occur. Our role will continue to work together with the Headteacher, staff, parents and wider community to ensure the continuing upwards trend in progress for all pupils as identified in the SIP. In the first part of the year particular attention will be paid to monitoring the closure of gaps in learning that have occurred during lockdown and to ensuring that a gradual return to a broad based curriculum takes place. All key priorities identified in the SIP will be monitored regularly with written reports and follow up actions recorded at Governor meetings. Leadership and staff workload will be an area that Governors will regularly discuss with the Headteacher. A key priority for the GB is to find the right balance between challenge and support when carrying out our role, particularly during periods of disruption to normal school routines.

Feedback

The GB welcomes comments and/or questions from parents on this impact statement and the role of the Governors. Please email any suggestions for improvements, comments or questions to the school office, office@plaxtol.kent.sch.uk. A full list of Governors, their attendance at meetings and other information is available on the Governors' page of the school website www.plaxtol.kent.sch.uk.