

Spring Bank Annual Governance Statement 2022-23

1. Introduction

The [Governance Handbook](#) defines the three core functions of governance as:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent

The governing board also ensures that the school complies fully with statutory safeguarding procedures and works with the safeguarding lead in school to complete an annual safeguarding self-assessment.

This aim of impact statement is to share the strategic work of the governing board in relation to school improvement and the discharge of statutory duties. The day to day management of the school is the responsibility of the headteacher and senior leadership team.

2. The composition of the governing board

To comply with statutory requirements ([What maintained schools must publish online](#)) our school website has a page with information about our governance arrangements including our structure, responsibilities and committees and attendance of governors at meetings.

The governing board currently has several vacancies for co-opted governors because of numerous resignations during the year. We look forward to welcoming a new parent governor, replacing a long-standing governor whose child has left the school. We are extremely grateful to all our outgoing governors for their hard work, commitment and enthusiasm for the school. We are also grateful to our associate governor, a highly experienced governor who has joined us on a temporary basis to help us develop our processes as we move towards academisation.

3. Meetings of the governing board

The full governing board meets up to 5 times a year plus extraordinary meetings; all meetings are clerked by a trained professional clerk. Our committees (Teaching and Learning, Pupil Support) normally meet once each term and have delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of the governing board. They are also professionally clerked. Committee membership and the committee structure is reviewed at the beginning of each academic year. We have also had working groups and ad hoc meetings during the year to deal with matters relating to the academisation process. Apologies for non-attendance are considered on an individual basis.

As of 2023-24, following the recommendation of a National Leader in Governance who reviewed the board early this school year, we are moving to working without committees.

4. The focus of our strategic oversight

We have continued to focus on the areas identified by Ofsted (in the 2021 full visit report and the 2022 monitoring visit report):

- Curriculum development
- Leadership and management
- Attendance and punctuality
- Early Years provision

Additional areas requiring particular attention that have emerged this year are:

- Financial systems and processes

- SEND provision

The work of the governing board includes monitoring visits, to extend our understanding of the school and to “triangulate” information that school leaders provide to governors. This includes monitoring the progress of the school improvement priorities listed above as well as numerous statutory duties, which include safeguarding and provision for pupils with additional needs.

Our monitoring also takes into account external reports and feedback from stakeholders including pupil, staff and parent surveys.

The process begun by letters from the Department for Education regional director in October, and leading eventually to the school receiving a directive academy order in March and Owlcoates MAT being confirmed as our sponsor in May, has required extensive additional work from governors.

5. The impact of the governing board

Whilst this is not an exhaustive list of our work over the past year, the board has worked together in our strategic role on:

- **Attendance:**
 - We have monitored the rates of pupil attendance, and have worked with the leadership team to review the various strategies the school has in place to tackle non-attendance.
- **Staffing and leadership:**
 - We have discussed, approved, reviewed, and developed a suitable reporting and accountability structure for, a new temporary leadership arrangement with an executive headteacher
 - We undertook extensive preparatory work for the recruitment of a new headteacher. Although this process did not go ahead because of other developments (notably the beginning of the DfE intervention) the preparatory work will be useful in next year’s recruitment process.
 - We have reviewed and approved proposals for changes in the staffing structure
 - We have secured temporary support in the crucial area of SEN from another local school, and have reviewed and approved staffing plans to meet the needs of specific children
 - We have kept under close review the situation in relation to staff sick leave
 - A governor has participated in the interview process for new members of staff
 - We recognise that we need to do more in the area of staff well-being. We have responded to staff concerns following the announcement of the directive academy order
 - We have instituted a policy of exit questionnaires for members of staff who leave
- **Performance management:**
 - We have worked with an external advisor to set targets for the acting headteacher as part of the regular appraisal process
 - We have reviewed performance management processes and discussed necessary improvements
- **Policies:** Governors have approved policies and procedures and publish statutory policies on the school website.
 - To support compliance, all statutory policies are recorded on a review schedule which indicates the date of the last review and next scheduled review. We have audited the school website for assurance that all statutory policies are available and up to date.
 - The governing board has prepared a written statement of behaviour principles, which is published on the school website, and is the basis for the school behaviour policy.
- **Pupil attainment:** We regularly receive and review pupil attainment data, and governors have undertaken training in the interpretation of pupil data.
 - We have monitored closely the progress of pupils in years 2 and 3, after last year’s end of KS1 data suggested that pupil progress had been slower than expected in year 2. We

are satisfied that there is evidence that both year groups are now attaining expected standards.

- We have seen a very significant increase this year in the number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. We have reviewed how the school is supporting pupils in this group, including through monitoring visits to Reception (where there is a particularly high proportion of EAL pupils).
- We are also monitoring closely the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils – including those eligible for pupil premium – and their peer group. We are able to monitor these pupils' progress through data, and to discuss specific strategies that the school is adopting to close the gap – reviewing, and making suggestions for, the detailed action plan that appears on the school's website. One clear finding is that low attendance is a major factor in pupils' low attainment in this group, which reinforces the importance of work on attendance.
- **Safeguarding:** Safeguarding covers health and safety in the classroom and physical & emotional wellbeing in school, and at home.
 - We have regularly monitored processes and procedures to ensure all school staff have been safely recruited; made sure that training of staff is up to date and procedures followed to maintain a safe environment for our children including checks to ensure that volunteers and visitors to the school are suitable.
 - We reviewed the safeguarding self-assessment completed by school which provided assurance to the board of the robustness of systems and procedures, with termly governor monitoring to confirm that procedures are in place and being followed to keep children safe.
- **Financial management:** This year our resources committee, working with the school leaders and business manager and with the Owlcotes MAT team, has worked very hard to improve the transparency and reliability of our accounting processes.
 - We have approved a budget that eliminates the in-year deficit and reduces the historic deficit.
 - We have undertaken thorough monitoring of the Extended Services budget, with a refresh of all financial systems and procedures now being implemented, and options for future expansion of this out of school hours club being progressed.
 - Governors reviewed and completed the School Financial Value Standard (SFVS) to provide the assurance that school meets the standards necessary to achieve a good level of financial health and resource management. Various actions were identified and taken forward as a result of the audit.
 - We have implemented new and improved processes for monitoring service level agreements (including benchmarking), financial delegation, and auditing of unofficial school funds.

6. The effectiveness of the board

The governing board was reviewed by a National Leader for Governance in early 2023. We have implemented most of the recommendations from the report, which included:

- the appointment of a vice-chair
- a move to working without committees (which we will do from summer 2023 onwards)
- improvements to financial management and reporting (ongoing)
- ensuring consistent monitoring of key areas of compliance, through governor visits and reviews of visits by external monitors (although this will need further review for 2023-4 in the light of governor resignations)

Progress has also been made, although some further discussion is needed, on

- agreeing format and timetable of data to be presented to governors

We have had less success with

- recruiting additional governors or increasing the size of the board

This is less important in the light of our transition to a Local Governing Board (which in Owlcotes has a minimum membership of 7 including 2 parent representatives and 2 staff representatives). We are, however, endeavouring to recruit more governors – most recently through an advertisement on GovernorHub.

We have undertaken a skills audit of the governing body and we keep a rolling record of training completed. This year governors have completed training on subjects including school finances, safer recruitment, pupil premium funding, interpreting school data, and preparing for Ofsted.

Beyond the NLG review, in 2023-4 we might look to find more effective ways to monitor and support

- staff well-being
- how the school responds to change