

The Crossways Schools' Governors Annual Statement and Impact Report 2020 – 2021

The Governing board at our federation endeavour to fulfil the role defined by Government supported by the Local Authority. In doing so we hope that we can help to make our federation the very best it can be for the benefit of our children and be even better today than we were yesterday.

The Department for Education guidance specifies that the annual statement should explain how we have fulfilled our responsibilities, including:

- the governance arrangements that are in place, including the remit of any committees;
- the attendance record of individual governors at board and committee meetings
- an assessment of the effectiveness and impact of the board and any committees with details of any particular challenges that have arisen

Before covering these areas we should firstly explain that the governors' role is intended to be strategic in nature while being a "critical friend" to the Executive Head Teacher and the federation leadership team who are responsible for the day to day operational running of the schools. In reviewing the way the schools work, the governors have gained an enormous respect for all the staff in the federation. The amount of effort, care for our children, and "going the extra mile" we see on a regular basis from all our staff, is nothing short of inspirational. It is not only academic progress that is in evidence in the school, but all the clubs and other activities such as shows, trips, residential trips, and sports events, that show what a broad and fulfilling education our children benefit from in our federation. We would like to take this opportunity to give a huge thank you to all our staff for the level of effort and care they all contribute.

Governor Meetings

At The Crossways Schools members of the governing board have played, and continue to play, a strong role in driving the federation forward. The current governors who are all listed on the website, are all volunteers, giving up their own time to fulfil the roles for the benefit of our children.

There have been four full governing board meetings for the year 2020 – 2021. These have all taken place virtually, due to COVID restrictions. Governor attendance has, as always, been of a very good level, with any absences having been fully explained and accepted and approved by the governing board.

There are no causes for concern at the level of commitment shown by any member of the governing board. On the website, the governor's section highlights governor attendance at meetings.

We also have an experienced clerk that helps us to ensure all our records are up to date and meetings are minuted and we have a number of sub-committees that perform much of the detailed work in accordance with their terms of reference:

Finance and Resource Committee

Responsible for monitoring and reviewing the school budget and the school funds at regular intervals, as well as ensuring appropriate financial processes and controls are in place. The Finance and Resource Committee is also responsible for the maintenance and health and safety aspects of the school buildings, and decisions on the use of the premises outside school hours.

Pay Committee

Responsible for approving changes to the staffing structure, including any changes in roles, as well as monitoring the performance management and staff development processes.

Pupil Development Committee

Responsible for monitoring pupil progress and attainment, as well as ensuring an appropriate curriculum is being delivered throughout the schools.

Full Governing Board

Responsible for approving the budget for the schools, and approval of large capital spend on the schools. Governors understand that the staff team are hugely important to the success of the school, as are happy, healthy children and we have governors with specific responsibilities in relation to their mental health and well being.

Governors appreciate too, the requirements of our children's parents and carers and their need to be listened to and responded to, to ensure that they are satisfied with the safety, learning and enjoyment of their children.

To achieve their objectives governors too must continually evaluate the role they have played within the life of the schools, and publish relevant information to all interested parties.

This statement and report are part of that evaluation and publication process.

School Development Plan (SDP)

Governors work co-operatively with the Executive Head Teacher and federation leadership team in writing and monitoring the School Development Plan. The School Development Plan sets aims for the forthcoming year. The SDP for 2020/21 was based on priorities identified from school self-evaluation, local authority and Ofsted priorities. The SDP is set out with clear aims, the key tasks which will be completed in order to achieve these aims and the success criteria in order to measure outcomes. The SDP is monitored and reviewed regularly, with an evaluation overview being completed and presented to governors alongside the Executive Head Teacher report regularly during the year. The SDP also includes the specific development areas for the governing board, which this year have included succession planning, and increasing breadth and depth of knowledge in the governing board. Governors' specific responsibilities are also aligned with the SDP priorities each year.

The targets of the school development plan 2020/21 included the following key priorities:

- Revisiting the federations vision, mission and values, involving staff, children, parents and governors
- Designing and implementing a new curriculum that reflects the context of the community and places cumulative, coherent and logically sequenced knowledge (in all subjects) at the heart of its intent so that pupils know how to think, how to learn (metacognition) and as a result are able to remember more; and
- Reviewing the federation's approach to inclusive Teaching and Learning to ensure that it takes account of the most up-to-date cognitive science and associated pedagogical principles.

In normal times the governors visit the school as part of their monitoring of the SDP and of specific issues. These visits are considered a valuable opportunity for governors to be able to work closely with staff members across the school. However remote sessions have been possible for governors to monitor progress in designing the new curriculum being implemented to meet the new requirements.

Data analysis

Data is made available to governors two to three times a year with verbal and written presentations followed by question and answer sessions with the Executive Head Teacher, Curriculum Lead, and Inclusion lead. By doing this the governors are able to benchmark their data against similar schools, the Local Authority and schools nationally to ensure the schools' standards and expectations are high and are able to be closely scrutinised.

Particular scrutiny is placed on pupil progress across all ability groups including vulnerable groups and on the effective use of the Pupil Premium funding.

Policies

Governors review all relevant policies on a programmed basis to ensure that all guidance is current and up to date.

Specific attention is paid to ensure that the school complies with the Department of Education mandatory policy list and the Local Authority recommended list.

Financial management

The Crossways Schools have a Finance and Resource Committee who are fully committed to ensuring that the school money is spent effectively for all pupils. Governors have attended Financial Management training and some have a professional background in finance.

The governors have worked closely with the Executive Head Teacher and the School Business Manager to monitor the school budget.

The impact of the governors' role in the school ensures that the budget is managed effectively and financial resilience is monitored closely.

Staff recruitment

The federation leadership team and chair of governors are trained in "Safer Recruitment".

Governors are involved in the recruitment and selection of teaching staff and use the appointment process to ensure that high quality staff who share the federations values and aims are appointed.

Governor Training

During this academic year, governors have attended training in a range of subjects relevant to their roles on the governing board, including changes in OFSTED requirements.

Impact statement – review:

The governing board, the Executive Head Teacher and the federation leadership team and indeed all members of staff are constantly striving to improve and develop the school.

This year has been one focused on keeping staff and children safe, evaluating and acting upon the impacts of lockdown on the children's learning and social needs. This is in addition to also developing an exciting new curriculum to meet the new requirements in this area, where the curriculum is focused on interwoven learning across subjects and year groups, tailored to be focused on The Crossways Schools' values and position in the world.

Key priorities that the Governing Board have acted upon during 2020 – 21

This year has been an exceptionally demanding and eventful year, particularly in light of the global pandemic. Key activities included:

1. Supporting the integration of the new Executive Head Teacher
2. Approving the introduction of leadership roles, including School Business Manager and learning Phase leads
3. Supporting the federation leadership team ensure the schools remained open throughout the lockdown period.
4. Monitoring the continued impact on the budget of the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Reviewing the robust and effective risk assessment for children attending school during lockdown and thereafter.
6. Monitoring home learning provision during the lockdown period of COVID-19 through approval and monitoring of the home learning policy.
7. Scrutinising and analysing pupil progress and attainment data twice during the year, in the context of the impact of COVID19.
8. Monitoring the effective use of the catch-up funding which was provided to support children in the social, mental health and educational needs.

9. Working alongside staff leads for children and staffs' mental health and well being to ensure concerns are understood and responded to.
10. Providing support and challenge to the federation leadership team in the progress being made against the priorities set in the school development plan.
11. Analysing the impact of covid 19 restrictions and additional costs on breakfast club and after school club and approving price changes to reflect covid impact on capacity and additional associated costs
12. Meeting with local authority inclusion and learning specialists in implementing recommended actions as part of continual school improvement.
13. Ensuring compliance with website statutory requirements.
14. Monitoring changes in pupil numbers and the implications for both budget and staffing.
15. Setting and monitoring the budget and financial performance six times a year.
16. Reviewing and approving the federation policies in line with requirements.
17. Monitoring of the school's performance management cycle.
18. Overseeing the continual compliance in school with the General Data Protection Regulations.
19. Completing of and approving the School Financial Value Standard, including identifying and acting upon areas for improvement.
20. Reviewing and approving proposed changes to the staffing structure.
21. Working alongside the Executive Head Teacher, designated safeguarding lead and inclusion lead to ensure provision for vulnerable and key workers children during the period of lockdown and to ensure the safeguarding of all children, particularly those who were vulnerable.

Some of our aspirations for the coming year are to launch the revised vision and values for The Crossways Schools, that really bring to life what the federation's community says makes Crossways special, to rebuild the close ties with our parent and carer community and more widely within our local community and to see the curriculum embedded and the children fully catch up in terms of progress and attainment in their learning.



Emma Aiken-Jones
Chair of Governor
30 September 2021