



Governance Statement for Staplehurst School for the Academic Year 2015/16

Functions and Structure

In accordance with the Government's requirements for all Governing Bodies, the three core strategic functions of the Governing Body of Staplehurst School are:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the Headteacher 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 well spent.

The Governing Body of Staplehurst School is made up of 15 Governors including the Headteacher, one Staff Governor, two Parent Governors, one Local Authority Governor and ten Co-opted Governors.

The full Governing Body (FGB) met five times in the 2015/16 school year. The FGB delegates certain functions to its four sub-committees – Learning & Development; Community, Engagement & Growth; Finance & Premises; and Staff & Pay. As well as sitting on one or more of these committees, each of our Governors is asked to take on a Link Governor role, i.e. responsibility for monitoring a specific aspect of the school, such as Safeguarding, Literacy, Numeracy or Finance. Details of individual Governors, their terms of office, attendance records, which committee(s) they sit on and their link roles can be found on the 'Governors' section of the school website alongside individual biographies.

Objectives, achievements and challenges for 2015/16

One of the Governing Body's objectives for 2015/16 was to fill its remaining vacancies and this was achieved with the appointment of five new Governors in 2016. Where possible, the Governing Body recruits new members based on their skills and experience in order to fill any skills gaps identified and look longer-term towards succession-planning. Our new Governors bring a wide range of experience in areas such as finance, premises, education, legal, marketing and fund-raising. New Governors are always required to attend induction training and are mentored by more experienced members to help them build their confidence and make a positive contribution to the governance of the school as soon as possible.

Another objective was to review the structure of the Governing Body's sub-committees. The subsequent re-structure in May saw the creation of a new committee – Community, Engagement & Growth – which focuses on the future development of the school as well as improving communications and relationships with parents and the wider community. A working party within the Community, Engagement & Growth Committee was also created to look specifically at the need for and viability of an on-site pre-school and extended wrap-around care. This is something which we believe could benefit both the school and the children, but would require a significant amount of planning and work.

The Governing Body is committed to ensuring and promoting the safety of the children and staff as well as visitors, and safeguarding is a standing item at all FGB meetings. We have a dedicated, hands-on Safeguarding Governor who liaises closely with the Inclusion Manager and is responsible for producing a robust annual auditing report as well as regular updates to the FGB. Pupil welfare is another priority which comes under this banner and, as part of the re-structure, a working party was formed to focus on Pupils' Personal Development, Behaviour & Welfare which encompasses safeguarding, equality, e-safety, well-being and healthy schools.

2016 was the first year that the SATs were based on the new, more challenging National Curriculum introduced in 2014. Governors were aware of the challenges that this brought both for the teachers and the children. There were some positive outcomes – the percentage of children in Early Years who achieved a good level of development and the percentage of children in Year 1 who passed the phonics test were higher than both national and Kent averages. In Key Stage 2, the figures for writing were above the national and Kent averages for those children 'working at the expected standard and above' and also for those 'working at greater depth'. The school also achieved higher than both the Kent and national averages for the percentage of pupils 'working at a higher standard' in maths as well as for those 'working at a higher standard' across reading, writing and maths combined. However, there were areas for improvement and we are working to ensure that these are addressed.

As well as attending FGB, committee and working party meetings, Governors also came to one or more of the 'Governor Days'. These days give Governors the opportunity to meet and chat with pupils and staff, experience a typical school day and carry out their monitoring duties. Governors regularly say that this is their favourite aspect of governance and, in the reports which they submitted following their visits, gave feedback which was overwhelmingly positive about the children's behaviour and attitudes to learning. Governors also attended celebratory events such as Sports Day and the Christmas and Year 6 leavers' performances.

Priorities for 2016/17

Our key priorities are to:

- use the school's performance data to identify areas for improvement with the aim of raising levels of expectation, attainment and progress amongst the children;
- move forwards with the plans towards establishing an on-site pre-school and extend the school's wrap-around care provision;
- continue to keep abreast of Government policy regarding academisation and review what would be best for Staplehurst School;
- monitor the effectiveness of the new Governing Body structure.