



## **Governance Statement for Staplehurst School for the Academic Year 2017/18**

### **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 12 Governors including the Headteacher, one Staff Governor, two Parent Governors, one Local Authority Governor and seven Co-opted Governors.

The Full Governing Body (FGB) met six times in the 2017/18 school year. The FGB delegates certain functions to its sub-committees – Learning & Development; Finance & Premises; and Leadership Group Performance Management. 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 or priority of the school, such as Safeguarding, Special Educational Needs, Health & Safety or Finance. Details of individual Governors, their terms of office, attendance records and which committee(s) they sit on can be found on the 'Governors' section of the school website.

### **Objectives, achievements and challenges**

Following the resignation of our Chair of Governors in December 2017, the Vice-Chair, Chris Roome, was appointed as our new Chair and Caroline Bennett as our Vice-Chair. The Governing Body saw six Governors leave over the last academic year – either due to their terms of office ending or because they were relocating. Six new Governors were recruited who bring a wide range of skills to the Governing Body.

One of the biggest challenges for 2018 was the unexpected absence of the Headteacher from January onwards. Our new Deputy Head, Amanda Stevenson, stepped up to the role of Acting Headteacher and the Chair and Governing Body endeavoured to support her during what was a challenging time.

The visit by Ofsted inspectors in May led to the downgrading of the school's rating from 'Good' to 'Requires Improvement'. This was disappointing for all concerned, but Governors were already aware of the areas which inspectors identified for improvement and were encouraged by the acknowledgement of the progress which had been made towards raising standards. This was validated by the SATs results in July which were the best overall results the school had achieved for three years. The percentage of children achieving the expected level of attainment or above increased in Key Stage 2 across Maths, Reading, Writing and Spelling, Punctuation & Grammar (in some cases by over 20% compared to 2017) as it did

for those children achieving greater depth. The percentage of children working at a Good Level of Development in Early Years increased from the previous year and Governors were also pleased with the Key Stage 1 results which were above the national average.

One of the school's aims for 2017/18 was to establish wrap-around care by setting up an after-school club in time for the start of the new academic year. The Governing Body assessed various options (including in-house and outsourced) and decided to outsource the provision to Harlequins because of their well-established track record in providing after-school care and their 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating.

The safety of the children is of the utmost concern to the Governing Body which noted the need for improvements to the school site to enhance security and allocated funds accordingly. Fencing around the school site has been improved and there is ongoing work to improve access control to the site which includes access-controlled doors within the school and video entry at the school gates.

Staplehurst experienced ongoing issues surrounding inconsiderate parking and congestion at drop-off and pick-up times with real concerns for the safety of pupils, siblings and parents. Governors liaised with the Parish Council, Borough Councillors and Kent Highways in order to discuss how these problems might be alleviated. This is not specific to Staplehurst – many other schools experience similar issues – and the Governing Body continues to explore potential solutions – both long and short-term.

Following the resignation of Headteacher, Cathy Farthing, in May, the Governing Body took immediate action in order to recruit a new substantive Headteacher as soon as possible. The Governing Body appointed a Headteacher Recruitment Panel, which consisted of three Governors, in order to carry out the recruitment and appointment process. Following two days of rigorous exercises and interviews, the Panel recommended the appointment of Lucy Davenport. Ms Davenport, who will bring a wealth of experience and strategic vision to the school, joins in February 2019 and will be ably supported by Mrs Stevenson as Deputy Head.

Budgetary constraints continue to be a challenge across schools in the UK and Staplehurst is no exception. The Finance & Premises Committee works closely with the Headteacher and Business Manager to ensure that the school's money is spent efficiently and effectively and that savings are made wherever possible without compromising the quality of educational provision for the children.

**Our key priorities for 2018/19 are to:**

- Challenge leaders on the actions being taken to address areas for improvement such as pupil performance and quality of teaching;
- Look at the Governing Body's structure and meeting/monitoring schedules in order to ensure that it is as effective as possible;
- Have oversight of the budget in line with the school's priorities;
- Liaise with relevant stakeholders to identify solutions to the parking/traffic issues outside the school gates;
- Increase the school roll;
- Ensure that new Governors become effective members of the Governing Body as soon as possible.