

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/21

Whole School Aim

'Learning Together with Kind Hearts and Determined Minds'.

Governors' Role

The Governing Body is key to the leadership of Borough Green Primary School. The Governing Body supports and challenges the headteacher to continually improve the school and provide the best education for every child. This Annual Governance Statement is one way in which the Governing Body communicates its work and the impact we have had on school improvement to our stakeholders. In accordance with the Government's requirement for all governing bodies, the three core strategic functions of the Governing Body at Borough Green Primary 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
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent

The Governing Body Structure

The Governing Body is made up of a group of committed volunteers who bring a range of skills and expertise and come from a variety of backgrounds. Governors are committed to improving the education of every child in our school and invest a huge amount of good will, hard work and time.

Borough Green Primary School had a full governing body throughout the 2020/21 academic year, with all twelve positions filled as per the following structure –

- 2 Parent Governors appointed by ballot of the parents at the school
- 1 Local Authority Governor appointed by the Local Authority
- 1 Staff Governor appointed by ballot of the staff
- 1 Headteacher
- 2 Partnership Governors appointed by the Governing Body
- 5 Co-opted Governors appointed by the Governing Body based on a skills audit

The Governing Body appoints a professional clerk who is responsible for arranging meetings, taking minutes and following up on all actions. The clerk also advises on procedural matters and plays a key role in the work of the Governing Body.

Five new governors joined the Governing Body during 2020/21, replacing those whose terms of office had completed or who had moved away. The chair and vice chair are elected by the Governing Body and work closely with the headteacher and the clerk. In June 2021 the Governing Body elected George Booth and Catherine O'Neill as Co-Chairs of Governors.

Training

To effectively fulfil its role, the Governing Body must ensure that all its governors have the required skills and knowledge to support the achievement of the school's priority objectives. All members of Governing Body have undertaken extensive training and, supported by the training governor, continue to do so. During the pandemic, training has been provided remotely by the Local Authority and members of the school's leadership team. The impact of this is that the Governing Body has kept up to date regarding the latest requirements and expectations from the Department for Education, vital during this period of uncertainty with policies and plans changing rapidly, and governors are able to understand and challenge the information and data presented to them by the school.

Impact of Full Governing Body Meetings

The Full Governing Body met eight times over the 2020/21 academic year to inspect, review and agree school policies and monitor progress against the School Improvement Plan which identifies the key areas on which the school and the Governing Body wish to focus during the academic year. The School Improvement Plan includes measures and milestones that the Governing Body uses to satisfy itself that progress is being made against objectives and that all actions being taken are improving teaching and learning outcomes for all children.

Despite long periods of lockdown in 2020/21 the Governing Body continued to meet virtually with every meeting being quorate and overall attendance and commitment by governors remaining high. As well as continuing to meet its statutory obligations, the Governing Body maintained a particular focus on the wellbeing of the headteacher, the staff, and children and on the complexities of rebuilding after the disruption of the pandemic. Between Full Governing Body meetings, members of the Governing Body remained in close contact with the headteacher throughout this challenging period – providing support, considering and approving risk assessments, and monitoring the continued provision of learning.

Despite some comparative data being unavailable due to the cancellation of national tests in the summers of 2020 and 2021, at Full Governing Body meetings governors continued to ask questions to ensure the school's standards and expectations are high and scrutinised pupil progress across all ability groups including vulnerable groups, with a particular view to ensuring post covid catch up support is well targeted.

The school budget was scrutinised and reviewed in detail at Full Governing Body meetings, as well as by the finance monitoring pair who are trained and experienced in school finances and who meet regularly with the school's finance officer and School Financial Services. Using benchmarking information, governors compare the school's spending with similar schools and ensure resources are being used in the most effective ways to support the best education outcomes for all children. In 2020/21 the Governing Body was particularly keen to ensure the school was making effective use of the Pupil Premium and Catch Up Funding to deliver positive educational outcomes and mitigate some of the impact of the pandemic on pupil progress, particularly on vulnerable pupils.

Performance Management

Governors are responsible for undertaking the headteacher's performance management review each year. A panel of governors, who have undertaken training, supported by an expert external advisor, carry out the headteacher's annual appraisal, which is reviewed at points throughout the year. The appraisal process allows the Governing Body to look closely at the headteacher's performance, and discuss areas of strength and, where necessary, areas for development. New targets are then set against criteria on which the headteacher's performance will be evaluated.

Monitoring Focus Areas in 2020/21

The BGPS Governing Body uses the Circle model for monitoring specific areas. Governors are divided into pairs and usually formally visit the school up to 3 times during the year to monitor priority areas. Governors usually use monitoring visits as a chance to get to know the school better, to observe and communicate with staff and to hear the pupil voice. Visits enable governors to ensure that actions agreed in the School Improvement Plan are being taken forward by the school. A monitoring visit report is prepared and presented at the Governing Body meeting following the visit, allowing other governors to ask questions. In 2020/21, governors were unable to visit the school in person for much of the year due to covid restrictions but monitoring pairs still carried out 17 monitoring visits, regularly meeting with staff via zoom. The Governing Body's focus on wellbeing has had a positive impact, with the Head Teacher noting that she felt well supported by governors during this most difficult of academic years.

Specific governor monitoring areas identified for 2020/21 were:

- Early Years and Nursery
- Health & Safety
- Safeguarding
- Finance
- SEND and Pupil Premium (noting the significant rise in children eligible for Pupil Premium during the course of 2020/21)
- Teaching & Learning – with additional focus on writing and 'closing the gap'.
- Wellbeing – there is no separate wellbeing monitoring pair as all governors looked at staff and pupil wellbeing on every visit, recognising the significant impact of the pandemic on wellbeing of all those in the school community.

It should be noted that there was significant disruption in 2020/21 due to national and regional covid restrictions, and class 'bubbles' being required to isolate. Remote learning including live and recorded lessons was provided for pupils at home, with the school sourcing IT equipment for those children without access. The periods of home learning were lengthy. In October 2020, the year 3/4 bubble closed and all pupils were absent from school for four days before half term. Then, on 5th November 2020 the Second Lockdown caused school to close except for key workers and vulnerable children. On 2 December 2020 the school reopened subject to tier 3 regional restrictions but on 19 December, going into the

Christmas holidays, Kent was subject to Tier 4 regional restrictions. School did not reopen to all children until 8 March 2021 following the lifting of the third national lockdown. Most children spent a significant part of the 20/21 school year at home.

Governor focus areas for 2021/22

The Governing Body, the headteacher and senior management team and indeed all members of staff are constantly striving to improve and develop the school.

As we recover from the pandemic, the Governing Body will continue to closely monitor the wellbeing of headteacher, staff, pupils and parent communities and the progress and attainment of all pupils as they catch up after two disrupted academic years.

Specific monitoring areas will remain as in 2020/21 and allow governors to continue to monitor closely the measures in place to help pupils' progress to get back on track and the implementation of the School Improvement Plan.

Governors will also focus on increasing and improving two way communications with parents and carers, pupils and the community and will embrace the renewed possibilities to get to know our school that are brought by governors being able to visit in person.

Governors will review the long-term vision for the school in light of the events of the past two years and assess what is still relevant, appropriate and achievable, always with the best interests of all children in mind.