

Date of Visit: Thursday 14th April 2016

Name of Assessor: Clive Haines and Rebecca Walker

Governor Review Feedback Form

Holy Trinity CE Primary School, Sunningdale

Context:

Commissioned by the governing board, looking for pointers to further improve.

Methodology:

The review consisted of scrutiny and analysis of the governance paperwork and processes, scrutiny of governors' impact statements (supplied by the majority of board members) and interviews with the clerk and individual governors.

Findings:

The Governing Board has the following strengths:

- The board has put in place effective systems and processes. Statutory requirements are being met.
- Full governing board meetings are well led and managed by the chair, but succession planning is needed .
- Individual governors have been assigned roles and visit the school regularly in these roles. Governors and school leaders have developed good working relationships. Governors know the school well and those who were interviewed evidenced a strong commitment to the school and generally a good understanding of the core responsibilities of governance.
- The board has self evaluated and has recruited to meet the current skills gaps.
- The recent appointment of a highly effective clerk has had positive impact.
- The board has systems in place to monitor the school's staff appraisal process and to oversee the Headteacher's appraisal.
- The board has established a robust policy review schedule. In recent months policy review has been a major focus at meetings. Governance in relation to the school's policies now needs to move into monitoring whether policy is being carried out and is fully embedded in practice, and the impact that the arrangements prescribed by the policies are having on the outcomes of the pupils.
- The school's website provides parents and other stakeholders with a clear understanding of the work of the school and the governing board.

Procedures

- The Board's documentation demonstrates a clear and consistent approach to fulfilling a

wide range of statutory duties.

- The Headteacher's reports and documentation presented to governors is of extremely high quality. Governors need to establish processes to ensure they are not over-reliant on the material being presented and to improve challenge / holding the Headteacher to account.
- Committees report at Full Governing Board meetings, however it was not evident in the minutes or from the governor interviews how FGB discussion was triangulating the committee findings to ensure that the review of the school's progress towards achieving its key priorities is informing the review of expenditure on resources, staffing and services.
- School visits appear to be well aligned with school priorities and visit reports are being filed, but we did not see evidence that the findings from the visits are being used to inform 'next steps' discussion in terms of moving the school's priorities forward.
- Agendas/work programmes do not reflect a clear commitment to an annual cycle of timely in-school progress data review, in alignment with the school's schedule for collecting and analysing this data.
- The minutes did not evidence that governors are scrutinising in-year progress data to evaluate the impact of school strategies on the narrowing of 'gaps' between groups, or the impact that Pupil Premium and Sports grant expenditure is having on the outcomes of the children.
- The board's procedures for ensuring that the school carries out rigorous and fair appraisal of its staff would be further strengthened by the board's Pay Panel receiving anonymised staff objectives and reviewing their correlation to the school priorities.
- Board members ensure that there is a rigorous safeguarding culture in the school with a lead governor appointed, systems in place to monitor the school's processes and with safeguarding a regular item on the agenda for discussion. The current lead governor will be retiring from the board this summer, but succession has been secured with the recent appointment of a governor with a strong safeguarding and SEN skillset.
- 'Future direction' focus has been strengthened by the very recent appointment of a governor who will take the lead role in looking at academisation options. We advise a standing agenda item at FGB meetings, to keep this strategic issue moving forward.
- The board should consider the current remit of the vice-chair role and whether there is a strong enough succession plan for the chair.

Recommended actions to improve the board's effectiveness:

- The board needs to demonstrate that it is not overreliant on the Headteacher for information, that it has ownership of the school priorities and moves them forward via support and challenge of the leadership.

One suggestion is that governors send their questions based on what they have read in the Headteacher's report one week in advance of meeting. At the meeting, the Headteacher would then present her responses and the proposed 'next steps' for discussion and agreement. This would evidence that the board is holding the leadership to account and that its input is having impact in moving the school forward.

- To ensure focussed evaluation of the school's performance data for all groups of children (including PP, SEN and most able) we recommend the board reviews its committee structure.

We advise retaining the Resources and Admissions committees and introducing a Standards committee with a focussed remit to review the quality of provision and the consequent pupil performance output. Other aspects currently addressed at School committee, eg safeguarding, communications, could be addressed at Full Governing Board.

Reports from the Standards committee to Full Governing Board need to be highly focused on the school's key priorities with regard to standards and what improvement has been seen / what next steps were agreed, with the purpose that Resources committee then uses this output to inform its budget planning / allocation to ensure that expenditure is designed to have maximum impact on the driving forward of the priorities.

In this "triangulation discussion", a high focus needs to be given to the impact that Pupil Premium grant expenditure is having on the school's disadvantaged children and the impact that the Sports Funding grant is having on the children at the school.

- To improve the impact of governors' visits to the school, we recommend that visit reports are produced on a proforma which gives high focus to the findings as they correlate to the objective of the visit, and the evidence seen. Reports to be pre-circulated before the relevant committee / board meeting, to inform the discussion on the progress being made and agreement of the next steps towards achieving that school priority.
- In-house, in-year progress data by group: school progress data needs to be scrutinised by a group of governors (eg the Standards committee governors) in a format which evidences where the gaps are (eg PP vs non PP) and how these are changing over time – from one meeting to the next - in order for the board to review the impact that school systems and strategies are having.

We recommend as a first step that the leadership (with the support of the lead governor for Assessment & Data) creates an appropriate data reporting template, focussing on the in-school data that shows what's happening in the school's key priority areas. The board then agrees a schedule for the agreed group of governors to review this data set at certain times over the academic year and in alignment with its collection so that it is current and proposed actions following its evaluation are timely,

In-house training for these governors will be required, to ensure their effective analysis of what is being presented.

- To strengthen the role of the vice-chair and the succession plan for the chair, we recommend the current vice-chair and/or governors likely to be nominated for this role in future undertake the National Chairs' Programme. We recommend the vice-chair position should be considered as the succession plan and consequently the board could look at

shadowing arrangements, or a redivision of workload to ensure the governor in the vice-chair role builds experience and competence in board leadership.

- A rolling action list could be introduced from the minutes in-order for the Board to monitor long term actions.

Further comments on the assessment:

Next step – Deliver feedback to FGB on 23rd June 7.30pm