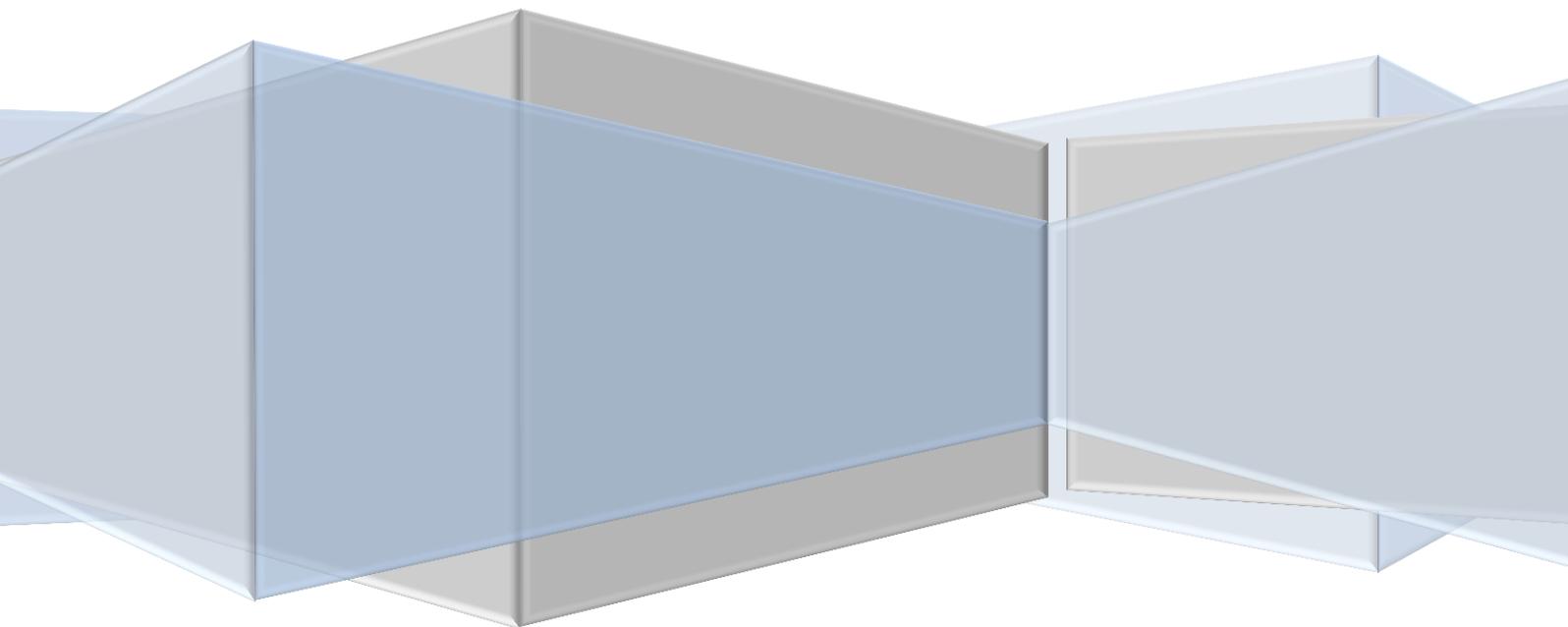


# **Progress review of governance**

**Castleford Park Junior Academy, May 2015**



## **Introduction**

An external review of governance was conducted by the local authority in November 2014. This was a supportive process linked to assisting the Governing Body to further develop their ways of working in effectively leading and managing the school. A series of recommendations were presented to the Governing Body, as well as observed and evidenced strengths and areas for development. Governors were encouraged to create a development plan outlining their actions to take forward, with support from School Governor Services upon request from the school.

In May 2015, the local authority returned to conduct a further review in relation to the recommendations presented to Governors to explore the progress made by the Governing Body. This report summarises the outcomes of this. In completing this progress review, the local authority officers met with the Executive Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Joint Chairs.

## **Recommendations from the initial review of governance**

The panel conducting the external review made the following recommendations to the governing body:

1. Risk assess the quality of governance based upon the content of the report and the governing body's understanding of its own and the school's strengths and areas for development. Criteria are provided below. This should be shared with the LA Officer within two weeks.
2. Produce an improvement plan for governance based on this report and the Governing Body's own self-evaluation. The plan should be owned by all Governors and all Governors should contribute to its implementation. A copy of the plan should be shared with the LA Officer within two weeks. A template is provided (<http://tinyurl.com/kbon8we>).
3. Consider whether all Governors are committed to the role and have the capacity for increased contributions to governance at the school. Governors unable to commit should consider their place on the Governing Body.
4. Develop a monitoring and evaluation schedule which is needed to guide the Governing Body's monitoring of the school and provide focus for the activities and visits that are taking place. The plan should include focussed visits to explore the progress towards the School Development Plan, meetings with subject leaders, pupil work sampling etc. the schedule needs owning by all Governors and embedding to ensure that it has an impact on the effectiveness of governance. Governors should generate a short report to the Governing Body after the visit and maintain a record in the "evidence file" in school. This will support the Governing Body in evaluating the school's actions.
5. Establish the Governing Body's training and development needs and identify training opportunities for Governors. It is recommended that each Governor attends one training event each year in order to develop the Governing Body's skills, knowledge, awareness and networking opportunities.

## **Progress by May 2015**

Since November 2014, governance has strengthened through the embedding of effective leadership structures for the Governing Body. The Joint Chairs have different strengths and

areas of expertise. They have a shared vision for effective governance at the school. They meet fortnightly with the Headteacher and take the opportunity to challenge senior leaders. They seek continuous improvement and have assessed governance against examples of best practice detailed within the Wakefield School Governance: Learning from the Best document.

Governors are committed to their role and supportive of the school. Governors have reconstituted the Governing Body. The proposed constitution was referred to the Trust Board for approval. A skills matrix was completed to help identify skills and any gaps (see minutes 12 February 2015). Those Governors who were unable to commit to the role have resigned. Some Governors changed category and new Governors were elected/appointed and inducted into their role. The new Governors have had meetings with the Joint Chairs and Deputy Headteacher and they had already been into school prior to joining the Governing Body. They have been encouraged to attend the LA's Induction Training.

A Governor section of the school website has been developed to aid the sharing of key information. The school produces a newsletter for Governors to keep them updated, in between meetings, on key activities and headline data, in order that they may follow the journey of the school. Governors have found the updates useful.

The lead Joint Chair has met and will continue to meet with the Chair of the Trust Board which supports strategic planning of the work of the Governing Body and provides a framework for two way communication and lines of accountability in the governance structure.

A Governance Development Plan has been prepared and shared with Governors (see minutes 12 February 2015) including a monitoring schedule detailing the timeline and activities to be undertaken. The Executive Headteacher and Headteacher have had input into the plan and have provided a steer in terms of monitoring linked to school priorities. The monitoring activities tie in with the school's own monitoring calendar, which is an effective use of time. The plan is used as a working document and has been reviewed to assess progress against actions (see minutes 16 April 2015). This means that all Governors have ownership of the plan.

There are good relationships amongst Governors and school staff. A Classroom Visits Policy has been updated (see minutes 11 December 2014). Staff welcome Governors into their classrooms and understand the role of Governors.

The Governing Body has reviewed the structure, membership and terms of reference of committees including section panels to ensure they are up to date and fit for purpose (see minutes 16 April 2015). They have agreed arrangements for the chairing of committees. Different chairs have been appointed to committees based on their skills, which aids succession planning, shares the workload and adds capacity (see minutes 11 December 2014). Committee meetings operate effectively. New Governors have been appointed to serve on committees of their choice/based on their skills (see minutes 16 April 2015). Meetings have been scheduled to align with the availability of data and information and to feed into meetings of the full Governing Body. Minutes of committee meetings, where available, are shared with Governors in advance of meetings of the full Governing Body to allow them time to read the minutes and raise any questions at the meeting (see minutes 11 December 2014). Generally, the Resources Committee meets immediately prior to a meeting of the Governing Body and verbal reports are provided with minutes to follow. The minutes of meetings of committees have been developed to capture key discussion, challenge and decisions made.

Governors have been encouraged to document their involvement in monitoring and evaluation activities in school (see minutes 11 December 2014). Maintaining written records will support the Governing Body in evidencing monitoring and evaluation activities and will aid tracking.

Governors have adopted key policies including a Pay Policy (see minutes 11 December 2014), Appraisal Policy and Capability Procedure.

Governors are aware of the profile of teaching and links to performance related pay (see minutes 12 February 2015 and 16 April 2015). The Headteacher performance management is undertaken in line with statutory deadlines and with external support. Governors receive updates on staff performance management (see minutes 12 February 2015) and the Teaching and Learning Committee has received anonymised performance management data and copies of a coaching plan. They have measured the impact of support in place through questioning and have seen evidence in children's books.

Governors have accessed internal and external training opportunities. Two Training Link Governors have been appointed to liaise with the LA over training offered and promote training opportunities to Governors (see minutes 11 December 2014). The training that has been accessed includes: Chairing the Governing Body, Finance, Using Pupil Data, Safer Recruitment, Pupil Premium and the Annual Governors' Conference. The Deputy Headteacher has scheduled training on questioning techniques for Governors in the second half of the summer term.

Governors are monitoring progress against the priorities in the Ofsted Action Plan. They requested that "Ofsted Summary Checklist" appear as an item on the agenda of meetings of the Governing Body (see minutes 11 December 2014). Regular updates are provided in meetings.

There is evidence of Governor monitoring and evaluation activities taking place which demonstrates that Governors are gathering first-hand information to gain an independent view of the school. Monitoring activities have included:

- Visit by the Chair to Year 5 and 6 with a verbal report to the Governing Body (see minutes 12 February 2015);
- Health and safety walk with a report back to Governors (see minutes 12 February and 16 April 2015);
- Meetings/interviews with teaching staff to discuss progress towards Ofsted inspection recommendations. An executive summary report was shared with the Governing Body (see minutes 16 April 2015);
- Staff presentation on the Primary Curriculum and Year 6 data (see minutes 16 April 2015);
- Meetings with children and the planning team. Children commented on behaviour which was explored further by Governors through discussions with staff (2014);
- Visits to classrooms to gain an overview and familiarise themselves with a typical day in school.

Further monitoring activities have been planned including:

- Observation of work scrutiny under the guidance of staff leaders. The Deputy Headteacher is formulating a scrutiny timetable; and
- Meetings with individual Governors and staff on their area of the School Development Plan.

The Headteacher provides quality information for Governors via his Headteacher's Report and in additional reports and documentation including the whole school self-evaluation (SEF). The School Development Plan has been redesigned to make it more user friendly

(see minutes 16 April 2015) and Governors have been consulted on the new format. Governors take an active role in the School Development Plan and whole school self-evaluation. The Joint Chairs meet regularly for planning with senior leaders and have an input into the creation of school priorities. Governors plan to review the documents towards the end of the summer term to feed into the next round of planning for the following academic year.

The Deputy Headteacher provides formative and summative data sets for Governors. The Chair, who has a secure understanding of data has simplified the format to provide a summary for Governors. This supports Governors in tracking progress of pupils for their monitoring purposes.

Governors feel they are able to evidence the impact of challenge of senior leaders. Staff presentations to the full Governing Body and committees have been in response to challenges made and requests for information. Governors are encouraged to have the confidence to ask questions and partake fully in meetings.

### **Recommendations:**

- Encourage Governors to systematically complete a written record of school visits, report back briefly to the full Governing Body and retain a copy of the visits form in school as evidence and to aid tracking and monitoring. Governors have considered introducing a “Governor Visits” signing in register which will allow them to evidence Governor activity and visibility within school.
- Further enhance the Governance Development Plan through the naming of Governors against monitoring activities to support sharing of responsibility.
- Ensure the challenge offered by the Governing Body is captured within minutes of meetings of the full Governing Body. Whilst it was apparent, through face-to-face discussions that challenge is made, this is not always captured in writing, which was a view endorsed by Governors. School Governor Services will feedback to the Clerk and offer additional support in minute writing relating to capturing challenge.
- Maintain the current direction of travel. The Joint Chairs have a clear understanding of what needs to be achieved and how to go about this.

The Officers conducting the progress review would risk assess governance at the school as “low risk” based upon the content of this report and the Governing Body’s understanding of its own and the school’s strengths and areas for development. The risk assessment criteria are shown below.

### **Report of:**

Claire Thomas, Team Manager, Governor Services

Email: [cthomas@wakefield.gov.uk](mailto:cthomas@wakefield.gov.uk)

Natalie Cox, Senior Governor Support Officer: Training

Email: [ncox@wakefield.gov.uk](mailto:ncox@wakefield.gov.uk)

Date: 19 May 2015

### **Governance risk assessment**

These assessments are best fit.

- Low risk: Governance is deemed to be effective. For example, Governors engage in school and classroom monitoring visits, the Governing Body does not fulfil its duties just through attendance at meetings, effective committee structures are in place and committees meet regularly, and Governing Body meeting time is used efficiently. The Governing Body is aware of the use and impact of Pupil Premium funding, link pay to performance and has a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Pupil performance data for the school is above national averages and national expectations and this is being sustained. Schools will typically be in Band 1 to 3.

- Need support: There are areas for development needing to be addressed to make governance effective. For example, Governors need to become more engaged in monitoring the schools progress and hold senior leaders to account. The Governing Body is aware of the use of Pupil Premium funding, monitor the quality of teaching and have a broad awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Pupil performance data for the school is at least in line with national averages and national expectations and outcomes are improving. Schools will typically be in Band 1 to 3.

- High risk: Governance needs significant amounts of support and, without this; this would impact on the judgement for leadership and management during inspection. The work of the Governing Body is not sufficiently effective, e.g. the Governing Body work is conducted purely in meetings, committees are not well established and operating effectively and/or Governors lack a rigorous understanding of the school. The Governing Body are not aware of the impact of Pupil Premium funding, do not effectively link pay to performance and do not have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Pupil performance data for the school is in line or below national averages and national expectations with few signs of improvement. Schools will typically be in Band 3 to 4.