

Governors Annual Statement

Dear parents and carers and all partners of St. Bede's Catholic Infant School,

There is no legal duty for maintained schools to produce an annual statement of governance. The governing body of our school has decided to provide one because we are so proud of the achievements of our children and the hard work and dedication of our staff and we want to share this with you.

There is some information all schools are required to publish, such as how effectively pupil premium funding has been used, and these have been noted in this statement. We have used the six key features of effective governance (as defined by the DfE) as a framework and you will find lots of evidence listed within each of these. You will find far more detail on the school website and in the DfE performance tables and in documentation stored in the school office.

The Golden Rule in our school is "If you want to know just ask" and that applies to any member of staff, including the headteacher, and any governor, including me.

Sue Howard (Ms)

Chair of Governors

There is a list of governors, together with their main responsibilities detailed on the school website.

Our Mission drives our actions and response. The Mission Statement is reviewed annually in consultation with parents and the wider community.

The school made an excellent response to the wide ranging and ongoing challenges arising from the Pandemic, as always driven by our Mission to ensure the best possible outcomes for our children and their families. The school continues to focus on ensuring that a high quality of education is available to all children. Key decisions (including historic decisions) around staffing, budget and curriculum design, have ensured that there is the capacity to respond immediately and fluidly in line with identified need.

Key to supporting the children (and parents) is our ability to maintain strong relationships with the whole school community by providing timely, accurate and sensitive communication.

In line with identified need we continue to focus on all children making outstanding progress very quickly through provision of support/intervention explicitly linked to the content of daily lessons focusing upon basic skills in English and Mathematics and support/intervention for Personal Health and Well-being.

Teachers in Reception focus on the prime areas of learning, including: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development and physical development. They also assess and address gaps in language, early reading and mathematics, particularly ensuring children's acquisition of phonic knowledge and extending their vocabulary.

Our priorities and our school curriculum (see website) demonstrated that our focus is in the context of and continued commitment to an ambitious and broad curriculum, the richness of which is enhanced by exciting, motivating and relevant visits, visitors/external contributors and extra-curricular opportunities.

Outcomes across all year groups for 2024 are convincing evidence of the success of these strategies.

School achieved an outstanding judgement across all areas in our most recent Ofsted Inspection in October 2023. <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>

The purpose of governance

As the Governing Body of a Catholic school, our overarching responsibility is to ensure the school is conducted in accordance with its Catholic character at all times. This overriding duty permeates everything that we do. Canon Law also requires all Catholic schools to strive for academic excellence and we are equally committed to this.

Beyond this our purpose is to provide confident, strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance. We believe that the most effective way to do this is through a strong partnership between the governing body and the headteacher, with governance at a strategic level and the headteacher and senior school leaders responsible and accountable to us for the operational day-to-day running of the school.

The core functions of the governing body are set out in (regulation 6) and include but are not limited to ensuring:

- that the vision, ethos and direction of the school are clearly defined
- that the headteacher performs their responsibilities for the educational performance of the school
- the sound, proper and effective use of the school's financial resources

(DfE Maintained schools governance guide March 2024)

These functions are reflected in the School Governance Regulations and in Ofsted criteria to judge the effectiveness of Governance.

A governing board and its governors **must**, as required by The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013, regulation 6(2)

- act with integrity, objectivity and honesty and in the best interests of the school
- be open about the decisions they make and the actions they take and shall be prepared to explain their decisions and actions to interested parties

The governing body also has legislative responsibility and strategic oversight for the school's safeguarding arrangements.

As a Voluntary Aided School Governors have responsibility as an Admission Authority and Employer of Staff.

How do we fulfill our strategic functions?

The DfE provides guidance on this for all schools in the Maintained schools governance guide March 2024. This describes six key features of effective governance, which are matched to the core strategic functions. Noted below are some of the ways our governing body exemplifies effective governance based on these key features

The key features

1 Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership that sets and champions the school's culture, vision and ethos.

The governing body meets this by creating a vision and shared values for all staff and partners based on our mission statement. The Ethos and culture of the school underpinned by the Gospel Values is one of mutual respect and support for person and role. At the heart of this holistic vision is the spiritual, moral, academic, emotional and physical wellbeing of all pupils. We are determined to ensure that all pupils continue to make excellent progress academically and achieve the best possible educational outcomes. With the headteacher and school leaders and in consultation with all our partners, the governing body drives strategic change. Plans and priorities are monitored for impact and reviewed as necessary. Targets for pupils are highly ambitious and the school has been successful in meeting and exceeding its targets for the past eighteen years. The governing body employs and responds dynamically to risk and engages in meaningful self-evaluation to ensure that it maintains the capacity and skills to continuously improve. Safeguarding procedures are highly effective. Workload is regularly reviewed and discussed and has the highest priority. We are a team. Governors are committed to the DfE Wellbeing Charter.

Evidence

Mission Statement, SDP, Investment v Outcomes, Data Analysis, Headteacher's Reports, Headteacher's Performance Management, Relevant Documentation, NGA Membership Ofsted and Section 48 Inspection Reports

2 Accountability

Strategic decisions that aim to improve educational standards and financial performance.

Governors receive training at least annually on how to analyse the standards achieved by pupils using external and internal data and receive copies, accompanied by analysis of key points of the Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR). They have an excellent understanding of the school's priorities for raising standards and monitor progress towards implementing them through action plans. Performance management, including of the headteacher for which they have direct responsibility is very effective. There are appropriate procedures for governance and effective financial controls. Governors effectively and appropriately support and challenge school leaders.

Evidence

Staff/Governor forum evaluates SDP and impact and identifies future priorities
Governor Learning Walks
Headteacher's and Curriculum Leaders Reports to Governors
ASP, IDSR and internal analyses
Governors' minute's show key questions linked to standards
LA Service Level Agreement for finance and LA audits

3. People

Effective governance should involve people with the right skills, experience, behaviours and capacity.

The governing body has a very clear understanding of its role and responsibilities, including statutory requirements. Its members bring a range of complementary skills and a diversity of perspectives to the board. The chair and vice-chair are both very experienced and manage the governors effectively as a body so that decision-making is clear and robust. The governing body plans ahead to manage recruitment and the processes of election and appointment are transparent. It is serviced by a professional clerk.

Evidence

Ofsted and Archdiocesan Inspection Reports; Proven historic commitment and reputation; Minutes; NGA Skills Audit; Training; Archdiocesan Support; Governor Recruitment Procedures; HBC Governor Support SLA

4. Governance structures

Clearly defined governance roles, responsibilities and accountabilities

Members of the governing body represent the range of the school's stakeholders. Its committees are structured against core functions and terms of reference are linked across and back to the school's mission statement. Terms of reference and membership of committees are reviewed annually and revised as necessary.

The strong partnership between governors and the headteacher is key to the school's success and this is based on a clear separation between strategic oversight and operational leadership. Communication within the governing body and with pupils, parents and carers, staff and communities is excellent.

Evidence

List of members and responsibilities, terms of reference, minutes of meetings

School website; Attendance at weekend School Community Arts/Mission days/Community Collective Worship; Learning Walks; Parent/Pupil Questionnaires

5. Compliance

Governing bodies comply with statutory and contractual requirements.

The governing body is scrupulous in fulfilling all its legal responsibilities under Catholic Canon Law and under education and employment legislation and other legal requirements. It rigorously adheres to 'Keeping children safe in education', relating to safeguarding and safer recruitment. The governing body is scrupulous in meeting the duties of the Equality Act including the Public Sector Equality Duty with a commitment to promoting and ensuring diversity and equality as an integral part of the school's fundamental values. It is highly effective in meeting its key duties around inclusion and special educational needs. Governors set the budget in a timely fashion and regularly monitor the budget and the impact of financial decisions. Pupil premium and PE/Sports premium are standing agenda items. (See below)

Evidence

Website Compliance; Equalities Policies, Procedures and Action Plans including Accessibility, School SEND Report; Disability and Equalities Working Party; Safeguarding and Safer Recruitment Policies and Procedures; Appraisal and Pay Policy and Procedures; Reporting of nil Prejudiced Based Bullying/Racist Incidents

SLAs including Legal, Finance, Health and Safety, HR

6. Evaluation

Regular evaluation to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance.

The governing body carries out regular reviews, closely aligned to the school's strategic plan to ensure it has and builds on knowledge and an appropriate range of skills. The Continuous Professional Development programme for governors has been identified as a strength in its external review and this equips governors with a high level of expertise. Training on Keeping children safe in education, including keeping pupils safe on line in education is integral to the induction process and is revisited regularly. The contribution and impact of governance is part of the self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness.

Evidence

Completion NGA Skills Audit, Training; HBC Governor Support SLA, Archdiocesan Support

SES; Annual review Investment v Outcomes; IDSR, ASP, Completion NCTL Self Evaluation Tool; SFVS; DfE Benchmarking; annual review Committee Structure/Scheme of Delegation; Staff/Governor Forum; Consideration of Ofsted and section 48 documentation; undertaking NCTL Governor Mark Training; Retention Policy; Minutes

Pupil Premium

(See School website for Pupil Premium Strategy Statement 2024-2025 which includes a review of outcomes from 2023-2024).

The additional pupil premium funding is used to strengthen the school's strategy of supporting disadvantaged pupils by providing additional challenge and support tailored to individual needs. Intervention strategies focus on the application and consolidation of numeracy and literacy skills, developing a more confident approach to learning, meeting social and emotional needs, well-being and behavior and support for the more able.

The qualitative and quantitative impact is measured against individual success criteria and evidenced through personalised learning files and pupil progress discussions. The effectiveness of our systems is amply demonstrated through the high standards achieved by our disadvantaged children. For example, in each of the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was identified as a strength in the Inspection Dashboard and in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023 in the Inspection Data Summary Report.

The School Development Plan contains details of actions, costings and success criteria. Plans for the use and evaluation of the impact of pupil premium is a standing agenda item at governing body committee meetings and is reported in the Headteacher's Report. This maintains a strong focus on pupil premium by governors.

PE and School Sport Funding (See School Website)

This additional funding, first allocated in 2013, is to be used to improve the quality and breadth of PE and sport provision. Schools are free to determine how best to use the funding to achieve this aim, including increasing participation in PE and Sport so that all pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and reach the performance levels they are capable of.

St. Bede's Catholic Infant School was allocated £17 560 for the academic year 2023-24 and has been allocated £17 560 for the academic year 2024-25. The impact of this funding and the plans for the implementation of this funding can be found in the relevant action plans for the academic years 2023-24 and 2024-25 which are posted on the school website.

Improvements in educational provision

The school was inspected in October 2023 when all aspects of the school's work were judged to be outstanding. School was also judged outstanding across all aspects of our section 48 Inspection in November 2019. These judgements are further validated by the local authority, archdiocese and our external consultant.

National expectations and requirements become more demanding each year and as a governing body we welcome this. Below we have listed just some of the ways the school has improved over a number of years.

- Year on year academic outcomes for pupils remain amongst the highest in the country.
- The spiritual, moral, social, cultural and physical development of pupils is outstanding. This has been broadened since the last inspection, in response to changes in the national community, by strengthening fundamental (British and universal) values.
- The school has made an excellent response to the wide ranging and ongoing challenges arising from the Pandemic, as always driven by our Mission to ensure the best possible outcomes for our children and their families.
- The Implementation of the National Curriculum which is recognised as more challenging. The core National Curriculum is enhanced in a broad and balanced curriculum offer. Alongside this, the school has continued to strengthen individual subjects, including developments in Computing, Creative Arts and PE.
- Developing Personalised Learning Records and Provision Mapping. These support each child to progress towards reaching their potential and ensure the effective and efficient deployment of staff and resources;
- Improving assessment procedures to match national changes to strengthen formative assessment and inform teaching and learning;
- Meeting the needs of an increasing number of children with additional and complex needs;
- Substantial improvements in the outdoor learning environment including new play equipment and designated areas to enhance social, emotional and physical skills and well-being;
- Website supporting extended learning, effective communication, business continuity;
- Strengthening Pupil Voice through the Pupil School Council and Pupil Steering Groups including Reading Ambassadors, Arts Ambassadors, STEM Ambassadors, Digital Leaders, Spirituality Group, Emotional Health & Wellbeing Group, School Council, Sports Ambassadors;
- Extensive enhancement of extra-curricular opportunities;
- Participation in the Children's University;

- Promotion of fundamental British values;
- Implementation of the requirements of the PREVENT Duty;
- Extensive improvements to premises including the addition of 2 new classrooms, refurbishment of the whole school including toilets;
- External Accreditations/Reaccreditations-
 - Basic Skills Quality Mark, Primary Science Quality Mark,
 - NAACE Mark, PE Activemark (Distinction), Artsmark (Gold), Pupil Voice,
 - Halton Healthy Schools Standard, Global Awareness Award
 - UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award, Fairtrade Award, North West Together We Can
 - Partnerships supporting the sharing of good practice and the efficient use of resources:
 - Primary Learning Network, Halton Arts Network,
 - Curriculum Networks