



**Governing Body of Woodlawn School
Annual Governance Statement
2019-2020**

The Governing Body of Woodlawn School has a strong focus. Its three core strategic functions are:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
2. Holding the Head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school ensuring value for money and best practice.

The Annual Statement 2018-2019 identified key priorities for governors for 2019-2020 to be:

To work with the Head teacher in monitoring the following (OfSTED October 2018):

Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:

- eliminating inconsistencies in the quality of teaching so that a greater proportion of pupils make excellent progress from their starting points
- strengthening teachers' use of assessment information so that planning meets individual pupil's needs more effectively in other subjects across the curriculum

Improve the effectiveness of 16 to 19 study programmes by:

- continuing to refine the curriculum on offer in the sixth form so that all pupils make rapid and sustained progress, including the most able pupils in the cohort
- ensuring that all courses on offer are delivered to a consistently high standard.

Ensure further appropriate training takes place to maintain Governor skills and knowledge in order that we carry out the three core functions of governance with rigour and understanding. (Continue to maintain the rigour through link governor priorities).

Further develop our individual self-reflection and appraisal and maintain a high percentage of attendance at governor meetings

The OfSTED report in October 2018 identified the following:

Overall Effectiveness	Good
Leadership and Management	Outstanding
Teaching Learning and assessment	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Personal Development, Behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Early Years Provision	Good
Post-16	Good



Nobody could have seen in September 2019 that by March the country would be in lockdown and we would be in the throes of a COVID -19 pandemic. The school has managed to remain open (albeit with much smaller numbers) and has offered online activities through Seesaw for parents and carers as well as work in school. As governors we were quick to organise zoom meetings and a governor WhatsApp group. The Head teacher and the Chair of Governors have spoken at least weekly by phone. The school is looking to reopen fully in September 2020. The pandemic and subsequent challenging obstacles to overcome have been a huge strain on senior leaders and staff and governors have acknowledged the outstanding work that has been achieved.

Comments from Governors:

“For 2/3rd of the school year we’ve been in an extraordinary position and the school has done a marvelous job”

“What a sterling job the SLT and all staff have done and how resilient our young people have been.”

“The way the SLT has managed the interaction (with the LA) and getting the best outcomes for the pupils has been inspirational!”

School Development Plan (SDP)

Governors work closely with the Headteacher and senior leaders in writing and monitoring the School Development Plan (SDP), overall responsibility for writing the SDP is with the Headteacher. The priorities for the School Development Plan (SDP) are taken from both internal and external monitoring, e.g. Local authority reports, OfSTED report and internal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and pupil outcomes by the Headteacher, other senior leaders and link governors. Governors join staff on the first Training day in September to look at the progress made in the previous year and develop plans for the coming year.

The SDP is monitored and reviewed termly with an evaluation review being written and presented to governors as part of the Headteacher’s termly report. Governors question the Head teacher where there are any concerns. Questions are challenging and rigorous.

This year the Head teacher reported the following:

“The Coronavirus epidemic in Spring of 2020 resulted in lock down on 20.3.2020 supported accelerated development of the use of See Saw to communicate with families. This is the tool we use to communicate achievement and progress to parents and carers. Through this period, we saw a dramatic increase in numbers of parents accessing see saw and numbers of learning activities and videos presented from school staff. The tool was used to communicate with families and pupils about their learning through a difficult time. It supported a feeling of Woodlawn unity when we were all separated by the need for social isolation.

The school has continued to focus on the areas recorded in our last OfSTED report of October 2018”



“1) To improve the quality of teaching and learning and assessment by:

- Eliminating inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning so that a greater proportion of pupils make excellent progress from their starting points.
- Strengthening teachers’ use of assessment information so that planning meets individual pupil’s needs more effectively in other subjects across the curriculum.

(OFSTED Oct 2018)

The work this year to support this development included”: **(text in bold is the Chair of Governors’ comments regarding governors’ monitoring.)**

- “All staff had a performance management target in coaching and mentoring to support the collaborative working in school. This has given staff the opportunity for closer working to support sharing skills and knowledge with peers.
- Two teachers have completed a post graduate qualification in coaching and mentoring with Sunderland University.
- Senior leaders have continued to monitor progress of teaching and learning through a variety of methods e.g. book scrutiny, learning walks, classroom observations and pupil feedback. These monitoring activities have resulted in planning of further training for staff to ensure consistent practice across school”.
- **In response to governors’ questioning regarding reading out of school, the literacy plan was to use the school website as a tool for parents. Parents accessed Seesaw for their children and the school was to add a list of texts to the website. The School Improvement Partner (SIP) acknowledged the openness and transparency he found on his termly visits.**
- “Following a successful reading deep dive by our school improvement partner we have further developed our teaching of Literacy with a joint project with Benton Dene Specialist school giving staff at both schools the opportunity to see teaching and learning on another school site to extend their skills”.
- **Following governors’ questioning on 18th December 2019, the School Improvement Partner (SIP) advised of the clarity of thinking and clear programme for the next steps by School Leaders of the “Fresh Start” programme (next steps in Read, Write Inc).**
- “We have delivered training to all staff on behaviour for learning, use of seesaw, active engagement in teaching and learning and talk for writing”.
- **Governors are invited to attend some of the training sessions and a list is given out termly. The link governor for English attended behaviour for learning and talk for writing.**
- “We have implemented a new system for assessment of pupils’ progress. B squared is now used as a tool to assess pupils’ progress in all areas of the curriculum of core curriculum subjects English and Maths and foundations subjects PE, Art and History. This progress is shared in the annual review reports and discussed in annual review meetings with parents and carers”.



The HT reported to governors on 18th December 2019 at the same time as the School Improvement Partner (SIP) who endorsed the HT's comments. HT also reported to the Teaching and Learning Committee on March 11th 2020 regarding the progress of BSquared implementation in core subjects and further plans for foundation subjects.

- “Lunch clubs have been extended with a rich variety of clubs offered over the school year.”
These have been seen regularly by the Chair of Governors and governors who volunteer in school.
 - “Senior leaders and whole school teaching staff have developed a new curriculum offer to start in September 2020. This curriculum ensures that consistently motivating programmes of study will be taught in each half term and skills will be developed over the key stages.”
Termly feedback on curriculum development is given to full governors at each meeting. Governors’ minutes show questioning from governors and the HT’s responses.
- 2) “Improve the effectiveness of the 16-19 study programmes by:
- Continuing to refine the curriculum on offer in the sixth form so that all pupils make rapid and sustained progress, including the most able pupils in the cohort.
 - Ensuring that all courses on offer are delivered to a consistently high standard.

OFSTED Oct 2018

- The Post-16 curriculum has been further extended through focused work on careers and employability with a range of school partners. Working with our LEP (Local Employability Partner), Engie and North Tyneside Council we continue to develop this work both in and outside of school.”
The link governors for Post-16 and Careers Advice and Guidance have both met with pupils and staff and been very pleased with what they have seen. The governor for Careers Advice and Guidance reports “I am delighted to report that all of our young people who are leaving Woodlawn have been successfulwith pupils going to a range of businesses, colleges and learning organisations..... I have been fortunate enough to visit the school on several occasions to meet with pupils and hear their plans for the future and provide class lessons on how businesses work”. Information is in the HT’s report of July 1st, 2020
- “The Post-16 Woodlawn Café was open every Friday from school and has developed this year to offer refreshments to parents as well as pupils and staff across school.”
One of our governors produces a rota so governors regularly come to the café and see the work firsthand (and sample the scrumptious food!). At this time governors can meet with other staff and pupils. Planned visits may also take place.



- “Pupils have extended their basic skills through the appropriate extension course level 1, 2, 3 functional skills / GCSE courses and ASDAN short courses.”
The HT regularly reports to full governors regarding qualifications offered and expected grades.
The Chair and the Achievement / Outcomes governor met with the senior leader responsible for data and progress and were pleased at the rigour found. Any discrepancies in expectations were able to be identified and reasons found (e.g. absence for medical appointments etc,) with plans for future progress.
- “The students in post 16 engaged in community-based learning every week supporting development of functional skills in Literacy and Numeracy.”
- “Workplace learning has been extended via links with Woodlawn School. Opportunities have included Cedar Wood Trust, Café Beam and Barnardos.”
Destinations for post -16 pupils were confirmed at a full governors’ (Zoom) meeting on July 1st through the Head Teacher’s report.

Leadership and Management (Governors)

Governors monitor through termly meetings (two during Autumn term) of the full governing body and meetings of the committees (Finance, Staffing, Pay Review and Facilities Committee and Teaching, Leadership, Achievement and Safeguarding Committee).

As governors we quickly set up means of communication following the pandemic and subsequent lockdown of the country. The full governors meeting planned for 1st April was held on 24th April through zoom and subsequent meetings held on 10th June and 1st July, also through zoom. A WhatsApp group was also set up as an additional means of communication.

During 2019-2020 governors’ focus in Spring and Summer was on the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the school’s risk assessment and action plan. Governors held an additional meeting after lockdown to look at and assess the further opening of the school (which had been open for key worker and vulnerable children during the national lockdown). In order to ensure all criteria were met the school leaders looked at all advice including that of unions. Governors were impressed at the quality of the assessment and plan and questioned well-being of pupils not in school, use of PPE equipment and procedures if any child(ren) or staff member showed symptoms of coronavirus.

Impact: Leaders and staff felt supported. A rigorous plan was put in place. Governors are aware of school procedures, (any pupils not in school were able to access online learning and staff contacted parents / carers weekly).

We also have a strategic group consisting of the Chair of Governors, the Vice Chair (who is also the Chair of Finance), the Head Teacher and the Chair of Teaching and Leadership.

This group meets monthly and provides a helpful place for reflection, it allows for more regular monitoring and an additional opportunity for the school and Headteacher to consider further strategic opportunities. This group did not meet following the pandemic and lockdown but the Chair and Headteacher spoke at least weekly on the phone and the Chair and Vice Chair discussed issues regularly.

Prior to the pandemic the strategic group discussed well-being plans, finance, governor training, post-16 provision, coaching and mentoring and links with other schools and



Universities. Well-being was a key issue during the pandemic and governors closely monitored the well-being of the Head Teacher and other staff and pupils.

Impact:

Governors showed great awareness of well-being and the HT and staff governor reported feeling well supported by senior leaders and governors. The setting up of the WhatsApp group enabled questions to be raised at any time and positive support given. Governors also shared documents and key information relevant to the pandemic and schools extending opening.

As well as the two main committees and strategic group, governors also have the Headteacher's performance management group and the appeals and complaints committee. The Headteacher, through the performance management process produced excellent evidence for governors in achieving her targets for 2018-2019. Due to the coronavirus a semi-formal review did not take place in June 2020, however governors are aware of the commitment and dedication of the Head teacher, including keeping the school open during major holidays, and progress made.

Governors have supported the school in complaints, appeals and disciplinary matters. These have involved a Governor panel regarding a disciplinary matter which had a satisfactory conclusion, a staff concern which had a very satisfactory conclusion and support with an exit agreement, which was completed with support from Human Resources (HR).

Impact: Governors are aware of the challenges facing the school. New governors are prepared to attend panels for the above meetings. Mentoring from experienced governors enabled these processes to take place as necessary and with rigour, and gave support to Senior Leaders.

Monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment plus outcomes is an essential part of the Teaching, Leadership, Achievement and Safeguarding (TLA&S) committee and it noted the ongoing move towards outstanding. This committee met twice during this year prior to lockdown, reporting on the development of meetings with the Assistant Head for Education in the Local authority and the Schools Improvement Officer, improvements in English and Maths progress and rigorous data analysis. However, it was felt not to be a priority to meet following lockdown – the main priority being the school's response to the pandemic and the ongoing health of pupils and staff. Other issues were dealt with by full Governors

Governors have continued to attend school events to support stakeholder engagement (including parents) in school life, however we have been unable to attend since March 23rd (following lockdown).

Governors have attended:

- Christmas productions.
- Enterprise Activities and Fair
- Core values assemblies
- Post-16 café (now on weekly rota)

Impact: Governors' knowledge of the school has increased, and stakeholders are able to discuss plans with governors more confidently having met them more regularly in the post-16 café.



We were sorry to lose Emily Ward as a co-opted governor (vacancy still available) and pleased to welcome Selva Ramachandra as a Trust governor. Cllr Sean Brockbank has become our local authority Governor. We currently have two co-opted governor vacancies.

Pupil Premium

(Funding given for pupils who receive free school meals, children who are looked after, adopted children and children who have a parent(s) in the Armed Forces.)

The pupil premium governor met during the Autumn term with the Pupil Premium Team (led by the Deputy Head with this responsibility). Presentations were given around spending pupil premium and progress made, reading interventions and closing the gap between pupil premium and non-pupil premium. Questions were asked re closing the gap, Maths interventions and a Read, Write Inc intervention session observed.

Impact: Outstanding progress made in English and social and emotional development; Maths interventions being considered further.

Training

Following our system of self-reflection and appraisal for governors, governors' skills audit and working with "Governor Space" it was identified that key training to take place for all governors during 2019 - 2020 would be:

- 1) Keeping Children Safe in Education
- 2) Governance and School Finances in Special Schools

1) Keeping Children Safe in Education

This session was led by the Headteacher (with input from the Deputy Head with responsibility for Safeguarding). Relevant documentation was shared, including the School Policy and action plan and the HT went through the procedures and systems in place, including identifying Designated safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy Leads (DDSL).

The school uses CPOMS (Child Protection Online Management System) and this was explained to governors. The system is quick, and concerns go directly to the HT and the Designated Safeguarding Lead online, so action (if necessary) happens the same day. Staff also receive a response quickly. Another session will be held at full governors meeting in September.

Impact: Governors have greater awareness of the safeguarding process and procedures and felt reassured that with the CPOMS tool any concerns were quickly dealt with.

2) Governance and School Finances in Special Schools

This session was led by Noel Kay (Senior Finance Officer in the Local Authority). Noel outlined the statutory responsibility of the Local Authority (LA) and that of Governors in budget monitoring both in school and externally and procedures to follow where any challenge may be required to the LA.

Allocation of funding was explained as well as budget planning, monitoring and tools to assist in reviewing and benchmarking.

Impact: Governors felt they had greater clarity around allocation and their role in monitoring and how the LA system works.



Governors have also attended the following training this year:

Whole school action planning with staff
Updating and monitoring the governors' action plan

Individual governors have attended:

Governance Leadership Programme (Strategic Leadership)
A webinar on the new OfSTED Inspection process
Encouraging more student talk across the curriculum
Understanding Learning Disabilities
Understanding Autistic Spectrum Condition
British Sign Language (BSL) Qualification
Food hygiene
Understanding Anxiety and support during lockdown
Promoting emotional regulation in children with Autism
Supporting a safe and successful return to school following lockdown

Impact:

Appropriate and relevant training planned for governors has developed knowledge and skills in monitoring and reviewing processes in the school, particularly linked to the three strategic functions of Governors. More rigour is seen through focussed meetings. We have a strong Governing Body with a range of knowledge and skills.

Finance, Staffing, Pay Review and Facilities (FSPR&F) Committee

The FSPR&F Committee ensures that the budget is managed effectively, and that money is spent appropriately to ensure the most significant impact for pupils across the school at Woodlawn. Governors continue to ensure that the school's financial priorities are in line with those identified in the School Development Plan (SDP), providing suitable resources and facilities to achieve the school's aims. Governors have worked with the Headteacher both in the appointment of new teaching staff and additional support staff to meet changing needs in the school community.

The FSPR&F Committee receives regular and rigorous reports from the HT and Business Manager which give Governors confidence in the school's robust and effective Facilities, Management, Health and Safety and Data Protection procedures. Governors also supported the school regarding lack of allocated funding to three new post-16 pupils and a significant drop in allocation that had not been discussed with the school. This could have affected the school, limiting spending in priority areas.

Impact: Governors were pleased that this and the issues around pupil funding have now been rectified, eradicating any potential deficit.

Future aims:

It is clear to see the outstanding progress the school continues to make. The governors of Woodlawn School will continue to work with the Headteacher and staff in monitoring the work of the school.



Key priorities for governors for 2019-2020 will be to monitor the following:

Support and monitor the progress of pupil and staff well being following the return to school after lockdown and how to manage anxiety around a possible second wave of COVID -19.

Support and monitor progress and achievement through access to the curriculum both at school and online where this is required.

Ensure further appropriate training takes place to maintain Governor skills and knowledge in order that we carry out the three core functions of governance with rigour and understanding. (Continue to maintain the rigour through link governor priorities). Ensure good attendance at and commitment to training.

Further develop our individual self-reflection and appraisal and maintain a high level of attendance at governor meetings.

Governors can be contacted through school and we welcome comments and feedback.

Hilary Harrison
Chair of Governors
Woodlawn School

Composition of the Governing Body

- 2 Parent Governors
- 1 Headteacher
- 1 Staff Governor
- 1 Local Authority Governor
- 7 Co-opted Governors
- 2 Trust Governors

Committees of the Governing Body

- Finance, Staffing Pay Review & Facilities Committee
- Teaching, Leadership, Achievement & Safeguarding Committee
- Appeals
- Complaints
- HT Performance Management

Chair of Governors

Mrs Hilary Harrison

Vice Chair of Governors

Rev. Peter Dobson