



The John Fisher School

Governors' Annual Statement

2020 – 2021

Introduction

1. The Governing Board's main objective is to make our school the very best it can be for the benefit of our students and support the school in achieving its strategic priorities.

The Department for Education's guidance specifies that Governing bodies should prepare an annual statement explaining how we have fulfilled our responsibilities, including:

- the governance arrangements that are in place, including the remit of any Committees
- the attendance record of individual Governors at Governing Body and Committee meetings
- an assessment of the effectiveness and impact of the Governing Body and any Committees with details of any particular challenges that have arisen

The Role of the Governing Body

2. Before covering these areas, we should first explain that the Governing Board's role is intended to be strategic in nature while being a "critical friend" to the Headteacher and the school leadership team who are responsible for the day to day operational running of the school. In reviewing the way the school works, the Governors have gained an enormous respect for all the staff in the school. The amount of effort, care for our students, and "going the extra mile" we see on a regular basis from all our staff, is nothing short of inspirational. It has been an exceptional year in terms of the challenges presented by the Covid pandemic. The school has responded in terms of the provision for remote learning, ensuring high standards of safeguarding and support for mental health and wellbeing, extensive testing and supporting vulnerable students and the children of key workers. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our staff for the effort and time they contribute.
3. The Governing Board operates in accordance with an agreed Code of Conduct that is reviewed annually. Underpinning the Code of Conduct are the Seven Principles of Public Office (The Nolan Principles) which were established in 1994. These seven principles apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder including people who are elected or appointed to work in education. The seven principles – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership – were established to improve standards of behaviour in public life and focussed on behaviour and culture. The side effect of adopting these principles is a Governing Board that has a tight rein on process and compliance, has a strategic plan in place, is spending public money wisely, makes decisions that are in the best interests of the school and is delivering exceptional service for all stakeholders. Additionally, the Governing Board operates with regard to the school's Equality Objectives which are:

- a. To ensure the attainment and achievement of students of ethnic minority groups, with SEND or with a perceived disability is equal to the average attainment and achievement of all other students.
- b. To ensure SEND students are achieving their full potential by ensuring their literacy abilities narrow the gap with their peers.
- c. To further promote the Christian and British values of respecting the rights and differences of all members of the school community with protected characteristics.
- d. To equip students to tackle social justice and prejudice in the school community and the wider society.
- e. To ensure all staff are clear on how to deal with an incident of racism and the appropriate action and response so that students are treated fairly and equally.

Governor Meetings

- 4. At The John Fisher School members of the Governing Board have played, and continue to play, a strong role in driving the school forward. The current Governors, who are all listed on the website, are all volunteers, giving up their own time to fulfil the roles for the benefit of our students.
- 5. There have been four Full Governing Body meetings in the year 2020 – 2021 plus one extraordinary meeting to approve the plans for a second school closure in January 2021. Governor attendance has, as always, been of a very good level, with any absences having been fully explained and accepted and approved by the Governing Board. On the website, under Governance there is a record of Governor attendance at meetings.
- 6. We have a very experienced Clerk who helps ensure that we adhere to the correct procedures and cover all the topics we are required to discuss each year. The standard of clerking is excellent, providing efficient administration and thorough minutes of meetings. We have a number of sub-Committees which perform much of the detailed work in accordance with their terms of reference.

Resources Committee

- 7. The Resources Committee is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the school budget, Health and Safety, the maintenance of the school's premises and grounds, significant contracts such as catering, cleaning and grounds, strategic staffing matters, and staff mental health and wellbeing. The Committee met once each half-term and held one extraordinary meeting to discuss the budget.

Student Learning, Achievement and Welfare (SLAW) Committee

- 8. The SLAW Committee is responsible for monitoring and reviewing curriculum developments, students' academic progress including Centre Assessed Grades, arrangements for remote learning, provision for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and vulnerable students, safeguarding and the mental health and wellbeing of students. The Committee met five times during the year.

Admissions Committee

- 9. The Admissions Committee is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the Admissions Policy including the Published Admission Number (PAN), applications and appeals. The Committee met twice during the year.

Pay Committee

10. The Pay Committee is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the school's staffing structure, the Pay Policy and pay awards. The Committee met twice during the year.

Headteacher's Performance Review Committee

11. The Headteacher's Performance Review Committee is comprised of the Chair and Vice-Chair of Governors, together with an external advisor. The Committee is responsible for the Headteacher's appraisal and any pay award. The Committee met twice during the year.

Full Governing Board

12. The Full Governing Board is responsible for monitoring the work of the Sub-Committees, for reviewing the School Improvement Plan and overseeing the financial management of the school. The objective of the Governing Board is ensuring that students make appropriate progress in their education and personal development. They appreciate that for this to happen students must be supported by a well led, enthusiastic, professionally competent and motivated staff all working together within a safe and supportive environment. Governors appreciate too, the need for our students' parents and carers to be satisfied about the overall leadership and management of the school and how it affects the safety, learning and enjoyment of their sons. Governors are committed to achieving a full understanding of the evolving educational landscape, including from the Department for Education, Ofsted and the Education Commission. This year four external reviews have also taken place with input from the Governing Board. Governors too must continually evaluate the role they have played within the life of the school, and publish relevant information to all interested parties. This statement is part of that evaluation and publication process.

School Improvement Plan (SIP)

13. Governors work co-operatively with the Headteacher and Senior Leaders in monitoring the School Improvement Plan. The School Improvement Plan sets aims for the forthcoming year. The SIP for 2020 - 2021 was based on priorities identified from data, school self-evaluation and Ofsted priorities. The SIP sets out clear aims, key tasks which will be completed in order to achieve these aims and the success criteria in order to measure outcomes. The SIP is monitored and reviewed termly, with an evaluation overview being completed and presented to Governors alongside the Headteacher's report.

The targets of the School Improvement Plan 2020 - 2021 were identified as:

Culture

- Sustain effective mental health & wellbeing support for students and staff members.
- Deepen student and staff members understanding of diversity.

Character

- Continue to embed a well rooted growth mindset approach engaging students in active learning in person and remotely when necessary.

- Further develop our curriculum which promotes resilience, independence, and achievement.

Currency

- Develop the use of Information Technology to support students in their learning.
- Strengthen the use of assessment to ensure that it is used effectively to help inform teaching.

Governor Visits

14. The Governors meet virtually with school staff this year as part of their monitoring of the SIP and of specific issues. These conversations are considered a valuable opportunity for Governors to be able to work closely with staff members across the school. Link Governors follow a cycle which sets out the monitoring activities which they will be undertaking with the subject leader. Guidance in terms of the roles and responsibilities of Governors during their updates are provided and regular training is available in order to up-skill our team.

Examples of the Impact of Governor Visits

15. Examples of the impact that Governors' online meetings have had include co-operative working to prepare for the National Schools Mental Health and Wellbeing Accreditation, supporting the work of the new Catherine group, supporting RE teaching and the work of the department, the introduction of the new RSHE programme and supporting the work towards achieving the UNICEF Rights Respecting School Award. Governors have also attended Student Representatives Meetings to hear the views of students on specific issues.

Data Analysis

16. Data is made available to Governors through FGB and Sub-Committee meetings with verbal and written presentations followed by question and answer sessions with the Headteacher, members of the Senior Leadership team, Subject Leaders and Co-ordinators of specific areas. By doing this the Governors are able to benchmark their data against similar schools, the Local Authority and schools nationally to ensure the schools standards and expectations are high and are able to be closely scrutinised. Particular scrutiny is placed on pupil progress across all ability groups including vulnerable groups and on the effective use of the Pupil Premium.

Policies

17. Governors review all relevant policies on a programmed basis to ensure that all guidance is current and up to date. Specific attention is paid to ensure that the school complies with the Department of Education mandatory policy list and the Local Authority recommended list.

Financial Management

18. The John Fisher School has an experienced Chair of the Resources Committee who is fully committed to ensuring that the school money is spent effectively for all students. Other Governors also have a professional background in finance and financial qualifications. The Governors have worked closely with the Headteacher, School Business Manager and Senior Leaders to monitor the school budget. The impact of the Governors' role in the school

ensures that the budget is managed carefully and improvements are effective and continuous, together with taking specific measures to reduce the deficit.

Governor Expertise

19. At The John Fisher School the Governors have a wide variety of expertise and this in turn helps to ensure the school continues to move forward and develop. Examples of the impact of Governor expertise on school improvement includes expertise in finance, HR, education, business management, SEN and IT and within the Diocese. Our experienced Chair of Governors has been on the Governing Board at The John Fisher School for over ten years.

Staff Recruitment

20. The Headteacher, Chair of Governors and Chairs of the Resources Committee and SLAW Committee are trained in "Safer Recruitment". Governors are involved in the recruitment and selection of the more senior staff and use the appointment process to ensure that high quality staff who share the school's mission statement and aims are appointed.

Governor Training and Membership of Support Associations

21. During this academic year Governors have received training in a range of subjects including safeguarding, child protection, SEND, RSHE, the PREVENT duty and the Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools. In addition, they have access to online training on governance through the 'Firm Foundations' programme provided by the Diocese and a suite of online training modules on GDPR provided by Judicium, the school's Data Protection Officer.
22. All Governors are members of the National Governance Association, the membership organisation for governors and clerks of state schools in England. It provides guidance on a wide range of topics including information on legislative change and policy updates.