

Whitchurch Primary School & Nursery Governing Body – February 2017

Introduction

The Governing Body are aware that not all parents and staff understand what we are and do. We intend to improve our communications with you and this newsletter is one of the main ways. In this first written piece we want to describe what we do, advertise our current vacancies for governors [particularly external ones] and update you on our recent activity and plans.

Overall aims of school governance

School governors aim to raise standards by

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Holding the Headteacher and senior leadership to account for the educational performance of the school, its pupils and the performance management of staff
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent
- Strengthen links between the school and the community it serves

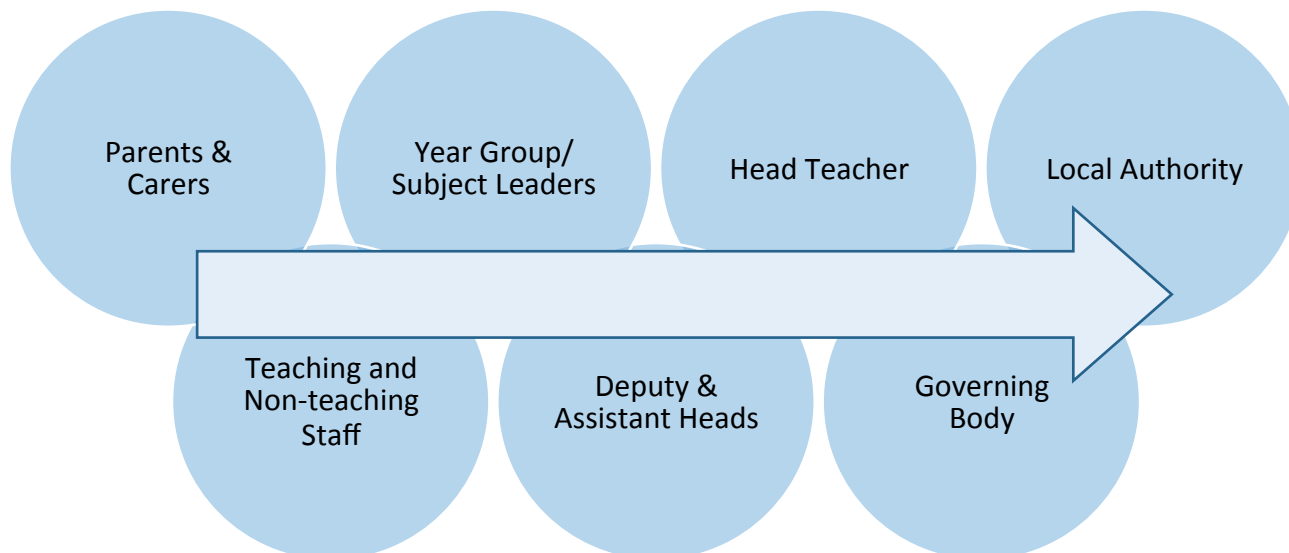
The Governor's handbook

School governors make up the largest volunteer group in the UK and given their pivotal role in advancing educational standards, there is a significant level of central government guidance and support available. The main source is The Governance Handbook, formerly known as the Governor's Handbook. This substantial resource can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook>

Communication and relationships

Good communication links between staff, parents and governors is essential for good governance. The diagram below illustrates appropriate escalation:



“Line management” function of the Governing Body

It may be helpful to remember that to meet the elements outlined in the second bullet point above, the Governing Body acts, in many ways, as the “line manager” for the Headteacher. The Governing Body is responsible for recruiting, appointing, setting objectives and appraising the Headteacher. It is via this key relationship that the Governing Body influences and affects the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The Local Authority supports the Governing Body for some high level, and hopefully rare, functions such as reviewing pupil exclusion and staff dismissal or appeals. This applies to any maintained school, such as Whitchurch, that is funded by the Local Authority.

The Governing Body at Whitchurch Primary School and Nursery

This group is made up of four parent governors, one Local Authority appointed governor, the Headteacher one other staff governor and seven co-opted governors which can include additional staff or parents. We aim for a diverse and representative team and currently have vacancies, particularly for external governors.

To apply to be a governor follow this link

http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200127/school_governors/537/become_a_school_governor

The Governing Body at Whitchurch Primary School and Nursery also operates three subcommittees that focus on curriculum & school improvement, pupil inclusion & safeguarding and finance, pay & premises. We believe this structure provides a suitable framework to enable the Governing Body to play its part in supporting the school and to continually strive for improvement. This school improvement plan can be seen here:

<http://www.whitchurchprimary.harrow.sch.uk/schoolinformation/school-improvement-plan>

Looking forward and planning ahead

Governors bring great value to the overall capacity of the Governing Body. We particularly value expertise in a wide range of areas. Some of these include performance management, finance, safeguarding, community links, human resources, health & safety, facilities management, risk, quality, governance & assurance or educational delivery. For the Governing Body to be a robust part of the school leadership all governors are required to develop areas in which they have less experience. There is good access to a large range of training for their continuing development which the school will usually fund. Governors may also choose to join various local and national associations who support the role of school governors. Governors are unpaid volunteers who must commit time to participate in committees, conduct school visits and undertake personal development.

Assessment of progress

We assign governors to the key strands in the School Improvement Plan and by working with staff leaders, through school visits, observations and feedback we are able to assess evidence and provide supportive challenge to the Headteacher and senior leadership. The Governing Body is also able to access additional performance objectives and process data to help inform its assessment of progress.

External input

In addition, staff may at any time communicate via their trade union representative who in turn will then consult with the Headteacher or Chair of the Governing Body. Additional external inputs may be provided by inspections, the Local Authority or commissioned reviews. The Headteacher and Governing Body welcome all constructive contributions from all stakeholders.

Recent activity and plans

The Governing Body are setting up the recruitment process to find and appoint a permanent Headteacher from September 2017. To help define clear challenging objectives for the Headteacher and, in the interim, for the acting Headteacher, we have sought a review of the structure of the most senior posts, agreed to the recruitment of a significant number of administrative and support staff, established staff, parent and pupil surveys, established regular exit interviews for staff who choose to work elsewhere and ensured the appraisal of all school staff. We have also worked with the acting head to fully embrace a single school approach which includes only using “upper” and “lower” to describe, respectively, the younger and older children’s past schools and removing legacy references, for example on signage, documents and the website. We are also actively supporting the upcoming refresh of the school ethos and aims. These will be developed with staff, parent and pupil involvement and we feel is essential to conclude the amalgamation of the two legacy schools.

Conclusion

We hope you have found this initial communication useful. The Governing Body welcome your contributions – just email chairgb@whitchurchprimary.harrow.sch.uk. You can also find out more here:

<http://www.whitchurchprimary.harrow.sch.uk/governing-body/meet-our-governors>.