



Local Governing Body Annual Report 2022-23 September 2023

We are privileged to be Governors at New Siblands School and over the last year have worked closely with the new leadership team of Mr Hemmings and Ms Steer, providing strategic oversight while living our Vision of:

Achievement, Belonging, Celebration

The work of the Local Governing Body is focused around six key strands and we are pleased to report on the achievements and developments over the last academic year.

1. Assessing the quality of education that the school provides for its pupils:

The progress of our pupils is regularly reviewed through scrutiny of assessment reports and discussions with key staff. This year, Governors attended workshops to increase our own knowledge and skills to become more adept at understanding the assessment data we are presented with and allow us to better question areas for development.

Classroom practice is monitored across the year through observations by the leadership team and our School Improvement Advisor, whose reports are presented to Governors. This year there has been a focus on improving consistency.

Our expected visit from Ofsted, though earlier than anticipated, was a positive visit, and we were pleased that Ofsted recognised the 'carefully considered curriculum pathways that cover the range of needs of all pupils'. In line with our ethos of continuous improvement, there is more to do and the development areas suggested by Ofsted aligned with our own priorities in our School Development Plan and over the year the Governing Body have supported the school leadership team as they work toward realising these plans.

At the start of the year, Governors planned their monitoring areas for the year ahead in line with the school priorities; this was challenging as we had a reduced number of Governors, but with two new Governors recently joining us we are looking forward to getting into school much more in the year ahead to carry out learning walks and discuss progress with subject leaders. The school's holistic approach to the curriculum and the personal learning goals for our pupils and students have a strong focus on teaching the life skills that they will need when they leave us; we will be continuing this approach while stretching those more academically able pupils.



2. Assessing the impact of the staff on outcomes for pupils:

Our dedicated and experienced staff are our greatest resource and to cope with the growing and increasing complexity of the needs of our pupils, the school continues to invest heavily in staff training and professional development. We hope to see this advanced further in the year ahead with a comprehensive and holistic approach to staff development across the Trust.

Governors have worked with the school leaders to plan mitigation for staff absence but national issues in the recruitment of staff, in particular teaching assistants and carers, continues to present challenges to the continuity that our pupils need. Staff workload and concerns over time available for debriefs and administration tasks has been a key focus for the school leaders as they strive to support all staff in their work and wellbeing. Governors are mindful of these workload challenges when planning monitoring visits with staff.

3. Assessing the quality of engagement with our parents and carers:

Our parents and carers are vitally important to the life of the school and Governors are keen to know their thoughts and opinions. The parental coffee mornings were welcomed but unfortunately they have been slow to get off the ground, though Governors have been attending to have informal communication with parents.

The Christmas Fayre, organised by the Friends of New Siblands (FONSS) was a great event raising much needed funds and the group would welcome more members to help put on more events. Governors hope to build on the work started this year to find innovative ways for parents to engage more with the life of the school as we go into 2023/24.

4. Holding the school leaders to account for standards in the school:

Governors receive a report from the Head Teacher every term and we use this, coupled with our own visits to school, to challenge school leaders on the standards in our school.

Our Positive Behaviour Base was praised by Ofsted and the investment is returning improvements for children and reductions in anxiety for staff. Governors carried out frequent monitoring of Behaviour in the past year and the skill of our staff was praised; staff always aim to meet the needs of children but when dysregulation occurs it is upsetting and stressful for all involved.

Pupil attendance figures are above the national level for special schools for the year, but the importance of regular attendance cannot be over stated and Governors approved a new Attendance Policy that will be introduced from September 2023, with in depth monitoring three times a year.



The Health & Safety (H&S) of our pupils, staff and visitors is taken seriously and our H&S Governor meets regularly with the school to oversee the work being done to comply with legislation and develop planned maintenance of our school sites.

Safeguarding has the highest priority and at the start of the year Governors adopted the new Trust wide Safeguarding and Online Safety Policies and have continued their own training in the key areas of safeguarding and cyber security. Our dedicated safeguarding team continue to have a high workload and our Safeguarding Governor supported the annual safeguarding audit with further Trust wide audits commissioned to enable us to streamline processes across the Trust to better serve our vulnerable young people and support staff wellbeing.

Governors also look at the all the risks, strategic, operational and financial that could impact our school and update the Risk Register every term, assessing the adequacy of the mitigation in place.

5. Holding the Headteacher to account for delivering the agreed budget outcomes:

All schools spend the majority of their income on staff costs and it is the role of Governors to support the Head Teacher in sound decision making, both income and expenditure related. This year Governors continued to support school leaders as they engaged with the Local Authority on the level of top up funding our children receive and there will be difficult decisions to come as we all struggle with the impact of the cost of living increases. We engaged in further training to better understand the delicate balance of finances in our school and approved changes to staff contracts , providing improved security for staff and reducing administration costs and workload.

The Trustees have tasked us with increased oversight of finance and for the year ahead we are appointing a Governor to work more closely with the Head Teacher and to assist in using the new financial management tools that are becoming available.

6. Ensuring that the school contributes to shared learning across the Trust:

This year, staff and Governors have supported our new Trust Safeguarding Group, along with the established Trust Assessment Group, to streamline our processes and provide an effective forum for continuous improvement in these areas. We have many talented staff and leaders and it is our pleasure to share our knowledge and skills as we get ready to welcome our new school, Two Bridges, in 2024.

The Chair and Vice Chair of Governors continued to meet termly with our counterparts from Culverhill School and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Trust building our links and gaining knowledge and support from each other.



Conclusion and looking ahead

This has been a year of transition with our new leadership team and building the skills of the Governing Body, strengthening it with new members, while saying goodbye to others. Governors have an ever increasing role and we have looked critically at how we organise ourselves and are making changes that will allow clearer focus on key areas across the year. Our role is to support and challenge and there are many challenges ahead, increased pressures on finance, recruitment challenges and another Ofsted visit to look forward to, but with the wealth of talent and expertise we have to call on, and our wonderful pupils and students, we are confident that it will be a great year ahead.

Gillian Foxton
5th October 2023

Breakdown of the Local Governing Body, at the end of 2022/23:

Karl Walker, Headteacher
Gillian Foxton, Chair of Governors, Local Governor
Moria Lloyd, Vice- Chair of Governors, Local Governor
Katherine Ball, Staff Governor
Natalie Perrett, Staff Governor
Rachel Checksfield, Parent Governor
Andrew Scully, Local Governor
Alliser Duncan, Local Governor
Christopher Cooksey, Local Governor

We currently have 1 vacancy for a Parent Governor. If you are interested in learning more about how you can make a difference to our school, please contact our Clerk, Frances McMillan by email: frances.mcmillan@enabletrust.org.uk