

Governors' Annual Statement

Annual Governance Statement for the Board of Governors of Howitt Primary Community School - member of the Embark Multi Academy Trust

November 2023

In accordance with the Government's requirement for all boards of governors, the three core strategic functions of Howitt Primary Community School's Board are:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and
- overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Safeguarding children has remained a priority for our governing board and our focus will continue to be on emotional, physical and mental wellbeing, online safety and the Prevent strategy. All governors undergo rigorous safeguarding training and keep up to date with current legislation.

Governance arrangements

The Board of Governors at Howitt Primary Community School currently has 10 members plus one clerk. The board includes the **headteacher**, one **staff governor**, and two elected **parent governors**. Four members have been **co-opted** onto the board because, in our opinion, they have the skills and experience required to contribute to the effective governance and ongoing success of the school. In addition, our governing board also includes two **associate governors** who are currently the deputy headteacher and the business manager at the school. They provide a balanced overview and "hands-on" information about the whole school; they have no voting rights. On our board, the members come from a range of backgrounds including teaching and education, personnel, business and building management, involvement in charitable work, finance, law and Ofsted inspection.

The full board usually meets at least six times a year; five of these meetings are to discuss formal business, one is allocated to governor training. Some of our meetings have a specific 'Children and Learning' focus. The co-chairs of governors have maintained at least weekly contact with the headteacher and other leaders. The final item on every governors' meeting agenda is "*What have we done at this meeting to improve outcomes for children?*" Every agenda also includes safeguarding with the opportunity for the designated safeguarding governor to update all governors on any relevant issues.

Minutes of governing board meetings are public documents. If you would like to see any of the minutes, please ask at the school office. Dates of future board meetings are available on the school website and on the online school calendar. If you have any other governing board queries please ask at the school office.

We have a **Headteacher Performance Management Committee** with responsibility for setting and reviewing annual challenging objectives for the headteacher. This committee meets at least three times a year and one of these meetings includes the Embark School Improvement Officer.

We also have a **Pay Policy Committee** that meets at least once a year to review changes in pay and conditions.

In addition, we have a **Working Party for Policies** that reviews all Howitt policies before they are circulated to all governors with a view to ratification at the next full governing board meeting. Since we are part of the Embark Multi Academy Trust, certain policies are consistent throughout the Trust.

Attendance record of governors

Howitt Primary Community School's Board of Governors is a committed team and attendance at meetings is a priority for all governors. Governors devote much of their spare time to the school attending events, visiting classes, working alongside teachers and subject leaders, meeting with the headteacher and senior leadership team, speaking with pupils, meeting with external inspectors/advisors and also with Embark's central team to ensure the school continues to improve. Governors write reports of their monitoring visits to school and these are circulated to all governors for information.

We have undertaken robust relevant training in many aspects of school life, for example, safeguarding, safer recruitment, e-safety, equality and diversity, cyber security, information security and data analysis. Many of these training sessions are organised through our involvement in Embark.

Governors also attend relevant Embark forums and network meetings across the Trust in order to share good practice and develop our skills even further.

The work that we have done on our committees and on the Governing Board

In 2022, governors identified **3 main strategic objectives** for the next three years, to be reviewed at least annually; these remain the same after our 2022/2023 review:

1. To ensure that the school provides a high quality education for all, providing a rich and ambitious curriculum that meets the needs of all our children.
2. To ensure that our school fulfils its statutory duties, for example, under the Equality Act 2010, and other duties, for example, in relation to the Prevent Duty and safeguarding.
3. To provide effective governance as a driver for school improvement, including succession planning.

Governors have an action plan that is an integral part of the School Improvement Plan and links directly to the governors' self-evaluation/audit outcomes and the Governors' Strategic Plan.

Whilst we have successfully implemented a creative curriculum, that meets the needs of our pupils. We continue to modify and refine this curriculum to provide our pupils with wide experiences and a clear emphasis on the purpose of their learning and on helping them to remember more. We aim for high standards of attainment and excellent rates of progress, with the Embark motto "Love Learning, Love Life" at the heart of all that we do. The school has continued to develop a complete curriculum planned on a two-year cycle and linked to the Embark themes: *Identity and Diversity, Peace and Conflict, Social Justice, Saving our Environment, Our Heritage, Our World and Beyond*.

At the start of each academic year, governors attend an after-school meeting that revisits the school's vision in the light of previous achievements and then identifies the way forward. This meeting involves all staff, pupils, parents, governors and members of the local community. Matt Crawford, CEO for Embark, led this vision meeting this year and the outcomes are now on display in school and on the school website. Our own school vision, values and aims remain unchanged, particularly in terms of ACE (Achieve, Care, Enjoy).

The 2014 code of practice for supporting children with special educational needs (SEND), updated April 2020, guides our approach to SEND provision. Governors annually review the school's policy and action plan that places greater emphasis on the partnership between school and parents/carers and also builds on our existing good practice. This policy is fully embedded across the school and all teachers and members of SLT are familiar with further changes and developments. Governors liaise regularly with the school SEND co-ordinator (SENCo) and we have a named SEND governor who works alongside the SENCo.

We acknowledge that governors have a key role to play in keeping children safe at school; all governors take part in regular safeguarding training. Safeguarding is an agenda item on all governing board meetings and the headteacher completes and presents the governors with the Embark termly safeguarding report. At the start of each school year, governors receive an annual report on the outcomes of the Safeguarding audit carried out by the Designated Safeguarding Lead teachers. This informs the annual Safeguarding action plan. The role of Safeguarding governor is now a shared role between the co-chairs and they liaise regularly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead teachers. We continually consider and review our safeguarding procedures in line with the Governments' statutory guidelines, following the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' document revised in September 2023.

Thorough health and safety compliance checks are closely monitored by Embark through the 'Every' software.

Governors monitor how the Government's Pupil Premium funding is being spent to help diminish the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. There is a named governor for Pupil Premium and all governors have been updated on how a variety of interventions are helping pupils reach their potential. One of our senior teachers has specific responsibility for monitoring the impact of Pupil Premium funding on the outcomes of disadvantaged children. We have published a Pupil Premium Strategy on our website that clearly identifies barriers to learning and how

the Pupil Premium funding is to be used to address these. This is being reviewed for the year 2022/23 and a new strategy will be in place for January 2024 and will be available on the school website.

The governing board agreed a new three-year budget plan and reported that the school's finances are closely monitored. The Embark Trustees have approved this plan. Governors supported the headteacher in appointing a new member of staff to work in Year 3/4.

The school continues to make excellent use of our own Forest Schools provision and it continues to be an integral part of our curriculum providing 'real life' experiences. This provision, alongside the many extra-curricular opportunities offered through the Embark Trust, ensure that our pupils are inspired to learn in a wide variety of ways. Our pupils have been working towards achieving their own Embark Awards and a number of them received their award at the recent Embark Awards Presentation ceremony in October 2023.

The governors' Children and Learning focused meetings provided us with regular data updates which focussed on the pupils' attainment and progress. Governors compared this data with national, Derbyshire and Trust data. Governors asked probing questions regarding the achievements of specific groups and how they compared to other pupils. These meetings also provided governors with verbal and written reports from subject leaders to outline progress with their action plans and their next steps. Subject leaders valued this level of support and challenge when they reported in person to the governors and they, in turn, welcomed this opportunity to ask specific questions of subject leaders as part of their monitoring and strategic role, holding school leaders to account.

Governors are confident that the school continues to offer an effective and very successful provision for two-year olds linked to our excellent nursery provision. We currently support sixteen two-year olds across morning and afternoon sessions. Our nursery is a lively and welcoming environment that uses every opportunity to extend learning and provides our children with a variety of experiences and skills at the start of their school journey. The latest Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework has been successfully implemented by our enthusiastic Nursery and Reception staff. They have collaborated with other practitioners across the Embark Trust to share good practice. The staff are very effective in supporting parents/carers and encourages their wider involvement in school life.

Our successful after-school club (the Evening Owls) is staffed by experienced school Teaching and Learning Assistants and is very flexible in its offer. All the necessary safeguarding procedures are in place.

Governors' Self Evaluation and training

During the school year 2022/23 each governor completed a 'governors' self evaluation audit' which was put together by the headteacher and co-chairs of governors. This identified our board's improvements in expertise and knowledge and brought to our attention a couple of specific training needs for individual governors. In addition to this, we recognised that we wanted to explore the 'Ten Guiding Principles of Effective Governance' and use them to help our further development.

We shared this idea with the Embark Trust leader and this led to us hosting a training event inviting all Embark governors. The event was very well attended and gave governors an opportunity to meet with other governors from the Trust. Other governor networking events have subsequently been organised, recognising that this was a good model.

Governors took part in the Ofsted inspection in June 2023 and the inspectors were very positive about the school and the in-depth knowledge of the governors.

The co-chairs and vice-chair of the governors have continued to participate in other professional development, online workshops, and have engaged with online and face-to-face Embark Trust forums, e.g. Chairs' forum, Finance forum and School Performance forum.

Future plans for governors

The co-chairs have worked with the headteacher to determine the school's next steps and write the school's new Improvement Plan. This sets out our priorities for the year ahead, linked to the review of data, our vision and the work within the Embark Trust. These priorities are:

1. To further improve children's retention of knowledge over time in the Foundation Subjects by July 2024.
2. To further improve outcomes in writing for each cohort by July 2024.
3. To further improve the proportion of children achieving Good Level of Development (GLD) by the end of EYFS by July 2024 so that it is at least in line with national average.

In addition, the school is working hard to increase the number of pupils who achieve greater depth in their maths.

The action plans **for English** have a major focus **on reading to ensure that standards in reading continue to rise**. The progress of the **disadvantaged pupils** will be closely monitored in each subject by subject leaders, class teachers and by the Lead teacher with specific responsibility for Pupil Premium.

Securing high standards for all our pupils remains our ultimate goal and we will continue to work closely with teaching staff and the Lead teacher for Pupil Premium, to ensure Pupil Premium funding is spent effectively and that interventions for disadvantaged pupils have a positive impact on their achievements and continue to diminish gaps.

Howitt Primary Community School is a thriving school and this year we welcome our cohort of 35 children in the Reception year bringing our current roll to 333.

Governors will ensure measures remain in place to support teaching staff to continue to deliver excellent lessons that promote a love of learning.

We will continue to develop creative ways to forge links with the community. Our links will of course, be strengthened further by our continued involvement within the Embark Trust.

We will continue to prepare our pupils for a life in Modern Britain by promoting the British values of democracy, the law, liberty, respect and tolerance as set down by the government. These sit alongside our own school principles of creativity, curiosity, independence, respect, tolerance, co-operation and resilience.

How you can contact the governing board.

We always welcome suggestions, feedback and ideas from parents/carers. Please contact the co-chairs of governors, Mrs Jane Bowley and Mrs Carolyn Wood, via the school office.

A full list of governors with information about what we do is available on the school website.