

Governors' Annual Statement

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

November 2022

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.

Throughout the COVID-19 restrictions imposed upon the school community, 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.

Governance arrangements

The Board of Governors at Howitt Primary Community School currently has 11 members plus one clerk. The board includes the **headteacher**, two **staff governors**, and two elected **parent governors**. The other four members have been **co-opted** onto the board because, in our opinion, they have the skills 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, finance, law and Ofsted inspection.

The full board usually meets at least nine times a year; five of these meetings are to discuss formal business, one is allocated to governor training and three have a '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. 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 challenging objectives for the headteacher. This committee meets at least three times a year and one of these meetings includes an external adviser.

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, speaking with pupils, meeting with external inspectors/advisors and also 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, information security and data analysis. Many of these training sessions are organised through our involvement in Embark.

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

Governors have identified **3 main strategic objectives** for the next three years, to be reviewed at least annually:

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' actions with regard to school improvement are an integral part of the School Improvement Plan and link 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. We aim for high standards of attainment, 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 establishes the school's vision in the light of previous achievements and 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, 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. There is a named Safeguarding governor on our board who liaises 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 2022.

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 has been reviewed for the year 2021/22 and a new strategy is in place for 2021/24 and is available on the school website.

The governing board agreed a new three-year budget plan and reported that the school's finances are currently healthy. The Embark Trustees have approved this plan. Governors supported the headteacher in appointing a new member of staff to work in Year 3/4. This teacher is an Early Careers Teacher, having recently qualified, and support and mentoring is already in place.

The school continues to make excellent use of our own Forest Schools provision and it is being developed further so that it integrates with our curriculum. 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 the Embark Award and a number of them received their award at the recent Embark Awards Presentation ceremony in October 2022.

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 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 proud of the fact 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 thirteen two-year olds and have sessions morning and afternoon. Our nursery is a lively and welcoming environment that uses every opportunity to extend learning and prepare children to be “school ready”. The new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework is being successfully implemented by enthusiastic Nursery and Reception staff who have undertaken relevant training and collaborated with other practitioners across the Embark Trust. 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 2020/21 each governor completed a ‘governors’ skills audit’ which was put together by the headteacher and co-chairs of governors. This helped us to identify our board’s training needs, effective recruitment, assigning committee members and subject link governors along with succession planning. This was a useful exercise in helping us to be as effective as possible in delivering our governor duties. We used the outcomes to make changes to our agendas and to ensure that training was focused on areas of need, e.g. including a regular finance update on every agenda presented by our school business manager. This audit and process of self evaluation has proved so successful that it has been shared with other governing boards across the Embark Trust.

Governors have had bespoke training and support to prepare for Ofsted and have also begun a programme of safeguarding training run by ‘Flick’; this has been organised by Embark. The co-chairs and vice-chair of the governors have also participated 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 embed our curriculum so that our pupils’ knowledge is increased and that they understand how their learning fits into the wider curriculum.
2. To raise standards in writing across the school through a sequenced approach to learning for all pupils so that standards are at least in line with national averages with a significant proportion above

3. To further improve the proportion of children achieving Good Level of Development (GLD) by the end of EYFS in July 2023 so that it is at least in line with national average.

In addition, the school is working hard to raise standards in maths so that there is an increased number of pupils who achieve greater depth in their learning.

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 senior 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 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 44 children in the Reception year bringing our current roll to 364.

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.