

# Governors' Annual Statement

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

October 2021

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 12 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 three **associate governors** who are currently the two deputy headteachers 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. During the COVID-19 restrictions the governors have continued to play an active role in the life of the school. Our meetings have been held remotely up until the start of this academic year 2021/2022. The co-chairs of governors have maintained at least weekly contact with the headteacher and other leaders. This contact has been a combination of Zoom meetings, emails and, more recently, face-to-face in school.

The final item on every 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.

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 and meeting with external inspectors/advisors to ensure the school continues to improve. Governors write reports of their visits to school and these are circulated to all governors for information. Governors are now resuming their monitoring visits by visiting the school. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the governors' monitoring activities were carried out remotely, e.g. via Zoom meetings, receiving relevant reports, etc.

We have been able to undergo relevant training in many aspects of school life particularly safeguarding, safer recruitment and data analysis.

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

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, a love of learning and a thirst for knowledge. 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).

A revised code of practice for supporting children with special educational needs (SEND) was published during the summer of 2014 and this guides our approach to

SEND provision. Governors annually review the school's policy and action plan that now places greater emphasis on the partnership between school and parents/carers and 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 2021. During 2020/21 there have been several safeguarding amendments and addendums for governors to read and agree to reflect the impact of COVID-19.

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 the school's deputy headteachers monitors 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 2020/21 and a new strategy will be in place for 2021/22 which 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 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.

A thorough health and safety audit has been carried out. The school continued to make excellent use of our own Forest Schools provision and any extra-curricular opportunities offered through the Embark Trust. Our pupils have been working towards achieving the Embark Award and a number of them have been nominated to receive a special category award at a presentation evening in October 2021.

During the governors' Children and Learning focused meetings, regular data updates have been provided which informed governors of 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' 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.

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 fourteen two-year olds and have established an additional session every afternoon in response to our waiting list. Our nursery is a lively and welcoming environment that uses every opportunity to extend learning and prepare children to be "school ready". The nursery staff is 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 and links to COVID-19 are in place.

We continue to be very proud of all of the hard work, commitment and resilience of the staff, pupils and governors this year and particularly the way the staff have risen to the challenge of providing remote learning opportunities and providing face-to-face learning opportunities for children of key workers and vulnerable families during the period of COVID-19 lockdown. The Family Liaison Worker has played a key role in supporting our vulnerable families. The impact of everyone's hard work is evident in the positive and calm way that the pupils returned to school at the start of this academic school year. The governors also wish to thank the parents/carers for their continued support for, and encouragement of, their children during this particularly difficult year.

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.

### **Governors' Self Evaluation and training**

During the school year 2019/20 each governor completed a self-audit/evaluation devised 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.

Governors have had bespoke training and support to prepare for Ofsted and also had online training delivered by a National Leader of Governance focused on roles and responsibilities. The co-chairs of the governors have also participated in other professional development, online workshops, and have engaged with online and face-to-face Embark Trust briefings.

## **Future plans for governors**

The co-chairs have worked with the headteacher to determine the school's next steps and draft 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 ensure that our curriculum provides our pupils with opportunities to know more and remember more and improve their resilience for learning.
2. To raise standards in reading, and in particular reading comprehension across the school, so that they are above the national average at the expected standard and at least in line with the higher standard.
3. To improve outcomes in EYFS through the further implementation of the revised EYFS Framework so that the GLD (Good Level of Development) in July 2022 is at least in line with national averages.

In addition, the school is working hard to ensure that the gaps in learning in maths across the school are diminishing.

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 348

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 Multi Academy 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.