

Governors' Annual Statement

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

September 2020

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 and the co-chairs of governors have maintained at least weekly contact with the headteacher and other leaders.

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.

Following our skills audit (Spring 2019) our governors' minutes always make reference to relevant audit statements to raise governors' awareness of our experience, skills and other attributes.

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.

In addition we have a **Working Party for Policies** that reviews policies before they are circulated to all governors with a view to ratification at the next full governing board meeting. We continue to work with the Embark Multi Academy Trust to ensure that policies are aligned wherever possible.

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. In normal circumstances, a number of 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. Whenever relevant, governors write reports of their visits to school and these are circulated to all governors for information. Once the situation allows, governors will resume their monitoring visits but in the meantime the governors' monitoring activities have been 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. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the school has worked alongside the other schools in the Embark Trust to develop the Rising Strong recovery plan/curriculum. Also the school has developed a complete curriculum planned on a two year cycle and this was in place ready for September 2020.

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. Unfortunately, this event has not taken place in September 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. Up until the school's lockdown in the Spring term 2020, we have attended various showcase events, creative curriculum visitors ('WOW' days) concerts, performances and celebration assemblies.

Our vision for the school remains unchanged, particularly in terms of ACE (Achieve, Care, Enjoy). There will inevitably be some catching up to do but we recognise that a different range of learning opportunities have been made available to our pupils either online or face-to-face during this year's Spring and Summer terms.

A revised code of practice for supporting children with special educational needs (SEND) was published during the summer of 2014 and over the last six years, the school has implemented the key changes and further developments. 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. 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 2020. During 2019/20 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 has been reviewed for the year 2019/20 and a new strategy for 2020/21 has been put in place which can be viewed on the school website.

The governing board agreed a new three year budget plan and reported that the school's finances are currently healthy. This plan has been agreed by the Embark Trustees. Governors supported the headteacher in appointing staff, two of whom are recently qualified teachers who had both completed their NQT year at the school, and a part-time experienced teacher to work in Year 6. A successful health and safety audit has been carried out. The school has made excellent use of our own Forest Schools provision, particularly during the COVID-19 restrictions. The Year 4 classroom has been completely repaired and the lead is being replaced above the Year 5 classroom.

During the governors' Children and Learning focused meetings, regular data updates are provided which inform governors of the pupils' attainment and progress. Governors asked probing questions regarding the achievements of specific groups and how they compared to other children. These meetings also provide 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 are very proud of all of the hard work 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; especially during the school holiday periods. The impact of everyone's hard work is evident in the positive and calm way that the pupils have returned to school following, for some, a prolonged period at home. One of the advantages of being part of the Embark Trust has been our school's direct involvement in formulating, with the Trust, the Rising Strong project which has focused on developing an effective strategy for pupils and staff to return to school. This project has been so successful that it has made the national press and has been shared with other academy trusts throughout the country. 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

At the start of the school year 2018/19 each governor completed a skills audit linked to the National Governors' Association skills audit. This helped us to identify our board's collective skills and experiences and to identify any gaps and training needs. We agreed some actions to address the gaps in experience, e.g. rotating the chairing of the Children and Learning focus meetings so that all governors have experience of chairing a meeting and receiving finance training from one of our associate governors (school business manager).

The co-chairs of the governors have also participated in 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 further develop and refine our curriculum ensuring that every pupil has the opportunity to engage in a broad and balanced curriculum.
2. To raise standards in reading across the school, so that they are above the national average at the expected standard and at least in line with the higher standard with a particular focus on furthering opportunities for reading for pleasure.
3. To continue to raise standards in maths across the school with a particular emphasis on problem solving and reasoning for all pupils so that they are at least in line with national averages with a significant proportion above.
4. To ensure that pupils with SEND make progress in all subjects that is comparable to that made by non-send pupils.
5. To ensure that the attainment gap in learning, due to COVID-19, is diminished, whilst addressing mental health and well-being of all pupils.

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 381

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 strengthen our 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 children 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. The Embark Award has been launched at the start of this academic year and each pupil has been issued with a folder in which to store evidence of their achievements.

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.