

Governors' Annual Statement

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

September 2019

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 will remain a priority for our governing board and our focus will 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**, one **staff governor**, and two elected **parent governors**. The other six 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. On our board, the co-opted members come from a range of backgrounds including teaching and education, personnel, business and building management, finance and Ofsted inspection. In addition, our governing board also includes two **associate governors** who are currently the two deputy headteachers at the school. They provide a balanced overview and "hands-on" information about the whole school; they have no voting rights.

The full board now meets at least eight times a year; five of these meetings are to discuss formal business, one is allocated to governor training and two have a children and learning focus. The final item on every agenda is "*What have we done at this meeting to improve outcomes for children?*" Every agenda also includes a discussion around one of the National Governors' Association 'Twenty Questions' that every governing board should ask of itself or any items that have arisen from our board's self-evaluation/skills audit.

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 are now also working 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. 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. We also undergo relevant training in many aspects of school life e.g. induction, finance, roles and responsibilities, safer recruitment, safeguarding and data analysis.

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

All schools introduced the Government's National Curriculum in September 2014. 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.

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. We have also attended homework project showcase events, creative curriculum visitors ('WOW' days) concerts, performances and celebration assemblies.

A revised code of practice for supporting children with special educational needs (SEND) was published during the summer of 2014 and over the last five years, the school has implemented the key changes and further developments. Governors regularly review the school's policy 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 teacher. This informs the annual Safeguarding action plan. There is a named Safeguarding governor on our board who liaises regularly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead teacher. 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 2019.

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 2018 -19 and a new strategy for 2019 -20 has been put in place.

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. The Resources Committee (2018/19) supported the headteacher in appointing new staff, two of whom are newly qualified teachers, a part-time experienced teacher. This committee ensured that the school site was well maintained and secure. A successful health and safety audit has been carried out. This year the school has created and makes good use of our own Forest Schools area. We have also tightened up on security by installing new metal gates to the playground. During the summer holiday in July 2019 some lead was stolen from one of our roofs and this resulted in some flood damage to one classroom. The issue was resolved before the start of term.

The Children and Learning Committee (2018/2019) received regular data updates which informed them of the pupils' attainment and progress. Governors asked probing questions regarding the achievements of specific groups and how they compared to other children. This committee also received regular 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 committee. Governors welcomed this opportunity to ask specific questions of subject leaders as part of their monitoring and strategic role.

Last year the Children and Learning Committee played an integral part in school improvement and their roles and responsibilities were clearly identified in the School Improvement Plan. We continued to use our monitoring questions that are linked to each key issue in the Plan. These questions supported governors to have an increased awareness of school improvement whilst being an effective strategy to hold school leaders to account. This year (2019/2020) the work of this committee is being taken on by the whole governing board.

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 eleven two-year olds and have introduced an additional session in the afternoons 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 are very effective in supporting parents/carers and encourage their wider involvement in school life.

This year we have set up an after-school club (the Evening Owls) to develop our wrap-around care. It is staffed by experienced school Teaching and Learning

Assistants and is very flexible in its offer. All the necessary safeguarding procedures are in place and it has been monitored by governors.

Following a series of Governing Board Extraordinary meetings and consultation with the community and all stakeholders, our school became an academy and now works alongside seven other Derbyshire primary schools as part of the Embark Multi Academy Trust. The children and their education were at the heart of this decision and we have a number of children who have benefitted from wider opportunities offered by the Trust. These include working with West End stars to record our Trust song and as part of singing workshops, an art day where two artists inspired children to develop their drawing skills. Pupils from one of the other schools also visited our school to perform a dance production based around anti-bullying. Other opportunities are being planned for the future.

We are very proud of all of the hard work of the staff, pupils and governors this year and the impact of this hard work is evident in the school's overall trend of improvement and the positive 2019 outcomes our pupils have achieved. The governors also wish to thank the parents/carers for their continued support for and encouragement of their children and their increasing involvement in the life of the school.

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 2017/18 each governor completed a self-audit /evaluation linked to the National Governors' Association skills audit. This helped us to identify our board's strengths and training needs and we devised a governors' development plan linked to the six competencies in the "Competency Framework for Governance". As result governors have received training on:

- Roles and responsibilities;
- Interpreting and questioning data;
- Safeguarding;
- Prevent; and
- Online safety.

The co-chairs of the governors also attended training and Local Authority and Embark Trust strategic briefings specific to their role.

In the Spring term 2019 each governor completed a Governors' Skills Audit to grade their experience, skills and other attributes so that the board could evaluate the spread of expertise and also identify future training.

Future plans for governors

During the 2019 summer break the co-chairs 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 meeting earlier in September and the work within the Embark Trust. These priorities are:

- To further develop the curriculum ensuring every pupil has the opportunity to engage in a broad and balanced curriculum.
- 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.
- To continue to raise standards in writing across the school, with a particular emphasis on spelling, for all pupils so that they are at least in line with national averages with a significant proportion above.
- To ensure that pupils with SEND make progress in all subjects that is comparable to that made by non-SEND pupils.

Securing high standards for all our children 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 children 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 45 children in the Reception year bringing our current roll to 371.

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

We will continue to strengthen our links with the community by showcasing our pupils' talents for sports and music outside school. We have a vibrant school choir and an established community choir. 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.

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.