

Sheep Dip Lane Primary School Governing Body External Review

Reviewer Name	Mrs G Ayre
Reviewer background	Educational Consultant, Standards and Effectiveness Partner (STEP), Governor Previously <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Headteacher, Headteacher • Accredited Ofsted Inspector • Accredited School Improvement Partner • Senior Adviser in 2 Local Authorities
Chair of Governors Headteacher	Acting Chair – Mrs D Wright Mrs F Parish
Date of Review	Monday 1 October and Thursday 4 October 2018
Attendees at the Review Meeting	Mrs F Parish Headteacher Mrs D Wright Acting Chair of Governors Mrs K Holland Vice Chair of Governors Mrs A Parkhurst Co-opted Governor Mrs S Bradley Parent Governor Mrs Dewsnap Co-opted Governor Apologies: Mrs Rajatharsan No show: Miss C Broxholme
Background and context of the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is currently deemed at 'targeted level' by the Local Authority and a 'School of Concern'. • The school underwent an Ofsted Inspection in May 2018 where overall effectiveness was judged as Requires Improvement. <p><i>'.....Governors bring a range of relevant skills and experience to the governing body. Some of the governors are very experienced. They are committed, highly organised and work very hard for the school and the pupils. They are thorough in their work, including watching over safeguarding arrangements. However, they occasionally concern themselves a little too much with day-to-day operational matters, rather than restricting their efforts to strategic issues.....'</i></p> <p>Ofsted May 2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair of Governors resigned towards the end of the Summer Term following illness and Mrs D Wright is Acting Chair, very ably supported by Mrs K Holland as Vice Chair.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the last few weeks, since taking over, the Acting Chair and Vice Chair have formed a very strong partnership and are now putting in place key plans and developments which are beginning to improve governors' understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Although this is in the very early stages, indications are positive and already firm foundations are being established. Discussion with other governors confirmed their commitment to improving governance at the school.
<p>Process of the review</p>	<p>Analysis of key documentation and resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing Body Minutes • Headteacher Reports to Governors • Standards and Effectiveness Partner Reports • Record of Governor visits • Governor Training Log • Structure and Terms of Reference for committees • Draft Governor Action Plan • Most recent Ofsted Report • Code of Conduct • Audit of Skills - not available • Website <p>Face to face meeting with the Headteacher and Co-opted Governor Face to face meeting with the Staff Governors then other Governors Brief feedback Formal written report</p>

1 Strategic Leadership that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy

<p>a clear and explicit vision for the future set by the board, in collaboration with executive leaders, which has pupil progress and achievement at its heart and is communicated to the whole organisation;</p>	<p>The Governing Body has recently a shared vision for the school so that there are strong values and high expectations. However, they must develop, communicate and model these ambitions. Previously, reports shared have not contained sufficient information about the progress of pupils and quality of teaching across the school however, the Acting Chair and Vice Chair are beginning to address this aspect with far more rigour and determination. Some governors do not fully understand the performance of the school and</p>
<p>strong and clear values and ethos which are defined and modelled by the board, embedded across the organisation and adhered to by all that work in it, or on behalf of it;</p>	

<p>strategic planning that defines medium to long-term strategic goals, and development and improvement priorities which are understood by all in the organisation;</p>	<p>therefore need specific training in interpreting data and other aspects of school performance.</p>
<p>processes to monitor and review progress against agreed strategic goals and to refresh the vision and goals periodically and as necessary including at key growth stages or if performance of the organisation drops;</p>	<p>Discussion and documentation evidenced that there are committees in place e.g. a regular termly meeting for the full Governing Body with two further committees: School Improvement Committee (SIC) and Finance, Facilities and Human Resources Committee (FFHR). Written evidence supports the fact that these committees have information about membership and terms of reference but would benefit from looking at agendas and the focus of meetings particularly the SIC e.g. pupil achievement being the priority on an agenda before updates to environment etc. It is also recommended that the School Improvement Committee meets half-termly during the coming months until a judgement of good has been secured within School Self-Evaluation.</p>
<p>mechanisms for enabling the board to listen, understand and respond to the voices of parents/carers, pupils, staff, local communities and employers;</p>	<p>The 'Code of Conduct' for governors is thorough and was last signed in Autumn 2017. It is an ideal time to revisit this with all governors and share expectations and responsibilities, particularly with two new governors coming on board so that expectations can be shared, agreed and modelled.</p>
<p>determination to initiate and lead strategic change when this is in the best interests of children, young people and the organisation, and to champion the reasons for, and benefits of, change to all stakeholders;</p>	<p>Previously, at the end of the Summer Term, governors have spent time discussing and agreeing School Improvement Planning priorities for the following year with SLT staff. Due to other commitments this was postponed and planned for this term. This is a crucial session so that governors can participate in and contribute strategically to School Improvement Planning. It is good practice to evidence succinctly such discussion.</p>
<p>procedures for the board to set and manage risk appetite and tolerance; ensuring that risks are aligned with strategic priorities and improvement plans and that appropriate intervention strategies are in place and embedding risk management at every level of governance;</p>	<p>The Acting Chair and Vice-Chair have worked very hard during the last few weeks to discuss and draft a governor action plan. To strengthen further, timelines and specific milestones need including. It is pleasing to note that many, but not all, of the areas for improvement identified in this review are being addressed through this plan. It is suggested that, following this review, governors discuss, agree, amend their draft action plan to take account of the additional recommendations as appropriate. It is important to ensure the</p>
<p>an informed decision on whether to form, join or grow a group of schools which is underpinned by robust due diligence and an awareness of the need to review the effectiveness of governance structures and processes if and when the size, scale and complexity of the organisation changes.</p>	

	<p>whole governing body is aware of what needs doing to support a good or better judgement for Leadership and Management and that each and every governor contributes actively to this. It is crucial that this plan is 'reported on' regularly and rag-rated to evidence the progress being made.</p> <p>The headteacher commented how governors discussed Academisation to help them make an informed decision. This was confirmed by governors' discussions and by the detailed minutes and reports shared within the meeting.</p> <p>Although governors consider that they lead strategically and that they set and champion vision, ethos and strategy, there is often a lack of evidence to substantiate this and there is still much work to do to improve to ensure that governance plays a key role in particularly relating to challenging senior leaders regarding rapid school improvement. The draft governors' action plan states 'support the headteacher to develop leadership and challenge behaviours at all levels throughout the school' this is key to driving school improvement.</p> <p>The Governing Body needs to evidence concisely that they have ownership of the school improvement plans and policies and monitor their implementation and subsequent impact on outcomes for pupils. The Governing Body needs to ensure and evidence that its work is driven by the key main priorities and that monitoring activities are focused on evaluating progress towards agreed targets and milestones.</p> <p>Governors are keen to consult more with pupils and parents and the draft Governor Action Plan shows a keenness to build this aspect into systems and processes (See section 8).</p>
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2 Accountability that drives up educational standards and financial performance

<p>rigorous analysis of pupil progress and attainment information with comparison against local and national benchmarks and over time;</p>	<p>Due to a decline in outcomes in 2017 this indicates that governors have not been rigorous enough in checking pupils' attainment and progress and holding staff to account. However, there were some mitigating circumstances e.g. absence due to illness of the long-standing and well-respected chair who was keen to continue and some governor resignations. Results improved in 2018 but nevertheless, it is suggested that there are improved processes for overseeing and monitoring school improvement activity and its impact on pupil outcomes using a range of triangulated evidence. (see comments above re SIC focus and rigour).</p>
<p>clear processes for overseeing and monitoring school improvement and providing constructive challenge to executive leaders;</p>	<p>In the most recent Headteachers' Report to Governors there is a detailed section on pupil outcomes for Summer 2018. Governors are given this report in advance and there are spaces for questions and comments, governors have just begun to ask key questions and challenge leaders e.g. See K Holland's questions to the headteacher. This aspect needs to be further enhanced through focused discussions and dialogue at the half-termly SICs. Governors need to know how to compare the school's performance with national data and use internal data to monitor future outcomes. Governors also need to understand what evidence is required to challenge the school's judgments on the quality of teaching.</p>
<p>a transparent system for performance managing executive leaders, which is understood by all in the organisation, linked to defined strategic priorities;</p>	<p>The school wisely uses an accredited external Performance Management (PM) Consultant to ensure robust processes are in place. It is vital that PM training is enabled for other governors so that they are fully conversant and so that there is succession planning in place should they need to be different governors on a PM Committee in the future.</p>
<p>effective oversight of the performance of all other employees and the framework for their pay and conditions of service;</p>	<p>Governors support many events but there needs to be a clarity about what governors are doing in a 'supportive role' and what they are doing in terms of their 'challenge role', particularly in holding leaders to account for pupil outcomes. A priority on the action plan needs to be for the governors to review how they carry out sharply focused 'purposeful visits' alongside leaders to see the school in action and gain valuable first-hand experience of the standards and quality the school provides. It is suggested that the</p>
<p>a regular cycle of meetings and appropriate processes to support business and financial planning;</p>	
<p>effective controls for managing within available resources and ensuring regularity, propriety and value for money.</p>	

	<p>Governor Visits Policy is looked at reviewed and updated. It is crucial that all governors consider carrying out termly visits which are recorded on an agreed pro forma so that they have information to enable them to both support and challenge the school appropriately. Reports are a crucial piece of evidence and can record and demonstrate impact seen. Although it is acknowledged that being a governor is voluntary, the school cannot afford any 'passengers'. Each and every governor now needs to contribute fully.</p> <p>The Chair of Governors meets regularly with the headteacher. It is recommended that such meetings are logged, stating date/ time and includes bullet points of what the outcomes of the meeting have resulted in.</p>
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3 People with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity

<p>understand the purpose of governance and the role of non-executive leadership and have all the necessary skills, as outlined in the department's <i>Competency framework for governance</i>, to deliver it well</p>	<p>As mentioned above there are people in place with a blend of skills and capacity to support and challenge the school. There is general agreement that the governing body has to improve further and develop their roles and responsibilities.</p>
<p>include an effective chair and vice-chair with the ability to provide visionary strategic non-executive leadership;</p>	<p>Although the Acting Chair was new to post in Summer 2018, she is doing a very good job and is ably supported by a confident vice-chair. This is now working well, and the Chair commented that she relishes the role and feels there is a very strong partnership between the head and governors and that they are not afraid to challenge as well as support.</p>
<p>provide sufficient diversity of perspectives to enable robust decision making;</p>	
<p>are recruited through robust and transparent processes against a clear articulation of required skills which are set out in a role specification;</p>	<p>There is still a vacancy on the board and as there are several governors who are closely linked to the school, it is suggested that the next appointment is someone new, who would bring 'fresh eyes', objective viewpoints and a different perspective to the board. Governors and the headteacher through</p>
<p>use active succession planning to ensure the board, and the whole organisation, continues to have the people and leadership it needs to remain effective;</p>	

employ a professional clerk, and as necessary a company secretary, to provide expert advice and guidance and to ensure the efficient and compliant operation of the board.

their audit of skills (not seen) suggests someone is needed from a business background.
A key strength is that the school uses a professional clerking service which is objective and offers specialist knowledge. However, governors need to insist that as part of this service level agreement, that they have a regular clerk who knows the school well and that all minutes reflect accurately the discussions and challenges which have taken place. The SIC is minuted by the school and would benefit from increased LA support here as the minutes from this crucial meeting are vital and need to reflect accurately the most up to date position.

The Acting Chair of Governors is aware of the need for governors, particularly those who have recently been appointed, to undertake training to enhance the effectiveness of the governing body. It was discussed that governors may benefit from the appointment of one governor to act as a 'training governor' so that they can look out for relevant support, keep an eye out for the latest documentation and share information and updates. Governors are very keen to support the school and it may help them to look at the documentation such as the Governor Handbook, Ofsted Handbook, NGA materials together and develop their own library of resources, booklets and pamphlets. It is suggested that visits to view other governing body meetings and talking to other governors will help clarify their roles.

The whole aspect of governor induction and training needs to be reviewed. The current Induction Handbook needs refreshing and updating to make more user-friendly and offer information more relevant to the school's current position. Ideas of schools where this has been done were shared. The recent coaching session with a new governor worked especially well and helped them quickly understand the role and get to grips with the needs of the school. This needs to continue with future new governors. No evidence was seen of Governors' recruiting processes.

4 Structures that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities

<p>appropriate board and committee structures that reflect the scale and structure of the organisation and ensure sufficient and robust oversight of key priorities;</p>	<p>An area that could be developed further is regarding communication with parents and pupils through the use and analysis of questionnaires. It is suggested that although most governors have ably demonstrated their presence within school, this could be enhanced through a specific governor display in a prominent position for parents and visitors to view. Furthermore, governors may wish to look at what governors in other schools put on their website and ideas were shared here. It is suggested that governors may benefit from talking to the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors at the schools identified.</p>
<p>clear separation between strategic non-executive oversight and operational executive leadership which is supported by positive relationships that encourage a professional culture and ethos across the organisation;</p>	<p>The Acting Chair and the headteacher have developed a good professional relationship and this will help communicate the higher expectations required and the work needed within the governing body. Although discussion elicited that governors have a rolling programme of policy review and development, this robust process is not always evidenced in the best manner e.g. comments re Teaching and Learning Policy date 206 and subsequent reviews</p>
<p>processes for ensuring appropriate communication between all levels and structures of governance and to pupils/students, parents/carers, staff and communities – particularly to ensure transparency of decision-making;</p>	<p>Without doubt governors want the best for the school and offer some level of challenge, however, there needs to be strengthening of processes and increased rigour in terms of procedures, so that the school moves in the right direction and secures good outcomes for all pupils.</p>
<p>published details of governance arrangements including the structure and remit of the board and any committees which is understood at all levels of governance and leadership and is reviewed regularly;</p>	<p>It is good to report that governors always participate in and contribute to the Standards and Effectiveness Partner (StEP) visits each term which keeps them abreast of the latest requirements in terms of teaching and learning,</p>

5 Compliance with statutory and contractual requirements

<p>awareness of, and adherence to, responsibilities under education and employment legislation and where applicable, charity and company law and all other legal duties including Canon law where applicable;</p>	<p>It is good to report that governors always participate in and contribute to the Standards and Effectiveness Partner (StEP) visits each term which keeps them abreast of the latest requirements in terms of teaching and learning,</p>
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<p>plans to ensure that key duties are undertaken effectively across the organisation such as safeguarding, inclusion, special education needs and disability (SEND), and monitoring and oversight of the impact of pupil premium and other targeted funding streams;</p>	<p>leadership and management, curriculum planning and provision and personal development, behaviour and well-being.</p> <p>The whole area regarding monitoring, recording and reporting of Pupil Premium and Sports Premium spending and impact needs reviewing as this is an area identified by Ofsted in May 2018 <i>they do not have a detailed and accurate knowledge of the progress of key groups of pupils across the age range. For example, governors have an overly positive view of the progress of disadvantaged pupils and the impact of the spending of pupil premium funding.....</i> This is on the draft Governor Action Plan as a priority.</p> <p>The Acting Chair stated SATs compliance has been monitored but in future this needs recording in the Governor Visit Log Book and reporting on the agreed template.</p> <p>The SFVS has been completed with the governors' involvement and understanding of the process.</p>
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6 Evaluation to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance

<p>regular skills audits, aligned to the organisation's strategic plan, to identify skill and knowledge gaps and which both define recruitment needs and inform a planned cycle of continuous professional development (CPD) activity including appropriate induction for those new to governance or to the board;</p> <p>processes for regular self-evaluation and review of individuals' contribution to the board as well of the board's overall operation and effectiveness;</p> <p>commissioning external reviews of board effectiveness, particularly at key growth or transition points, to gain an independent expert assessment of strengths and areas for development;</p> <p>documentation which accurately captures evidence of the board's discussions and decisions as well as the evaluation of its impact and which complies with legal requirements for document retention.</p>	<p>See above re comment about skills audit.</p> <p>It is recommended that governors have a follow-up review within 4-6 months to look at the actions taken and the impact they have had.</p>
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OVERALL JUDGEMENT OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

	High level of confidence	All judgements can be supported by evidence from a range of sources
✓	Mixed level of confidence	Some judgements can be supported by evidence from a range of sources, but improvement required
	Limited confidence	Sufficient evidence is not available and/or the evidence from the headteacher is not supported by other evidence

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION OF THE QUALITY OF GOVERNANCE

	Strong Governance	No urgent or major changes required
	Secure Governance	Governance is effective, but there needs to be some minor improvements
✓	Insecure Governance	Governance is not yet effective enough; some major and some minor improvement required
	Weak Governance	Major all-round improvement required

Strengths

- Governors embraced the review process, contributed valuable information and emphasised that they are keen to act on findings.
- A positive start has been made on the draft governor Action Plan
- The determination of the new acting Chair and Vice Chair to develop and enhance processes to secure an overall judgement of good in future self-evaluation backed by supporting evidence
- A hardworking and committed group of governors who support the school regularly.... ‘.....Governors bring a range of relevant skills and experience to the governing body. Some of the governors are very experienced. They are committed, highly organised and work very hard for the school and the pupils. They are thorough in their work, including watching over safeguarding arrangements....’ *Ofsted 2018*
- The good relationship between senior leaders and governors and the work of governors regarding safeguarding

Recommended Areas for Improvement

- Develop and enhance the draft governors' action plan as a matter of urgency showing how it is going to address the following recommendations and areas for improvement. This should include key main priorities, aligned actions, stating the lead person for each action, incorporating success criteria, timings and milestones, costings, training and resources plus the required and reporting

- mechanisms including where evidence can be found. This Governor Action Plan then needs to be discussed regularly and rag-rated on a frequent basis to ensure rapid improvements and no time slippage.
- Discuss and develop committee structures and terms of reference to ensure they focus their energies on the right priorities e.g. pupil achievement, data, quality of teaching and learning, behaviour and safety, curriculum. Ensure that governors' questions and queries challenge and that these are accurately minuted, including outcomes and any follow-up.
 - Ensure that governors' monitoring is integral to the School Improvement Plan and align this to an annual calendar of 'Monitoring and Evaluation Visits' so that governors can plan and can carry out series of purposeful visits, undertake focused Learning Walks, participate in work scrutiny and meet with key leaders and staff to increase their knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the school's work and complete over a 6-12 month period and ensure the impact of their work is measured.
 - Review and refresh the schools current 'Visits Policy' and develop the Governors' Visit Report Template, a 'Governors' Visit Book' and ensure governors rigorously complete notes each time they visit to share the information they glean more effectively.
 - Review, update, agree and implement a robust Code of Conduct bespoke to the school so that all governors are aware of expectations around attendance and input, adhere to them and all set a good example and model good practice. Embed the recently updated aims and vision so all governors are clear about the ethos and strategic direction.
 - Following the current training audit being undertaken, implement a Governors' Training Plan as a matter of urgency and plan a programme of intensive training and support to meet the needs of individual governors as well as the whole governing body so that all governors have a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
 - Utilise the Skills Audit when targeting and recruiting new Governors to ensure they will be active and have a presence within the school. Ensure a coaching mentoring system is developed to welcome and support new governors and that it is made clear to them about expectations, roles and responsibilities from the outset. New induction leaflet
 - The SLC committee would benefit from increased LA support for clerking to record improvements accurately before the next inspection as well as consistency with clerking the full governor board meetings through the service level agreement.
 - Raise the profile of governance amongst pupils, parents and staff and ensure improved communication all round e.g. enhance governors' section on the website, particularly regarding policy review, develop a governors' library and a governors' display within school and update regularly with what is happening, governors to undertake pupil and parent questionnaires and analyse and act on findings etc
 - Explore ways of learning from best practice across the region, through schools to school support and partnership working

Gill Ayre

October 2018