

Old Park Primary School

Old Park Road,
Wednesbury
West Midlands
WS10 9LX

Governance Review Date

December 2016

Overall Effectiveness of Governance

Strategic Governance

Strong

Performance Governance

Strong

Financial Governance

Strong

Financial Governance

Strong

Governance Review Findings

Governance in Old Park Primary School is strong

- There is a genuine partnership between leadership at all levels and members of the governing body.
- Members of the governing body have wide ranging skills and qualities which are used to good effect in different committees.
- Governors are involved in a wide range of activities which contribute to their knowledge and understanding about the work of the school.
- Governors respond well to different training opportunities with safeguarding being a strength.
- Governors ensure the performance management of the headteacher and other staff members are focused on the school's strategic priorities and improving outcomes for pupils.

Recommendations for Development

Governors may wish to consider improving the evidence of their work by:

- Creating a governors' action plan which provides an annual overview of their work in the school
- Completing governor visit notes to demonstrate the impact of their work;
- Compiling an annual statement about the impact of the work of the governing body which is placed on the website.
- Providing a governor portal as a resource for all documentation and communication.

*Governance is evaluated using the descriptors **weak**, **sound**, **strong** and **very strong**.*

Overall Effectiveness

Governors operate in such a way that statutory duties are met and priorities are approved.

- 1.1 The overall effectiveness of governance in this school is strong. The governing body is well-integrated with members having a wide range of skills and proficiencies which are used to good effect to support the work of different committees. The former chair ensured there was a smooth transition for the new chair of governors as well as the new headteacher. This is good succession planning. Governors know staff well partly because of the annual “adopt a governor” event when the senior leadership team share whole –school priorities in the school improvement plan, as well as other activities with which they are involved, including attendance at parent consultation evenings. Governors share a good understanding about the quality of education in the school.
- 1.2 Governors understand their roles and responsibilities to challenge, support, monitor and evaluate the work of the school. They are very proactive in terms of attending training, including school-based training. Governors have supported the development of new roles in school such as a safeguarding officer and the employment of a drama coach and a communication therapist because they recognise the benefit and impact of this work. Where governors required more information about standards achieved in statutory tests, this was included in the headteacher’s appraisal. Similarly, when there was an issue about nursery places, the chair requested a review of the nursery admission’s policy. Individual governors are involved in a range of activities to check the work of the school including acting as link governors and providing evidence for quality marks.
- 1.3 Governors have a very good understanding of statutory responsibilities which are reviewed regularly. All governors are expected to achieve Level One Safeguarding which is delivered by the vice-chair. There are two options for Prevent training provided by the vice-chair and all governors are also in the process of completing e-safety training online.
- 1.4 The governing body has spent the last two years reviewing its processes and structures reducing membership to fourteen. Governors’ work is now managed by regular meetings of two committees which oversee the provision the school makes to improve learning, and the outcomes that children achieve. This has enabled governors to work more effectively.
- 1.5 The school purchases an external training package for governors as well as allocating monies to cover staff when governors come into school to work with leaders. New governors are inducted by an experienced governor and advised to attend roles and responsibilities training. All governors complete an annual skills audit which informs the training schedule as well as providing information to match skills- sets to committees. Specialist training has been made available to the governor for special needs who has attended the therapeutic mentoring programme with the special educational needs coordinator. This has given an excellent insight into the complex needs of some pupils and how they are managed at the school.
- 1.6 The governing body has a professional clerk who run meetings efficiently and provides useful advice.
- 1.7 The governing body has adopted a wide range of techniques to communicate with parents and the wider community. The school is an effective partner in a learning community of local schools and with the wider partnership of authority schools. Questionnaires, visits to school and attendance at regular events lead to a high degree of involvement. Parents’ views have been sought about

reporting formats and homework for example. There is a dedicated email address for parents to contact governors. The chair has met the school council and governors are involved in staff appointments .

Strategic Governance

Governors ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.

- 2.1 There is a good understanding of how and when governors should be involved in strategic thinking and planning. The governors look at the headteacher's targets and at the priorities in the three-year plan to ensure they are linked. The annual "Adopt a Governor" evening enables the senior leadership team to share the priorities in the school improvement plan, an overview of which is provided for all members and staff. The event provides an opportunity for all staff and governors to question the senior leadership about the priorities thus giving a sense of ownership to all concerned.
- 2.2 Governors have good working relationships with staff members and this results in high quality challenge and support. The headteacher and senior leadership draft the school improvement plan which is then shared with governors. The committees enable staff to share progress with the priorities in the plan as well as the information included in the headteacher's report. Where possible, a governor attends the termly school improvement adviser visit, enabling them to gain further insight about progress with the school's priorities.
- 2.3 Challenge and support was evident in the meeting observed and highlighted in the minutes from committee meetings. The chair welcomes questions from members at meetings. The headteacher provides high quality information in advance but also tables materials for further consideration. For example, the Key Stage 1 and 2 writing exemplification materials for the expected standard were shared as well as a pupil premium review with the expectation that questions would be emailed to the headteacher. A presentation by the new mathematics leader generated a range of interesting and challenging questions. All governors have a voice in this governing body.
- 2.4 Governors identify priorities for improvement from the quality of information provided by the headteacher and other senior leaders. The headteacher is very open and transparent with the governing body. As much information as possible is provided in advance of meetings with the expectation that everyone reads it in advance in preparation for meetings.
- 2.5 Members of the governing body monitor and review the improvement plan through feedback to committees and the full governing body, following paired monitoring by staff in school. This gives members the opportunity to raise questions and ensure that priorities in the plan are linked to progress. Link governors are invited to join learning walks with members of the leadership team. The use of pupil premium funding is monitored very closely. Verbal feedback is provided following governor visits to school.
- 2.6 The strategic planning cycle and the governing body's activities and agenda setting are closely interlinked. The agenda is discussed and agreed by the chair, the headteacher, the school business manager and the clerk.

Performance Governance

Governors contribute to the school's self-evaluation and understand its strengths and weaknesses, including the impact of their own work.

- 3.1 Governors have a good understanding about the strengths and weaknesses of the school because of the quality of information provided by the headteacher and other leaders. The school is not complacent about its outstanding status.
- 3.2 Governors receive information about the school's performance from the termly headteacher's report, the termly school improvement adviser's reports, Raiseonline, Quality Mark reports, reports from the school business manager and the day nursery manager. Presentations by subject leaders as well as parent workshops (also) provide valuable information.
- 3.3 Governors link teaching and attainment and lead the drive for improvement through their knowledge of the monitoring cycle which is part of the school improvement plan. Minutes provide evidence of feedback from the monitoring cycle about the quality of provision as well as evidence of successful performance management. A confidential minute provides evidence of the rigour with which governors consider whether additional incremental points should be awarded.
- 3.4 Governors understand the school's performance well enough to properly hold school leaders to account which is evident from the minutes. For example, White British boys have been identified as a target group by the school. When the literacy leader made a presentation to the curriculum and standards committee questions were asked how the school is approaching improvement for this group and what is being done specifically to target improved outcomes. In a recent meeting, the mathematics leader was asked whether there will need to be increased challenge in Early Years and Key Stage 1 to meet the higher expectations of the new curriculum.
- 3.5 Governors use the information they receive from senior leaders and the school improvement adviser to make decisions about the performance management of the headteacher and other staff members. Challenging targets linked to priorities in the school improvement plan are set for the headteacher, which in turn inform targets for other members of staff. A mid-term review is held with the headteacher which is good practice and then fully reviewed in September based on the achievements in the school improvement plan and progress towards meeting targets.
- 3.6 Governors are involved in a wide range of activities which show the value and impact of their work in improving performance. Their attendance at in-house training, involvement in the monitoring cycle, involvement in working parties for quality marks, responding to parents' views about homework and annual reports as well as contributions to school newsletters all provide evidence of their impact. The "Working Together" section of the website provides useful information for parents and carers about the work of the governors. Governors may wish to consider extending online provision to the provision of a governance portal.

Financial Governance

Governors ensure solvency and probity and that the financial resources made available to the school are managed effectively, including Pupil Premium.

- 4.1 The governing body ensures financial management systems are robust by following the Local Authority scheme of delegation. The school business manager provides a detailed breakdown of expenditure for the finance committee; in turn the committee provide effective challenge to ensure probity. The chair of governors works in audit and liaises with the school business manager to ensure the school meets the requirements of the SFVS. An external audit of the school's financial management in 2014 provided an outstanding judgement.
- 4.2 The school's finances are monitored and evaluated regularly. Governors and other leaders use local and national benchmarks for comparison but find it most useful to benchmark against themselves based on costs in the school improvement plan because benchmarks are not widely available. The use of individual expertise and skills of governors are used in a very effective manner to ensure that the school runs the budget efficiently.
- 4.3 The normally accepted practices of requiring multiple quotations for work, which display a balance of quality and price, are required by governors as a matter of course. Quality is always uppermost so the chosen option is not always the cheapest but offers best value for money.
- 4.4 The governors know the strengths and weaknesses for different groups of pupils in the school because the headteacher provides this information in her termly report. As a result of white British boys being a focus for improvement, governors have looked at male role models in school. The site manager is the Forest School coordinator working with pupils from nursery to Year 6 but also helps to provide structure at lunchtimes. Governors are aware that issues can sometimes be specific to a cohort and therefore do not generalise from specific data.
- 4.5 Historically the school is effective in its use of pupil premium funding. This year the focus in Early Years and Year 1 is about Phonics and writing; this is a well-timed reaction to recent attainment data and has been prioritised as part of the school's improvement planning. As reading results dipped this year for pupil premium funded pupils, this has been included in the school improvement plan. Governors are keen to raise aspirations for higher ability pupils so are seeking community role models to talk to the children.

School details

SCHOOL CATEGORY

Chair of Governors

Number of Governors

Committee Structure

Oliver Knight

14

Outcomes committee

Resources committee

EVIDENCE BASE

Review Plan:

Set up meeting

1 hour

Scrutiny of Minutes and reports

3 hours

Scrutiny of improvement plan

1.0 hours

Observations of meetings

4.5 hours

Interviews conducted

1.5 hours

Total of compiling evidence

11.0 hours

Review Team

Jane Aldridge

GOVERNANCE SELF-EVALUATION RESPONSES

<i>Percentages of responses to each section for Governors who returned the self-evaluation.</i>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The governing body applies the Nolan principles of working within public life.	95%	4%	1%	
The governing body operates in such a way that statutory duties are met and priorities are improved, including the development of governors' skills to support school improvement.	82%	14%	4%	
The governing body ensures clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.	85%	15%		
The governing body contributes to the school's self-evaluation, understands the school's strengths and weaknesses and the impact of governors' work.	81%	19%		
The governing body ensures solvency and probity and that the financial resources made available to the school are effectively managed including Pupil Premium.	89%	9%	2%	

9 completed responses received.

GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Action required	By when	By whom	Success criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a governors' action plan which provides an annual overview of their work in the school 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A governance plan is part of the school improvement plan A calendar of visits is focussed on priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completing and publishing where appropriate, governor visit notes to demonstrate the impact of their work; 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All governors complete visit notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compiling an annual statement about the impact of the work of the governing body is placed on the website. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An annual evaluation statement about the work of the governing body is placed on the website Non-confidential minutes are accessible to stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing a governor portal as a resource for all documentation and communication. 			All documentation for governing body meetings is accessible online