

## **Governance Impact Statement 2020-21**

The Governing Board is responsible for the strategic direction of the school. It has three core functions outlined by the Department for Education. These are:

- Ensuring clarity of the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school;
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and the pupils and for the performance management of the staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure that the money is well spent.

The headteacher is responsible for operational matters and the day-to-day running of the school.

### **Legal constitution of the Governing Board**

The Governing Board is formally constituted as follows:

- Two parent governors
- One Local Authority governor
- One staff governor
- Nine co-opted governors
- The headteacher

Total number of governors: 14

### **Delegation of responsibilities**

As the key strategic decision-making body of the school, the Governing Board has a structure which has each governor having strategic oversight for a specific area and reporting formally to the Board.

The governance structure leads to more involvement by governors in monitoring the impact of decisions of the Governing Board on children's progress and taking appropriate action based on evidence gathered.

It also reduces the workload of the headteacher in line with the requirement to promote work-life balance, by reducing repetition of reporting and discussions in order to ensure focused debate and clear decision making.

Terms of Reference have been developed for each Lead Governor role and reporting on each role is part of the Governing Board's annual cycle of business.

The focus for governors is to carry out their roles in advance of meetings in order to be able to report to them.

## **Governance Impact During COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic created entirely new challenges for The Topsham School and changed the way the governors were able to perform their role. It also disrupted the Governing Board's annual cycle of business and made monitoring certain areas of the school's performance more difficult. Expectations also changed, with a greater focus on protecting the school's position rather than on enhancing it.

After the first lockdown, the governors held meetings via video conference and carried out monitoring remotely. Multiple governors have also had to step down due to the pandemic. At the same time, the school took on a number of new governors. Governor training and school monitoring also continued, primarily over the internet.

The Governing Board continued to scrutinise and hold the headteacher and the school's operations to account, albeit with an understanding that greater support was needed in the face of numerous new challenges.

At the end of the 2019/20 academic year, the Governing Board had reconsolidated and, with its new additions, was well prepared to deal with the continuing challenges of the pandemic. The priority remained helping to shepherd the school and its community through this great challenge without compromising on the school's ethos and quality.

## **Beyond the Pandemic**

The governing board has returned to meeting in-person at the school, with the option for some governors to join remotely, and with smaller meetings held remotely when this has proved the more prudent option.

The Topsham School has survived through the pandemic with the quality of provision and safeguarding intact, which is not true of all schools, a number of which have suffered pauses in effective governance or have had their headteachers leave the profession.

The school's policies and procedures have been followed, and tested, and have stood up well. The headteacher has been supported and challenged proportionately. The school's values are reflected positively in the children. The school now pivots from survival through adversity to real progress in outcomes for pupils – this is our aim in the year to come.