



Scholes (Elmet) Primary
St James' CE Primary
Moortown Primary

Annual Governance Statement

2017-18

The purpose of governance is to provide confident, strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance. The day to day management of the schools is the responsibility of the Head of Federation, Heads of School, and senior leadership team.

The governing body of Sphere Federation conducts its business to take account of their three core functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of each school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff;
- Overseeing the financial performance of each school and ensuring money is well spent.

Composition of the governing body and meetings

In September 2016, a new governing body was formed when Moortown Primary joined the existing Federation of Scholes (Elmet) Primary, and St James' Church of England VC Primary. The new federation was named Sphere Federation. The number of governors was reduced to 14 members and governors were appointed on a skills basis. Over the past academic year, two members stepped back, and three new members have been appointed. There are currently no vacancies on the governing body.

The full governing body normally meets four times a year. There are also three governing body committees which each meet termly, and a number of other committees and groups that meet less frequently, and have the delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of the governing body.

Governors have very good attendance at meetings. Apologies for non-attendance are considered on an individual basis; governors are aware through the code of conduct that non-attendance may result in removal of a governor.

Further details about the composition of the governing body, committee structure, and governor attendance at meetings are on the school websites.

The effectiveness and impact of the governing body 2017-18

It has been another busy year for the governing body.

The governing body had a follow-up review by external reviewers at the end of September to explore their effectiveness, and the reviewers "found a good deal of evidence to demonstrate rapid development".

This was backed up by Ofsted inspectors during a monitoring visit in November, who said: "Governors are making a stronger and more influential contribution to improving the quality of education at Scholes (Elmet) Primary School. They are working in a more organised and systematic way and are bringing a sense of energetic purpose to the way they support and challenge [executive and senior leaders]".

Governors have been highly committed to training and development to enhance their skills, and all governors are clear about their role and remit. Our three new governors have attended induction training so feel more equipped to challenge at meetings through effective and relevant questioning, and two of our more experienced governors have attended a year-long course covering all areas of the new governor competency framework, outlining six principles and personal attributes for governance. The Chair of Governors completed a year-long leadership development programme, and feedback from course leaders included "although you have considerable and significant experience of leadership and governance...it is clear that you have worked hard to involve and develop other governors on the boards...and you have worked hard to establish roles, protocols and to increase governor presence via focused school visits". Governors have also attended whole-governing body training on safeguarding, Church distinctiveness (St James' CE Primary), and finance and external funding.

The Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Committee were kept informed about how assessment procedures were used in relation to pupil progress and how teachers looked carefully at not just individual class results, but those for other groups such as disadvantaged pupils. Presentations about the breadth and delivery of the curriculum were made to the committee by senior leaders, and questions were raised by governors about this, such as is the curriculum accessible to all our pupils, and how high attaining pupils are stretched. Governors confirmed leaders' judgements by reviewing external information such as reports from the school improvement advisor. Link governors from the committee challenged leaders about the impact of the Pupil Premium funding, the PE and Sports Grant, and SEND funding. Governors also visited schools to monitor and question leaders' progress against the school improvement and development plans. Information gained from all school visits is shared with the governing body in a structured way, and suggestions for further improvements from these visits are included in school development and evaluation plans and revisited at a later date. Governors also ensure successes and visible progress are commented on.

Pressure on school budgets is greater than ever, and likely to get worse. Our schools are not immune to this budget pressure, and as governors we face some very difficult decisions as the budgets are further squeezed. The Resources Committee continued to monitor school finances on a regular basis, along with the LA senior finance manager, to ensure best value for money is being obtained and money is well spent in these challenging times. This included ensuring money was available to address issues raised in the school improvement plans, such as provision being built in the budgets to ensure adequate book supplies to help develop a love of reading for all our children. Link governors from the committee visited the schools to monitor health and safety and site issues, such as questioning what the school is doing to reduce the likelihood of flooding in the future at Scholes (Elmet), and developing outdoor space at Moortown. The committee also oversees the resourcing of staffing and effective performance management of staff. During the year, governors ensured recruitment at senior level was robust.

The governing body are particularly concerned with safeguarding and child protection, and ensures that the schools fully comply with statutory safeguarding procedures. All staff have signed a record to confirm they have read Part 1 of the DfE statutory guidance "Keeping Children Safe in Education". The governing body has familiarised itself with the document, attended safeguarding training, and have worked with the safeguarding leads in school to complete the annual safeguarding audit. The safeguarding link governor made regular visits to all schools, including monitoring alongside the Ofsted inspector during his visit to Scholes (Elmet). The Pupil Support Committee also monitored the number of bullying incidents, exclusions, and attendance, and raised questions about these to ensure our children are safe.

Governors recognise the importance of communicating with stakeholders, and as such have tried to increase their visibility by chatting with parents, carers and children to find out views regarding areas for celebration and improvement, through attendance at parents'/carers' meetings and new parents' evenings. The Pupil Support Committee have also challenged school leaders on outcomes from pupil voice visits, parent/carers surveys, and staff feedback, and improvements have been noted throughout the year on the back of this challenge. Governors encourage connections between the schools and the wider community, as a growing feature of the education world.

Governors have made website checks to make sure the schools are compliant, and policy reviews were planned and have taken place throughout the year in a timely and appropriate manner. This means schools policies and procedures are stronger as a result of the scrutiny and support from governors, and we continue to challenge the school leaders to ensure the best for each and every pupil.

Future plans

We will continue to ensure that all our statutory duties are met, and that there is rigorous and high quality monitoring and reporting of priority areas in the school improvement and development plans, through careful planning of the work of the governing body.

There will be challenges ahead due to current budget restraints, but we will continue to strive to find ways to have the best teaching, leadership and provision for all our pupils at all schools.

We will continue to challenge school leaders to ensure that all the schools continue to be a happy and healthy place to learn, and that all our children feel safe.

The governing body has a strong commitment to training as part of the drive for continuous improvements. This includes a self-review of its own performance feeding in to a governing body plan for development and ensuring succession planning for key roles.

The educational landscape generally continues to move at a fast pace, and as such, governors will have to keep abreast of these national issues and changes in education.