



ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Annual Governance Statement for the Governing Body of Hitherfield Primary School and Streatham and Norwood Better Start Areas

The three core functions of any school's Governing Body, as set out by the Department for Education (DfE) are as follows:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

These core functions involve not just holding the school to account but also offering informed support and encouragement to enable the school to thrive and ensure it achieves the highest levels of success for all pupils entrusted to its care – this is known as “support and challenge”.

The following sections summarise the membership and work of the Governing Body during the 2021/22 academic year. More information can be made available on request (see below for details of how to request it).

Part 1 – Vision and Values

The Hitherfield Primary School Vision, which can be found on our website and all policy documents, is as follows;

‘Our vision is to create a school community where everyone feels valued, has the opportunity to explore and develop their strengths and is able to participate in new experiences. We aim to become an inspirational school to produce good citizens for the future in an atmosphere that promotes confidence, high academic achievement, physical health and emotional well-being.’

We also have the Hitherfield Primary School Values and Learning Disposition. We focus on one of them every half term, but we reflect on them all throughout the academic year. The are:

VALUES: RESPECT, EXCELLENCE, UNITY, DETERMINATION, TRUST and EXPLORE

LEARNING DISPOSITIONS: REFLECTIVE, CREATIVE, COLLABORATIVE, RESILIENT, RISK-TAKING AND CURIOUS

Part 2 – Governance Arrangements

The Governing Body of Hitherfield Primary School was reconstituted in July 2015 both to meet statutory requirements and to secure the combination of skills and experience most suited to the school's needs. To view the current membership of the Governing Body, please go to <https://www.hitherfield.co.uk/our-school/governors>.

There are currently 14 full members of the Governing Body and a number of Associate Members – the Associate Members cannot vote at meetings of the full GB but do have votes on our Committees (see below) except on finance and personnel matters. The membership is as follows;

- Staff Governor (Headteacher) 1
- Appointed by the Local Authority 1
- Parent Governors (elected) 4
- Staff Governor (elected) 1
- Co-opted by the Governing Body 7
- Associate Members (appointed by the Governing Body) 4

The Chair of Governors and the Executive Headteacher serve on both main Committees as ex officio members. All other Governors must serve on at least one of them. These Committees each address the parts relevant to them of the statutory core functions (see page 1).

- The Resources Committee generally covers all finance, personnel and premises matters. It also deals with data protection and leads on Safeguarding matters and the Better Start Areas – the school's appointed Better Start Area Manager is also an Associate Member of this Committee.
- The Learning and Personal Development Committee covers all aspects of the curriculum, pupil progress and attainment including analysis of results, pupil welfare including behaviour and attendance, well-being of the whole school community and links with parents and the local community.

Copies of the minutes of these meetings can be made available by the school office on request but there may be a small charge for photocopying.

There is a range of requirements placed on all Governors that we continually strive to abide by and to monitor and review on a regular basis. These include;

- Attendance at meetings (see Part 2 below) and visits to the school.
- Commitment to the school's vision and ethos as well as the success of all its pupils.
- A willingness to learn, develop new skills and experience and engage with all aspects of the school's community.
- Good interpersonal skills, the ability to work professionally as part of a team, and to take collective responsibility for decisions.

- Annual declaration of interests, both business/financial and personal, for reasons of transparency – see <https://www.hitherfield.co.uk/our-school/governors> and scroll to the bottom of the page to view recent annual registers of interests.
- Awareness of the role of governance in Safeguarding of all its pupils.
- Adequate skills to understand and interrogate critical data including general data on pupil progress and attainment, including for some specific pupil groups, as well as financial data, and understand comparisons of the school’s data with similar schools, the rest of the Lambeth Local Authority area, and national data.
- Keeping up-to-date and well-informed through induction and ongoing training both individually and as a full Governing Body.
- Regularly review our performance both individually and as a full Governing Body.
- Have clear, designated individual and joint areas of responsibility within the work of the Governing Body, for example in the following areas;
 - Health, welfare and Safeguarding.
 - Understanding of governance and senior management in schools and the differences between what is strategic (the role of governance) and what is operational (the day-to-day work of school management and staff).
 - Performance management, appraisal and staff pay.
 - Budget planning and financial monitoring.
 - Links with the local community and business.

The full Governing Body meets four times per academic year, twice in the Autumn Term including an annual business meeting in September and once each in the Spring and Summer Terms. We always receive reports at these meetings from the Executive Headteacher on all key aspects that Governors need to know and the successes and important developments in the school that have taken place or arisen since the previous meeting. The meetings also receive reports from the Committee meetings that have been held since the previous meeting.

The two main Committees each currently meet six times per academic year, once in each half term. The Resources Committee sets the school’s budget each year and then monitors its implementation at every meeting with reports from the Executive Headteacher and the School Business Manager. The Learning and Personal Development Committee receives up-to-date data on pupil progress at most of its meetings and often receives presentations from the school’s middle leaders, such as subject leaders, on their areas of responsibility.

Part 3 – Governor Attendance

A record of Governors’ attendance at meetings is kept by the Clerk to the Governing Body. Meetings need to be quorate to ensure that decisions can be made – this means more than 50% of Governors must be in attendance at full Governing Body meetings and at least three Governors who are members of the Committee must be in attendance at Committee meetings. To date, no meetings have failed to meet the requirement for a quorum. We have always been blessed with very strong attendance at all our meetings which shows both great interest of Governors in what is going on in the school and a strong desire to participate.

Specific information on the attendance record of Governors can be seen in the register of interests documents on the school website – see <https://www.hitherfield.co.uk/our-school/governors> and scroll to the bottom of the page to view recent annual registers of interests.

Part 4 – Strategic Plan

For a number of years, the Governing Body has had a Strategic Plan which it keeps under constant review. The Chairs' Sub-Group (which comprises the Chair, Vice-Chair, Executive Headteacher and the Chairs of the main Committees) meets once in each of the three terms and regularly discusses important current matters within the Strategic Plan. The current Strategic Plan (2021-24) has four Key Areas. Each Key Area Working Group is led by a senior Governor and has a number of other Governors, Associate Members and senior School Leaders among its membership and they meet as and when needed. Every Governor and Associate Member is required to serve on one Key Area Working Group. The four Key Areas in the current Strategic Plan are as follows;

- Key Area 1: Securing the Financial Stability of the School.
- Key Area 2: Emergency Planning.
- Key Area 3: Partnerships and/or School Structures.
- Key Area 4: Succession Planning (Leadership) – Staff and Governance.

Some aspects of these Key Areas are permanent and ongoing while others are driven by the school's needs and/or by the ever changing education environment, guidance and legislation and both local and national needs (see Parts 5 and 6 for some issues referred to in this paragraph).

Part 5 – Ongoing and Important Issues for Governors during 2021/22 (School)

Issues identified in the 2017 OFSTED report continue to provide one aspect of the School Leaders' and the Governing Body's areas of focus. These were;

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:
 - Provision is improved in the Reception Year to ensure that all children make good progress and achieve well;
 - Pupils through key stage 1 receive the support and guidance they need to check their understanding, and adults intervene when pupils misunderstand or are unclear.

Covid Recovery: The Governors understand and continue to support and challenge the school's Senior Leadership Team over the provision for the ongoing recovery from the Covid pandemic, in terms of closing the education and well-being gaps that have been identified.

Safeguarding: Governors work closely with the Senior Leadership Team to ensure that Safeguarding is embedded within the school's culture. The Governors continue to undertake their statutory Safeguarding responsibilities, including ensuring that the school continues to be a safe place to learn and work, that the Single Central Record (SCR) and all relevant policies are up to date and implemented consistently correctly. Attendance is part of Safeguarding, as children need to be in school. Hitherfield continues to have overall attendance percentages that are higher than National and Lambeth averages and our percentages of children classed as persistent absentees by the government is lower than the National and Lambeth averages.

Anti-Racist and Inclusive Curriculum: Governors fully supported and were represented on the Anti-Racist and Inclusive Working Party which reviewed the school's curriculum and working practices. This work is ongoing and continues to be a key area for the development of the school.

Behaviour: Governors continue to monitor the quality of behaviour in a variety of ways, including through school visits, the School Improvement Adviser's termly reports, questionnaires and internal school reports. Behaviour continues to be a strength of the school.

External advisers and Improvement Partners, such as our School Improvement Adviser allocated by the Lambeth Local Authority, were welcomed into the school for a termly visit to ensure continued improvement and progress, to support the Executive Headteacher and his team.

Governors continued to support and challenge information received from the Executive Headteacher and other Senior Leaders as well as initiatives to ensure continued progress and use of best practice. Reports and presentations on a variety of subjects and other aspects of the school's work allow detailed projections for future results which compare favourably with many other schools when analysed.

Ongoing documents such as the annual School Development Plan and School Self-Evaluation Form were regularly reviewed both at Committee meetings and by the full Governing Body to help Governors to understand the strategy and to evaluate progress against the school's priorities. The Self-Evaluation Form provides the information that will be used by OFSTED when they next inspect the school while the School Development Plan provides the main operational focus for the school for each academic year. In the period of this statement, the priorities in the School Development Plan were as follows;

- Maintain the high quality teaching, learning and assessment, taking account of the impact of the pandemic on pupil progress by:
 - Reviewing and finalising the whole school curriculum in light of the Visible Learning CPD, the Inclusive and Anti-Racist Working Group and the changes to the PHSE/RSE, Music and RE curricula.
 - Embedding an updated consistent Phonics programme across EYFS and KS1.
 - Using the Mastering Number Programme (NCETM) to improve the teaching and learning of maths in EYFS and KS1.
 - Continue to develop the use of Virtual School platforms.
 - Maintaining the Recovery Curriculum Plan that supports the learning of all pupils.
- Meet the school's achievement targets in every year group with a focus on groups especially Pupil Premium and Black Caribbean children.
- Continue to review the school staff structures to ensure the financial sustainability and success of the school.
- Ensure the Better Start Areas offer appropriate, high quality support to our communities.
- The Governing Body of the school continues to be effective in light of the pandemic and changing financial position.

The school's policies and procedures were regularly reviewed and updated during the year particularly to ensure ongoing compliance with national and local guidance and legislation as

well as to ensure that, for example, where documents require specific individuals to be named, these are fully up-to-date. The school's key and statutory policies can be found on the school website at <https://www.hitherfield.co.uk/our-school/policies>.

One of the Governing Body's two Safeguarding Governors continued regular inspections of the school's Single Central Record of key information held on Staff and Governors to ensure compliance and that it was up-to-date and Safeguarding Reports were provided regularly at Committee meetings and at meetings of the full Governing Body.

Governors undertook training to improve their own skills and the overall skills of the Governing Body as identified by the Training and Skills Governor and through updates to our Skills Audit. Training has included Safeguarding, Finance, general briefings and meetings and has been obtained through a variety of sources, both in person and online through both meetings and reading.

Approved Minutes of meetings can be obtained by contacting the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office at admin@hitherfield.co.uk.

Governors also continue to be grateful to the PTA for the fantastic support they give the school in terms of fundraising, resources, time and commitment. We also welcome the fact that our Breakfast and After School Clubs and other extracurricular Clubs are so popular and provide a vital and comparatively inexpensive service to many parents.

Part 6 – Ongoing Important Issues for Governors during 2021/22 (The Bigger Picture)

Life is never dull in the world of education and sometimes it can be hard to keep up – the old adage of 'plus ça change plus c'est la même chose' (the more things change the more they stay the same) has rarely been more accurate. The main issues that Governors are having to deal with on local and national fronts are among the key drivers of our current Strategic Plan. These include the following:

- The Government's policy on forcing all schools to become Academies set out in the Schools Bill and White Paper published in March 2022.
- Partnerships both before and during that process.
- How we maintain our own 'non-negotiables' and everything that everyone loves about Hitherfield through this process.
- How the reduction in real terms funding and rising costs and requirements (for example staff pay and on costs) should be addressed.
- Falling pupil numbers across Lambeth and across London and how that might impact on our own numbers in the coming years.
- Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the school and its staff and pupils.

Part 7 – Engagement, Support and Challenge

As Governors, it is our job to focus on the things that matter most for our school. To support us to carry out this role, the Executive Headteacher and his team regularly brief us on current issues and trends. We are judged against both local and national benchmarks and within the terms of the Governance Competency Framework. Like Governors of all schools, in this role

we receive lots of information and data which helps us to understand, monitor and benchmark the following;

- Pupil progress.
- Trends over time in core subjects and across specific pupil groups.
- Comparisons with other schools locally and nationally.
- The matches and differences between projections, targets and outcomes.
- Ensuring that funds allocated for specific purposes, for example Pupil Premium Grant funding, are properly spent but also being able to track the impact and outcomes for the pupils concerned.

Our two Committees, Resources and Learning and Personal Development look at all these issues in great detail and regularly receive reports from the Executive Headteacher and his team. This helps us to understand what the school is achieving and to agree with School Leaders on the strategies and interventions necessary to ensure good progress is made by all our pupils. Occasionally, Governors also have to serve on Panels, for example to consider disciplinary matters, pupil exclusions or parental complaints, but no such Panels needed to be held during the period of this statement.

Part 8 – Financial Duties

School finance has become increasingly challenging, as funding has remained stable whilst costs have increased. Through careful planning and taking appropriate action at the right time, Hitherfield has continued to maintain a positive budget, with a carry forward each year. This carry forward has been reducing over the last few years and so the Executive Headteacher, the School Business Manager and the Governing Body's Resources Committee continue to monitor the financial situation closely, making recommendations and taking action when relevant.

The Governing Body has a duty to set the school's annual budget which is delegated to the Resources Committee. There is also a requirement for the Governing Body to undertake an annual benchmarking exercise and an annual review, known as the School Financial Value Standards Report, which must be agreed by Governors and submitted to the Local Authority.

The PTA's fundraising and the parent/carer contributions are becoming increasingly important in enabling the school to offer the wide range of experiences it does to the children and the Governing Body would like to thank the PTA and all parents/carers who are able to financially support the school.

Part 9 – Our Most Important Duty and Priority

The most important part of our work is of course to ensure that every pupil can learn and develop in a safe and stimulating environment to give them the best possible start and the maximum opportunity to move on to the next phase of their educational lives ready and able to succeed, wherever their lives may take them. Our current results are good but we always want them to be even better and we know that the school's staff want that as well.

It is our job as Governors to ensure that this remains true year on year, for all pupils throughout the school, whether they have just joined us at the start of their journey or whether they are just moving on to the next stage of it.

In 2022, our Year 6 leavers moved on to a range of secondary schools. For the full information please check out our website link:

<https://www.hitherfield.co.uk/our-school/secondary-school-transfer>

Whoever our Governors may be in the years to come, they must continue to take as much pride as we do now in the school's successes whilst continuing to support and challenge their School Leaders to maximum effect and follow the ever-changing requirements of local and national education.

Part 10 – How to Contact your Governing Body

Information about the Governing Body is available at <https://www.hitherfield.co.uk/our-school/governors>. Our Clerk to the Governing Body, Mr. Peter Compton, or the Chair of Governors, Mr. Simon Hooberman, can be contacted via the school office or by e-mail via admin@hitherfield.co.uk or you can write to them via our postal address.

Drafted by Simon Hooberman, Chair of Governors (December 2022) and expanded by the Chairs' Sub-Group (January 2023) and the Executive Headteacher (February 2023).

Adapted from a model Annual Governance Statement available from The Key for School Governors (now Governor Hub).