



The Willows Primary School

Annual Report from Governors – Academic Year 2023/2024

Introduction to the Governing Board and Governance Structure

In accordance with the Government’s requirement for all governing bodies, the three core strategic functions of the Governing Board are to:

1. ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
2. hold the Head Teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils;
3. oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well spent.

The Instrument of Government can be viewed on the school website in the About Us section, under “Governors”.

In 2023/2024 the full Governing Board met on ten occasions. The Chair of the Governing Board was Kate Parietti, and the Vice Chair was Nikki Stevens.

Individual governors take on responsibilities for key areas of the school and report to the Governing Board on issues and progress in those areas. In 2023/2024 governors taking lead roles were as follows:

Name	Key areas of responsibility	Meetings attended
Jo MacArthur	Headteacher	10/10
Kate Parietti	Chair of Governing Board Curriculum Planning: English	10/10
Nikki Stevens	Vice-Chair of Governing Board SEN Safeguarding PPG	8/10
Peter Goodchild	Finance	8/10
Chris Pritchard	Health and Safety	7/10
Sarah Wilson	Pupil Premium Grant Curriculum Planning: Maths	9/10
Mike Steer	Staff Governor	5/7
Steve Moreton	Staff Governor	2/2

This year, Mike Steer stepped down as staff governor in March 2024 having resigned from his post as deputy head teacher to take up the position of headteacher in a neighbouring school. Steve Moreton was elected as staff governor and ratified by governors in the meeting on the 20th June.

Governor recruitment is an ongoing challenge for the Board with two vacancies remaining open for the whole academic year. The Board as a whole has been actively seeking to recruit new governors and this will continue into the new academic year.

Safeguarding

The Board takes very seriously its duties and obligations to ensure the safeguarding of pupils at the school. Our nominated safeguarding lead governor communicates regularly with the school leadership to review safeguarding arrangements, and the outcome of the governor's work is reported to each Governing Board meeting. We also ensure that all training is up to date.

The governors have implemented an ongoing safeguarding question to their monitoring documents to ensure that they consider this on every visit to school.

The School Development Plan

The School Development Plan (SDP) is the key strategic document for the school, defining its aims, plans, and priorities for development and improvement over the coming year. The SDP is drafted based on evidence from a number of sources, including data (both the results of Key Stage testing and internal data) and the school's Self Evaluation document. The Governing Board formally reviewed the SDP at the start of the 2023/2024 academic year and then reviewed the progress of the SDP each term.

Curriculum

The school puts in considerable work to plan and deliver a rich, relevant, and child-centred curriculum alongside trips and enrichment activities. Curriculum reviews and enhancements are carefully planned and communicated through the SDP, and the Board has full visibility of all years' Learning Journeys for each term. The detailed information provided to Governors enables them to understand how effectively this curriculum is taught, and whether there are ways in which the Board can support and enhance its delivery.

Governors have had the opportunity to visit the school this year and triangulate the SDP with what they have seen through learning walks, book looks, pupil voice exercises and discussions with subject leaders in English, maths and DT. The headteacher has kept governors fully informed of the curriculum in headteacher reports and they are assured that the curriculum at The Willows is broad and balanced.

Governors have seen first-hand the impact of the work of the headteacher and subject leaders to improve the offer for the children.

Pupil Progress and Attainment

Governors receive a comprehensive written Headteacher's report each term as well as detailed data reports, covering all areas of pupil progress and the school's performance. We carefully review these reports, questioning and challenging the school leadership where appropriate. We want every child, including disadvantaged and SEND pupils, to achieve the best possible outcome. Where areas for

improvement are noted, the school identifies improvement measures and these are monitored by the Governing Board in future meetings.

The school has a detailed plan for the use of Pupil Premium funding to support the learning and development needs of eligible pupils. Information about this is available on the school website under Key Information.

We were very pleased with the Key Stage 2 results achieved in the summer term. These excellent attainment levels will stand Year 6 pupils in good stead on their transition to their secondary schools, and we congratulate staff for their continued hard work and an outstanding achievement.

SEND

The headteacher kept the governors fully informed regarding outcomes for children and the progress made in each year group for children with a SEND need. The SEN governor was able to look at the provision on offer to some children through learning walks, book looks and in discussion with the SENCO. They are keen to speak to pupils about their experiences in the next academic year.

Parental views on SEN provision were sought and presented to governors but further exploration, that was planned did not happen due to the SENCO absence. Governors were unable to interrogate this data further. Governors are keen to seek the views of parents further next academic year and to see the impact of the school's work to support children.

The headteacher had to take on role of SENCO in the summer term. Governors were assured to see the headteacher lead on SEND to support the children and that they identified the gaps in the SDP and worked tirelessly to put the provision in place. The governors recognise that this was a huge task and thank Miss MacArthur for taking this on in addition to her other roles in school.

Governors are looking forward to working with the newly appointed SENCO to ensure that all SDP actions can be triangulated and to ensure that this exception provision continues.

School Site and Premises

Our health and safety lead governor regularly visited the site with the Caretaker and the Headteacher to review premises and health and safety issues, reporting the outcome to the Governing Board. Through these visits and regular updates at meetings, we have sought to ensure that the school is well maintained and stay informed of potential issues.

Finances

The Board and its Finance Committee regularly monitors the school budget to ensure that funds are appropriately spent. Despite the financial challenges faced by all schools, the school has continued to run a balanced and robust budget with a reasonable level of reserves held in 2023/2024. Our effectiveness is reviewed through the annual completion of a Schools Financial Value Statement assessment process which is scrutinised by the local authority.

Governor Effectiveness

Governors have implemented their own development plan to be used to identify the key areas on which the school and the Governing Body need to focus during the academic year. This is to assist with ongoing monitoring as well as impact indicators so that the Governing Body can assure itself that the actions taken within the plan will improve learning outcomes for all children.

We have assessed our own effectiveness as individuals and as a board against the NGA 20 questions and identified areas of need. Some training needs such as finance have been identified and put in

place alongside updates from Ofsted and the local authority. The chair of governors attends the leadership forum and feeds back any relevant training to the rest of the governing body to consider.

Gaps in skill sets have been considered but as of yet, we have yet to find governors with these skills, who can fill the spaces on our board.

Governors took the lead in the recent appointment of the new deputy headteacher and ensured a robust process working with the school's improvement officer.

Governors have sought feedback from staff in the form of the well-being survey and have been seen more regularly in school. The survey echoed the feedback from the headteacher in their reports and retention of staff remains high.

Looking Forward to 2024/2025

The school, as with many schools in the local authority, has struggled to keep numbers coming into the reception class at 60. Governors have interrogated data from the place planning department and recognise that this is a local and national issue. Governors want to ensure that the school is able to maintain a strong education for all despite this. Governors and the headteacher have met with the local councillor to see how they might support the school further. Further planned events will happen in the autumn term to promote The Willows as an excellent establishment delivering strong educational outcomes for all.

The governors would like to thank Miss MacArthur and all of the staff at The Willows for everything that they do to provide enriching and vibrant learning opportunities for all of the children. We look forward to continuing our work over the coming months and to supporting and working with Miss MacArthur and her staff.