

Otley the Whartons Primary School

Annual Governance Statement 2024 – 2025

1. Introduction

At Otley the Whartons Primary School, the governing board recognises the importance of identifying the effectiveness and impact of its governance. The [Maintained schools governance guide](#) defines the core functions of the governing body are, but are not limited to:

- that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined.
- that the headteacher performs their responsibilities for the educational performance of the school
- the sound, proper and effective use of the school's financial resources

The governing board also ensures that the school complies fully with statutory safeguarding procedures and works with the safeguarding lead in school to complete an annual safeguarding self-assessment.

2. The composition of the governing board

There are currently no vacancies on the governing board. There will be vacancies starting at 25/26 and recruitment activities are planned.

3. Meetings of the governing board

The full governing board meets four times a year; all FGB meetings are clerked by a trained professional clerk. Our committees (Resources, Pupil Support, Teaching and Learning) meet regularly through the year. They are clerked by committee members. Committee membership is reviewed at the beginning of each academic year.

Governors have good attendance at meetings overall. Apologies for non-attendance are considered on an individual basis, and governors are aware through our code of conduct that repeated non-attendance could result in removal from the board.

a. Resources

The Resources Committee monitors and approves monthly budget reports ahead of the annual budget, monitors pupil and projected pupil numbers to ensure the best allocation of resources, checks quotes for best value or any previous issues and question priorities for works and services. Committee members attend budget meetings with the school finance officer (where required). The annual budget is approved by the Resources Committee and then ratified by the Full Governing Board. Committee members have also been trained to complete the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS).

The Chair of the Resources Committee works closely with the Headteacher, school administrator to ensure best financial management practice. The Chair also presents the minutes and topics discussed at the previous Resources Committee meeting, including monthly budget monitoring and the annual school budget, at the Full Governing Board meetings.

b. Pupil Support

The Pupil Support Committee monitor and review:

- absence levels across all pupils, and support in place to improve attendance,
- behavioural matters including suspensions and exclusions,
- school meal provision,
- personal and social education provision including relationships education,

- special educational need support,
- support for pupils with additional medical needs; and
- safeguarding.

The Committee receives reports from the Headteacher, and other feedback is received from stakeholders. Staff feedback is sought via wellbeing surveys. Annual parent surveys are carried out by the Committee and responses reported back at Committee meetings and at Full Governing Board meetings. The Committee conducts pupil voice sessions, which include meeting with pupil groups.

The Committee includes the governors responsible for safeguarding, pupil premium and special educational needs provision, and each such governor meets with relevant staff members to fulfil their responsibilities. The Chair of the Pupil Support Committee presents the minutes and key topics of the Committee at each Full Governing Board meeting.

c. Teaching and Learning

The Teaching and Learning Committee's activity since November 2024 can be summarised as follows:

- The Headteacher reported that the Fisher Family Trust programme was used with information imported from management data. It was more relevant to look at the internal tracker rather than national data, which allowed any interventions to be more bespoke.
- Whole School Attainment Against Age-Related Expectations (2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24) was particularly interesting as it showed the difference between girls and boys in reading, writing and maths.
- Other details were shown:
 - End of year analysis for each year group against national data
 - Phonics results are high – 92%. Reading is a priority. SEND staff are working really hard this year. Y6 results are better than in previous years
 - Teaching is strong across school, albeit greater depth is an area of focus
 - Any areas to improve can be monitored via learning walks which are undertaken by governors on a regular basis
 - Lessons and planning are monitored regularly by the Head/SLT
 - There is a school push on greater depth in maths. The school uses a range of resources including STOPS Maths and Nrich which is produced by Cambridge University and deals with open-ended problem solving for pupils in every aspect of the curriculum. Every Friday is problem solving day where pupils use trial and error, application of theory etc
 - In February, the committee was taken through data which
 - identified the bottom 20% some of whom are identified as falling behind ARE, these gaps are addressed by wave 2 and 3 interventions and booster groups
 - The school's holistic approach was outlined. Not all the emphasis is on English and Maths – Drawing and Talking/Sensory Circuit/Home Club/Social Group/Safeguarding were also addressed and there is a play therapist available through the Cluster. Parents of these pupils are also supported via the cluster Parent Support Adviser and networking groups
 - The whole school library books have been audited and rationalised (Leeds Library Service) and additional new titles reflecting current authors and what the children wanted to read are now being sourced. Each class has timetabled access to the library.

A pertinent point gleaned by the T&L governors was the national curriculum doesn't require greater depth identification in foundation subjects but The Whartons is designing opportunities for the recognition and exploration of greater depth across the whole curriculum.

4. The focus of our strategic oversight

The senior leadership team completed a self-evaluation of the school taking into account SATs results, the school's internal monitoring of pupil progress and attainment, the school curriculum and the most recent Ofsted report. The self-evaluation was reviewed by the board and informed our school improvement plan for 24/26 which prioritised the following three areas:

- **Priority one** - Promote inclusive attitudes, tolerance and understanding. Promote equality and diversity and respect for and reflection of, different beliefs and communities across the school. Working towards RED Award accreditation (Respect Equality and Diversity)
- **Priority two** - Develop Curriculum leaders as experts in their field
- **Priority three** - Develop mastery and greater depth knowledge across the curriculum in core and foundation subjects.

The work of the governing board includes monitoring activity, the purpose of which is to verify information provided to governors. This includes monitoring the progress of the school improvement priorities listed above as well as numerous statutory duties, which include safeguarding and provision for pupils with additional needs.

Our monitoring also considers external reports and feedback from stakeholders including pupil, staff and parent surveys.

5. The impact of the governing board

- **Staffing:** Ensuring staff are supported and developed. The staff structure is appropriate to meet the needs of pupils at school.
 - We have supported the Headteacher in changes to the staffing structure of the school, providing necessary challenge regarding financial sustainability. We are satisfied with the staffing structure.
 - Wellbeing – the wellbeing of staff and the Headteacher is a critical factor in the success of our school. Governors have ensured this remains a high priority and is visible in school. Governors meet regularly with the Headteacher, conduct wellbeing check-ins. We have monitored staff absence and the results of the most recent staff survey which demonstrates staff feel well supported by school leaders and enjoy working at school and have asked questions during monitoring visits which agrees with this and provided evidence that wellbeing is a regular feature of team meetings.
- **Performance management:** Governors are holding the Headteacher and teaching staff to account for their performance.
 - Pay progression is directly linked to performance targets. The Pay Committee (part of Resources Committee) reviewed the Headteacher's recommendations for pay progression for teaching staff.
 - We have overseen the operation of the school's appraisal policy considering the results of appraisals carried out by the Headteacher and agreed appropriate salary progression for eligible staff.
 - A panel of governors, who have undertaken training, supported by an expert external advisor, carried out the Headteacher's annual appraisal, which is reviewed annually. The appraisal process allowed the panel to look closely at the Headteacher's performance, identifying areas of strength and areas for development. New targets have been set, linked to school improvement priorities, on which the Headteacher's performance will be evaluated.

- **Policies:** Governors have approved policies and procedures and publish statutory policies on the school website.
 - To support compliance, all statutory policies are recorded on a review schedule which indicates the date of the last review and next scheduled review. We have checked the school website for assurance that all statutory policies are available and up to date.
 - The governing board has prepared a written statement of behaviour principles, which is published on the school website, and is the basis for the school behaviour policy.
- **Vision, ethos and strategic direction:** Before making any decision we ensure proposals align with our vision for school, its ethos and strategic direction.
 - The governing board has regularly reviewed the progress of actions in the School Improvement Plan through monitoring visits and discussion in meetings. We have been delighted with the progress made despite the challenges facing schools nationally and will continue to receive reports from the headteacher to determine if actions have had the expected impact, confirmed by monitoring visits.
 - We continue to support school in gathering and acting on feedback from stakeholders. Governors were present at MAT consultation to hear firsthand views.
 - The annual formal survey is planned for end of summer term.
- **Pupil attainment:** Pupil attainment is a continuing focus of the board, being directly linked to the priorities in our School Improvement Plan and has been monitored by our Teaching and Learning Committee. SATs results for our year 6 children have improved again, are in-line with expectations and above national averages.
 - The committee received internal assessment data and raised questions against expected progress/ expectations. Governors were highly satisfied that the quality of teaching continues to be excellent, and appropriate interventions were in place to meet the specific needs of this cohort.
 - Information received by the committee includes data analysis. Governors have been able to monitor in-year progress and attainment and make reference to pupil feedback. This has given governors a clear picture of the progress of specific groups of pupils which aligns with school improvement priorities.
 - Maths - In-year assessment data shows that the gap in maths achievement is closing in most year groups and that quality teaching, supportive interventions and school led extra tuition has had an impact.
 - Reading - Continuing to improve phonics attainment and develop a love of reading will remain a priority.
 - SEND Training has been given to support the teacher in their development of their qualification.
- **Safeguarding:** Safeguarding covers health and safety in the classroom and physical & emotional wellbeing in and outside school.
 - We have regularly monitored processes and procedures to ensure all school staff have been safely recruited, made sure that training of staff is up to date and procedures followed to maintain a safe environment for our children including checks to ensure that volunteers and visitors to the school are suitable.
 - We reviewed the safeguarding self-assessment completed by school which provided assurance to the board of the robustness of systems and procedures, with annual safeguarding report to confirm that procedures are in place and being followed to keep children safe.
- **Financial management:** We ensure school funding is spent in the best interests of children and financial management procedures are robust.

- We agreed to allocate funding for improvements to the school building to develop and improve the learning environment and learning provision. Work is scheduled for completion at appropriate points in the school year.
 - The Resources committee has worked closely with school to monitor income and costs against the budget which we approved at the start of the year, to ensure that our financial resources have been best utilised for the benefit of pupils. We have carefully reviewed some areas of spend, particularly staffing, and provided detailed assessments of the upcoming deficit budgets and corrective action plans.
 - The committee has agreed annually a three-year budget prepared with the local authority finance officer, which incorporates the priorities of the School Improvement Plan. The governing board noted the continued strain on finances due to increasing costs and extends its thanks to the Headteacher and School Business Manager for their continued efforts in reviewing contracts and reducing costs wherever possible.
 - Governors reviewed and completed the School Financial Value Standard (SFVS) to provide the board with assurance that the school meets the standards necessary to achieve a good level of financial health and resource management.
- **Premises, health and safety:**
 - Over the course of the year, there have been various changes around school to maintain and improve the overall look and feel of the classrooms and buildings and to ensure a safe learning environment for all.
 - The report from the annual Health & Safety inspection of the premises has been completed with no issues found. Governors are happy with the proposed priorities for maintenance and development, which will be monitored in Resources Committee meetings.

6. The effectiveness of the board

The most effective boards have governors with a good mix of skills and experience and clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Our board has that.

All members of the board are committed to their own continued development, so they have the knowledge to support school and ask appropriate and informed questions. Individual training needs identified are addressed through in-school development or formal courses.

The board is staffed with committed highly skilled members who give their time and support willingly and are highly effective.

7. What we plan to do next

Due to the impending conversion of the MAT the structure of governance will change operationally from its existing set-up. Governors remain committed to the school and will continue to support under whichever scheme.

Plans are being made to recruit new governors following three persons stepping down at the end of 24/25 academic year.

The pupils and staff are always at the forefront of our decisions as we endeavour to provide the best educational and pastoral environment for them. We will continue to closely monitor the school budget, which is affected by reduced funding and rising costs, to ensure that staffing levels and resources do not suffer and children's learning and development continues to be of the highest standard.

We believe the future is bright for the school and we look forward to continuing our support to the wonderful staff and leaders of the school which is at the heart of the community.

David Drake
Chair of Governors
July-2025