

CASTLE SCHOOL

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020-21

Governor Membership, Vacancies and Attendance

Castle School is a Community Area Special School in Cambridge. The Instrument of Government for Castle School allows for 14 governors across different categories.

Governing body membership currently stands at 13, with one vacancy that we expect to recruit to in the Autumn Term 2021.

In the course of the 2020-21 Academic Year, the governing body has lost two governors (resignations) and gained three governors in their place, one filling a pre-existing vacancy. New governors have brought a range of education, finance and business experience to the governing body.

Over the course of the 2020-21 Academic Year, the governing body has been chaired by Nick Brenton.

The work of the governing body has been supported principally by Laura Oxley, as Clerk to Governors, and Lillian Leedham, our school Business Manager.

Over the course of the year, governors' overall meeting attendance was 80%. Details about governor attendance can be found in the governors' area of the school website.

The Structure of Governance

As well as meeting as a full governing body, Castle School also has two committees, in order to ensure sufficient oversight, support and accountability in statutory and priority areas. These committees are:

- Finance and Personnel Committee;
- Teaching and Learning Committee.

Both committees and the governing body overall monitor the school's safeguarding responsibilities and manage updates of school policies aligned to particular areas of responsibility.

In addition to the above, governors also set the school's pay policy and a panel of governors undertakes formal Headteacher Performance Management annually.

Committees for particular purposes such as dealing with complaints or exclusions are constituted as they are required, in line with school policies.



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Impact of the work of the Full Governing Body

Over the course of the last academic year, the governing body has demonstrated significant impact with regard to;

- Monitoring implementation of the school's risk assessment with regard to Covid-19 and enabling the safe conduct of teaching and learning, both on site and remotely, for children and adults alike.
- Supporting the school's LFT arrangements for Covid testing, including volunteering to work with the school team on site conducting the tests.
- Supporting the Headteacher and senior managers in ensuring appropriate specialist interventions and practitioners are available to meet pupil needs.
- Supporting and encouraging the involvement of parents in the life of the school, including fundraising activities.
- Overseeing specific developments such as the Forest School and new Library and staffroom and classroom builds.
- Supporting the Headteacher in liaising with external bodies such as Cambridge University Press to enhance school provision for our pupils.
- Commencing an audit of school policies with a view to establishing a regular cycle of review and renewal in future years.
- Receiving updates with regard to the progress made against the School Development Plan.

Impact of the work of the Finance and Personnel Committee

Over the course of the last academic year, the Finance and Personnel Committee has demonstrated significant impact with regard to;

- Considering the implications of school expansion this year to 200 pupils and ensuring appropriate accommodation, staffing and resources are provided for this.
- Setting a balanced budget in challenging financial circumstances and then following through with the Headteacher in ensuring funding is provided to meet pupil need.
- Closely monitoring staff wellbeing through the pandemic and ensuring provision is made for staff to receive help if requested for any work-related challenges they may have been experiencing.
- Reviewing school expenditure against best value and statistical neighbour 'benchmark' schools to ensure our limited resources are used to maximum effect in teaching and learning.
- Evaluating and developing plans for off-site retail work experience provision (and the financial arrangements involved in charitable status for this work) and extending provision to 19-25 year olds in collaboration with other providers.

Impact of the work of the Teaching and Learning Committee

The Teaching and Learning Committee was established in the summer term, and has started planning its work for the 2021-22 year. This will include:

- Learning from and applying the lessons learned from children's remote learning during the pandemic.
- Ensuring that school leaders have adapted the school's curriculum to accommodate children's lost learning over the course of the pandemic.
- Contributing to the development of the 'therapeutic school' model of working and the continuing development of assessment for learning.
- Engaging in 'deep dives' in individual subject areas to more fully understand curriculum implementation and the pupil experience.
- Ensuring that the school has adopted an updated curriculum approach towards teaching children about relationships and sex education, aligned to changes in Government expectations.

Governor Training

Governors work collectively, so we are always able to benefit from our different points of view and considerations within meetings. However, in the past year the governing body has also benefitted from training courses on the following topics;

- Safeguarding – in order to effectively fulfil our duties in quality assuring the safeguarding arrangements for all children at Castle School.
- LA Briefings – in order to remain up to date with latest Local Authority information regarding the approaches towards safe school reopening.
- Governor induction (for new governors).
- Single Central Record updating – to ensure our HR records are fully compliant with all relevant legislation and guidance

Governor Monitoring

As well as attending meetings, governors are also expected to visit school to understand more about school life and particular areas of priority (typically linked with different areas of the curriculum).

This year, opportunities for visits have been limited by Covid, 'bubble' classroom arrangements and the general requirements for a safe and healthy school environment during the pandemic. Remotely, Governors have undertaken monitoring in relation to;



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- Safeguarding;
- The curriculum;
- Premises, health and safety (this has also involved school visits and site learning walks);
- The new library (including attending its launch in May 2021);
- Remote Learning.

Forward Planning

Following the impact of Covid in 2020-21, the governing body looks forward to returning to a more “normal” structure to its work in the forthcoming academic year. This will include;

- Ensuring that the school is suitably prepared for OFSTED inspection.
- Providing continued oversight regarding the impact of expenditure on children’s outcomes
- Overseeing the implementation of off-site provision for retail work experience.
- Contributing to the development of 19-25 provision, potentially to start in September 2022.

Other information and contact

Further information regarding the work of the Governing Body can be found at www.castleschool.info. This includes information regarding attendance of governors and their Declarations of Interest. A calendar of governing body and committee meetings for 2021-22 will be posted early in the autumn term.

Alternatively, stakeholders are always welcome to engage with the work of the governing body by contacting the Chair of Governors via email to chair@castle.cambs.sch.uk regarding the work of the Governing Body.

July 2021