



Woodmancote School
Belong · Aspire · Achieve

Governor Impact Statement, 2023-2024

This report summarises the impact of Woodmancote School Governing Body during the academic year 2023-24. Full details of governor involvement, questions and challenges can be found in the minutes of the Full Governing Body (FGB) meetings and in committee meeting minutes. Any questions can be addressed to Jane Erving (Chair of Governors) at chair@woodmancote.gloucs.sch.uk

GOVERNORS' AIM

The overall aim of the Woodmancote School Governing Body is to enable and empower all members of the school community to follow the school vision and strive to grow confident and independent pupils with a love of learning, a strong sense of self-respect and empathy towards diverse cultures and faiths.

The Woodmancote School motto is “Belong, Aspire, Achieve” and this is woven through the curriculum and everything the school does.

GOVERNORS' ROLE

The role of the Governing Body is an intrinsic part of the leadership of the school. This impact statement is one way in which the Governing Body articulates their role in school leadership and the impact we have had on school improvement.

The Governing Body is made up of a group of volunteers, who invest a huge amount of good will, hard work and time for the sole purpose of improving the education of every child in our school. The Government expects us as the Governing Body to be a dynamic group of highly skilled individuals who focus on supporting the Headteacher and all the staff to shape the strategic direction of school. As governors, we are accountable for the performance of our school and we are measured by three core strategic functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure the money is spent well

Governors work co-operatively with the Headteacher and senior management in the writing and monitoring the School Development Plan. The School Development Plan (SDP) sets aims for the forthcoming year. The current SDP is based on priorities identified from data, school self-evaluation and Ofsted priorities. The SDP is set out with clear aims, the key tasks that will be completed in order to achieve these aims and the success criteria in order to measure outcomes. The SDP is monitored at FGB meetings and through carefully planned governor visits.

TRAINING

All members of Governing Body have and continue to have significant training. We have a training induction plan for new governors, as well as an annual skills assessment, which helps to identify further training needs. The impact of this is that the Governing Body are kept abreast of their

responsibilities regarding the latest requirements and expectations. Recent governing body training has included events covering safeguarding, Filtering & Monitoring, exclusions, Prevent, TAG and ED&I. New governors have undertaken introductions to governance training.

IMPACT OF GOVERNING BODY

OFSTED

In September the school finally received its overdue Ofsted inspection. Both staff and governors had prepared extensively during the previous academic year. The inspection went extremely well, resulting in Woodmancote retaining its evaluation of Good. Recommendations from the inspection have been addressed and changes implemented as part of the school's continuing development plan.

Meetings and Committees

Governors attend at least one FGB meetings each term. For 2023-24 we adopted a business plan format which is based on monitoring the SDP, through visits, reports and discussion/questioning. As such, the bulk of the FGB agenda is set out well in advance. The core of the meetings remains the Headteacher's Report. This is provided in advance and, this year, we have aimed to save time at the meeting by working on the assumption that all governors have read it in advance, so the agenda item is a question and answer session. Questions can be tabled in advance; this is preferable since it gives the Head time to present well-researched and thorough responses.

This year we changed our committee structure on the advice of the external review which we commissioned last year, which suggested we had too many committees. We combined the Premises and Finance Committees and we feel this has worked well, since there was always considerable overlap. Since monitoring of Curriculum and Standards (C&S) is a core function of the whole governing body, we removed the C&S Committee and sought to bring any discussion on this subject into the FGB meetings, with nominated governors having responsibility to bring in information about specific areas of curriculum. We do not feel this has worked particularly well, with all governors feeling less sighted on curriculum issues than before. We plan, therefore, to reinstate the C&S Committee in September 2024.

Governor visit reports, which are supported by an agreed report form to help Governors maintain an appropriate focus, are written and may be discussed or questioned at FGB meetings.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The board collated diversity information this year. A diversity of thought, voices and perspectives is essential to good governance and the effective running of any organisation. We collated information for the purpose of diversity monitoring. A strategic approach to diversifying the governing board is both setting an example and demonstrating the board's commitment to achieving diversity and equality at all levels of the school/trust.

The purpose of diversity monitoring is not to promote token diversity – no formula is being applied to determine a representative governing board. Members of the governing board are not recruited solely on the basis of their protected characteristics or lived experience.

The boards responses will be evaluated for discussion, including proposed action, which might include:

- targeted recruitment to address gaps in experience and diversity
- developing and adapting board practices to ensure full participation
- prioritising training and awareness-raising in identified areas

- addressing potential 'blind spots' through seeking wider advice and perspectives on current and upcoming opportunities, challenges and risks

The board will decide how the summary and proposed actions are reported and discussed at a strategic level, considering confidentiality and sensitivity to individual circumstances and the consensus on the board's composition in relation to the community it serves.

Introduction of School Improvement Team

2023-24 saw the restructuring of the Senior Leadership Team and the introduction of the new School Improvement Team (SIT), consisting of 3 experienced teachers. The governors were closely involved in the decision to set up the team, and in recruitment of its members. Governors have had the opportunity (individually in some cases, and also as part of an FGB meeting) to discuss plans with the SIT and to monitor progress. This year the SIT has focused on improving writing across the school, supporting staff to change and improve teaching in this area. Data and feedback so far indicate that this has been a successful project. Due to financial constraints, the SIT will have less time to work together as a team in the coming year, and they have already started thinking how they can continue to deliver benefit to the school. Governors will continue to monitor progress and to ensure that the team continues to deliver value for money.

Multi Academy Trusts

During the early part of the school year governors considered whether Woodmancote School should become part of a Multi Academy Trust (MAT). The governing body received presentations from 2 different MATs, each of which operates to a different model. After much discussion it was decided that we had not yet found the right model for our school and that there was no pressing reason for Woodmancote to join a MAT at that time. We therefore parked the discussion temporarily, but it will likely be revisited we return to in the coming year.

SEND

The education of SEND children has been very much to the fore this year, taking up much of the Head's time and drawing close attention from governors. The concerns stem, at least in part, from the fact that the local authority is unable to provide special school places for those who need them; Gloucestershire is short of around 600 such places. This means that children are held in mainstream schools, where they may or may not thrive. Woodmancote has always, and will always, do its very best for all its pupils, but this year the impact on both budget and staffing has been significant. Indications are that matters will improve next academic year.

Staff Wellbeing

Governors have continued to monitor the wellbeing of staff. In general, morale is good, though some staff have been feeling the strain of teaching reception children who have been adversely affected by Covid. We are assured that this is nationwide, not just a feature in our school.

Teaching Assistant new Terms of Reference

Teaching Assistants have had a change this year to their terms of reference. Governors were involved in discussions with the TAs themselves and with unions. After some initial unease, the new ToR's have been accepted; we will continue to monitor this issue as the reality beds in over the coming year.

Impact of Finance and Premises Committee (FPC)

This was the first year of the new merged committee with the previous Chair of the Finance Committee assuming responsibility for the merged committee.

All Governors on the FPC have undertaken Governor Finance Training and the Chair is a 30 years post qualified Chartered Accountant.

FPC typically meets five times a year with the Head and the SBM. The agenda varies depending on the priorities within the academic year but include inter-alia:

- **3 Year Plan and GBP** – The draft 3-year plan is scrutinised by the FPC at a meeting before the end of the financial year before being presented at the following meeting by the SBM with the GBP for approval of at the FGB.
- **Actual vs Budget Report** – The SBM distributes an Actual vs Budget Chart of Accounts variance report with commentary on major variances. This commentary is used to hold the SBM and the Head to account to ensure effective financial control against the agreed budget.
- **Capital Expenditure** – The FPC scrutinises and approves where appropriate the annual capital expenditure budget and projected 3-year plan for Capex with intra-year approval as required.
- **Health and Safety** – During the academic year a Governor conducted a Premises Audit and reported back to the FPC. Actions resulting from the audit have been taken forward by SLT.

Working in conjunction the Head and the SBM there has been a consistent track record of strong budgetary control and premises oversight. The Chair of the FPC also sits on the Staffing Committee providing a link to staff resourcing in the context of sustainable operating, budgetary control and any premises related staffing issues such as fabric of the learning environment.

The FPC also hold the SBM and the Head to account in the following areas:

- **Purchasing** – Through regular engagement with the SBM the procurement methods and decisions are scrutinised in the areas of revenue and capital spend to seek to ensure best value for the school.
- **Benchmarking** – This is used to identify variances for further scrutiny to establish whether there is a performance gap requiring operational changes.
- **Financial Implications of Safeguarding and SEN Provision** – The financial implications of safeguarding duties are discussed at the FC at every meeting with detailed discussions around financial mitigation options.
- **Statutory Compliance** – Detailed scrutiny of the premises related regulatory requirements in areas such as Fire Life Safety via the FPC meeting reporting mechanisms.

Impact of staffing Committee

The Staffing Committee meets at least once per term, working closely with the Headteacher and School Business Manager to ensure that staffing is appropriate and within budget.

Pupil Premium Funding

The Finance and Premises committee approve the planned spend for PP funding each year and challenge the Headteacher and senior leaders on the impact of this spend. Governors are given regular access to data on the performance of Pupil Premium children and the effectiveness of the allocation of this funding, with a particular focus on the gap between PP and non-PP children. Data and evidence shows how the gap between PP children and non-PP children closes as pupils move through the school. Details of PP spend and the strategy can be found on the school's website.

General Data Protection Regulation

Governors are responsible for ensuring the data protection policy is in place and being followed. Governors ensure the school has a Data Protection Officer (DPO) and that they attending regular refresher training. Governors themselves will complete GDPR refresher training in autumn 2024

Safeguarding

The monitoring of safeguarding practices is a key priority for governors and is ongoing throughout the year. There is a nominated safeguarding governor who meets the Head regularly to monitor the relevant action plan. No serious issues have come to light.

Along with the Headteacher governors conduct an annual safeguarding audit and monitor the actions identified from the audit. Safeguarding reports presented at FGB meetings provide an opportunity to challenge the safeguarding culture of the school and ensure robust procedures and practices are in place. All governors attend regular safeguarding training and sign annually to confirm that they have read and understood the latest iteration of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

School Development Plan and Governor Visits

This year, as a result of the streamlining recommendations in the external review, link governors for each year group were not appointed. Reviewing this at the final FGB of the year, governors agreed that they felt less sighted in what was happening in school and found it harder to make meaningful visits without this link. Year group links will therefore be reinstated in the coming year, allowing governors to have a more rounded understanding of the school experience for both children and staff.

We have continued to have link governors for areas of curriculum. However, as described earlier, without the focus of the C&S committee, this has worked patchily. We will review the necessity for subject-related link governors once the C&S committee is reinstated.

OPAL

The governors have supported the successful implementation of the OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) scheme. They have actively supported the project by reviewing key documentation provided by the OPAL team to ensure that the objectives align with the school's goals and the expectations of the scheme. Through regular discussions and meetings, they have contributed to the strategic planning and oversight of the scheme, the logistics of implementation and ensuring it remains a priority within the school development plan. Collaborative efforts with school leaders have ensured the scheme's sustainability and its positive impact on pupils' well-being and development, making OPAL an enriching part of the school experience.

School Policies

Governors have reviewed policies in line with annual review cycles and approved those that require governor sign-off. This has taken place throughout the year with each policy discussed, and reviewed, by the relevant committee or the FGB. Any identified actions relating to policies have been shared with the Head, or Deputy Head, in order to ensure that actions are implemented and outcomes are achieved. Policies are updated on the school website and there have been some focused governor visits and audits in relation to particular policies, such as health and safety.

Performance Management

A panel drawn from the governing body is responsible for undertaking the Headteacher's performance management review each year. These governors, supported by the local authority, set annual objectives based around the continuous improvement of the education and experience of Woodmancote pupils. Progress against these objectives is reviewed at points throughout the year.