

Denmead Infant School



Annual statement of objectives and review of impact by the governing body

2016-17

The role of the governing body is to act as a critical friend to the school. This means that we are there to provide both support for and challenge to the school. We work with the senior leadership team to set objectives and to help drive up standards. We are accountable for our work and are required to report annually on the impact our work has had over the previous academic year and to put forward a statement of objectives for the current academic year.



Impact - 2015-16

With effect from 1 September 2015, we appointed a new Headteacher: Jane Clabon. Arguably, the appointment of a Headteacher is the most important function of a school's governing body. As the most senior leader in the school, the head creates its vision, develops its culture, and is expected to lead and inspire her staff so that standards within the school improve, or continue to improve. The head - arguably - makes or breaks a school.

Review of performance objectives

At the start of the year, we were an inexperienced governing body, with little in the way of embedded practice and procedures. What we lacked in experience, we made up with

enthusiasm and commitment, and were supported both by the local authority and by Jane herself.

When we appointed Jane, we said that we wanted her to:

- 1 Lead the school on its journey from good to outstanding, developing with stakeholders a clear vision for success, and successfully communicating that vision to the wider community.
- 2 Develop teachers and middle leaders to ensure accountability and sustainable leadership.
- 3 Sustain and build on current good and outstanding teaching practice.
- 4 Enhance pupils' attitudes to learning and learning behaviours in order that they take greater responsibility for their own learning.
- 5 Significantly improve pupils' achievement in writing.

The school improvement plan for Jane's first year in post incorporated those objectives, and set out in detail the steps to be taken in order to achieve them. It was our job, as governors, to see that those steps were taken, to monitor impact, and to challenge the school when it might appear that there was insufficient impact, or where such impact does not represent value for money.

Governors' monitoring includes:

- Learning walks - governors visit the classrooms to see learning in action. Are the children engaged? Are the teachers setting a positive example? Are the classrooms inviting? Are the teaching assistants being employed to maximum effect?
- Pupil conferencing - governors talk to small groups of children about a range of issues, including safety in the playground, learning behaviours, what they are working on, and feedback they receive from their teachers.
- Staff conferencing - governors talk to a cross section of staff to gauge issues such as whether they are given the opportunity to develop their careers; whether they receive sufficient training; and whether they would recommend the school to their friends.
- Attending pupil progress meetings - these are regular meetings between Jane and each class teacher when each child's progress is checked and any difficulties identified and planned for. Governors can see for themselves the extent to which teachers know their children and are proactive about overcoming any barriers to learning.
- Safeguarding checks - we have a duty to ensure that we comply with statutory requirements to keep our children safe, and we are fortunate to have an appropriately qualified police officer on the governing body who works with Jane to ensure that we exceed expected standards in this regard.

- Budget planning - we work with the finance officer at the school to set the budget for the year to ensure that it is distributed in line with the school improvement plan and that it represents value for money. We also have to ensure accountability for income such as pupil premium and sports funding.

Review of impact

Few would doubt the impact Jane's **leadership** has had on the school. The previous head had been in post for 14 years, and was held in great affection. It was a tall order for anyone to try to fill her shoes, but it is a testament both to Jane and her staff that within days of joining the school she had forged a team that was dedicated, loyal and inspired. For example, shortly after joining, it was necessary for Jane to commence a process of redundancy consultations. Governors held a meeting for staff to make representations on the process. A large number of staff attended the meeting; their sole purpose was not to make representations about the process, but to show their support for Jane.

Following a visit to the school in February 2016, the school's local authority lead learning partner from the local authority (Ross Irving), reported that:

- The Headteacher leads with determination and clarity, taking robust and decisive action to realign strategic direction and raise expectations.
- The learning culture is strengthening.
- The process of reviewing the vision for teaching and learning has been powerful, particularly in the light of changes to the curriculum and assessment.

We were fortunate to have a strong team of teaching and support staff, and one of Jane's key tasks was to build upon the **quality of teaching, learning and assessment**. It is not within our expertise as governors to judge this, but during learning walks and attendance at pupil progress meetings, we could see whether the children were engaged with the teaching, and the extent to which teachers were familiar with their class data. We could also see if the classrooms were set up for "irresistible" learning, and whether best use was being made of outdoor learning spaces.

Ross Irving reported that:

- Lesson observations confirmed that teachers and other adults were focussed on working with specific groups of children, with tasks being effectively differentiated and children being encouraged to demonstrate their understanding. Questioning was precise and there was some outstanding practice when children were further challenged.
- Teachers are becoming more adept at giving precise objectives and success criteria, and to give clear developmental feedback to the children, who are then better placed to respond to higher challenge.

Meanwhile, the old assessment model, based on levels of learning, had been discontinued, and schools had been left free to develop their own model. Our school adopted the

Hampshire Assessment Model, which itself was still in development during the year. This provided huge challenge for Jane and her staff in terms of understanding and implementing an entirely new system, including assessing the children during each of the four new "phases", tracking their progress through the phases, and aiming to have them achieve an "exact fit" for what the government decided they should be capable of doing by the end of the year. An added challenge was that no-one knew at the start of the year what was expected of the children by the end of the year!

Through data tracking and attendance at pupil progress meetings, we were able to see for ourselves how the school implemented the new assessment model, and the extent to which each class teacher "owned" her own data. We could also see the extent to which each year group leader was familiar with the data for her whole year, which is important both in terms of accountability and building sustainability within the management structure.

We know how important **learning behaviours** are, as well as the children's **personal development, behaviour and welfare**. Indeed, if a school is judged by Ofsted to be failing in its safeguarding duties, it will be judged as failing overall, regardless of how good it might otherwise be. We take our duties in this regard extremely seriously. Not only do we have an appropriate qualified police officer working closely with Jane on this, we identified through staff conferencing a gap in training which Jane quickly rectified.

We have our learning superheroes: Rosie Resilient, Mr I etc, and through pupil conferencing we know that the children are familiar with them all and able to talk confidently about what they represent. Jane introduced "Kindy", who has kind hands, kind feet and kind words, and represents how we like our children to behave to each other. The children therefore have the language and understanding to express what makes both a good learner and a kind person. Our own monitoring shows that the children enjoy their learning, they understand the learning behaviours required for success, and they are clear about what they need to do to make progress.

During pupil conferencing, it became apparent that there was some behaviour that could be improved at playtimes, and that the children could benefit from greater interaction or supervision from adults. This has been addressed through a special assembly and by additional staff training.

Ross Irving reported that, "There is a strong emphasis on developing strong behaviours for learning".

Of course, in assessing impact, we must ultimately look at **outcomes**, and one of Jane's key targets was to significantly improve attainment in writing.

The children who left year 2 in summer 2016 had a turbulent start to their learning journey, with long-term staff absences impacting the entire year group. At the end of their reception year, they were significantly behind the Hampshire average for attainment in writing (although they were on a par with national average). By the time they finished year 2, more children were working at the expected standard, and the school had slightly overtaken the

national average for writing. The number of children working at greater depth significantly exceeded the national number. Given that the staff were finding their way around both a new curriculum and a new assessment model, and given that assessment is tighter now than under the old system, the school considers that the end of year attainment for this group of children represents accelerated progress. What we as governors will be looking at next year is whether the current year 2 children have exceeded national average performance, and are starting to work in line with Hampshire averages.

Objectives - 2016/17

As usual, the school's objectives for the year are set out in its school improvement plan, together with a detailed action plan for each objective. In summary, the objectives are:

Leadership and management - to continue to develop the strategic role of middle leaders in order to ensure good outcomes for all pupil groups.

What governors want to see - year group leaders who are accountable for the data of all children in their year group, and who manage their teams proactively in terms of planning and feedback.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment - to continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school through the development of a continuous assessment process and rich and engaging curriculum.

What governors want to see - subject leaders who know their subject, are passionate about teaching it and proactive about sharing knowledge and best practice; children who love to learn, and who understand what they need to do to improve; teachers who deliver irresistible learning and who are quick to spot and address any barriers to learning; a closer fit between assessment at end of year R and beginning of year 1.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare - to ensure that all children know how to keep themselves healthy and safe, through promoting e-safety, healthy diet, exercise, and through timely and smart interventions ensure that the progress of no child is disadvantaged by low attendance.

What governors want to see - outstanding attendance from all children, and tenacious support for those children whose attendance is less than 90%; children regularly running to Rio (or similar); happy, safe playtimes; outstanding safeguarding practice.

Pupil outcomes - ensure strong progress for all groups through effective, individualised programmes of support for children eligible for pupil premium, embedding a responsive, incisive approach to SEND and implementing a clear monitoring cycle linked to both staff development and children's progress.

What governors want to see - accelerated progress for children in year 2, so that their attainment exceeds national average, and is in line with Hampshire; continued improvement in terms of year 1 phonics testing so that attainment is at least in line with

national; consistent progress for children eligible for pupil premium so that, where it is not possible to narrow the gap, the school is able to demonstrate clearly both why not and that the child has nonetheless made good progress for them.

Conclusion

The school improvement plan forms the basis of governor monitoring throughout the year. At the end of the year, we will be in a position to reflect on the school's performance, and the extent to which our own work has impacted on that performance. We will report back early in the next school year.