

Annual Governance Statement

Date: 2022-23

Governing boards are not required to produce an annual report; however, at Sphere Federation we believe communicating with our school community is important.

Overview

Our role as a governing board is to provide strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance. Our three core functions are:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of each school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
- overseeing the financial performance of each school and ensuring money is well spent

The day-to-day management of the schools is the responsibility of Mr Roundtree, the Head of Federation. We work closely with Mr Roundtree, the Heads of School, and the Senior Leadership Team to ensure the schools achieve our vision of being a happy and healthy place to learn (St James': a happy and healthy place to believe and achieve).

For academic year 2022-23, we adopted a new board structure. The governing board meets at least once each half-term. The purpose of the Autumn 1 meeting – the first of the school year – is to preview what is coming up, to make sure that individual governors are clear on expectations in terms of monitoring/evaluating (who, where, when, why...). The purpose of the Autumn 2 meeting is for governors to feed back to others, and to challenge school leaders, on the monitoring/evaluating they have carried out since Autumn 1. This pattern continues in Spring and Summer. There is clear schedule to ensure all statutory functions are carried out, and also a rolling programme to review all statutory policies.

Each governor has specific responsibilities, such as pupil outcomes, safeguarding and finance. Below are summaries from each of the governors from the last 12 months.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Jude Rawlings for work over the last year as Chair of Governors.

Assessment, Inclusion and Equality

(Andrew Gibson)

I am the co-Vice-Chair, and have responsibilities for Assessment, Equality and Inclusion.

Assessment is a vital part of school life: it measures the progress our children make. Additionally, from a governance perspective, regularly monitoring assessment helps us to see that school leaders and teachers are implementing plans that will help all pupils improve during the year.

This year, I have scrutinised and presented challenge around the assessment processes throughout the year. The schools record assessments and this in turn enables analysis of trends and overall assessment outcome movement. I have been pleased to see levels of attainment increase through the year for various subjects, especially in the light of Covid-recovery. We are very conscious to ensure lower attaining pupils have access to extra help and support; the assessment information I saw provided clear evidence that this was being achieved.

With inclusion and equality, we have added resources to help with this across the schools. More staff professional development for SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) was provided this year; we will monitor the impact of this.

We reviewed the SEND policies and procedures to ensure they are robust. All our schools have experienced SEND leaders, but there we recognise increasing demands and plan to build up capacity around SEND in 2023-24.

In May, I was one of three governors who monitored the administration of the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2) assessments (the SATs). I visited Moortown Primary. Our monitoring was carried out to make sure the schools administered the tests in line with government guidance; we referred closely to a series of 'what to look for' points taken from the KS2 test administration guidance and guidance on keeping test materials secure, published by the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) (guidance source: GovernorHub, 2023).

Christian Distinctiveness (St James' CE Primary only)

(Kathryn Wenn)

I am a Sphere Federation Foundation Governor and therefore have a particular interest in the Christian Distinctiveness of St James' CE Primary.

Following the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) inspection of St James' in June 2022, the Christian Distinctiveness committee has focussed on monitoring the implementation of the recommendations through the school's Christian Distinctiveness Improvement Plan:

- Embed the school's approach to spiritual development, so that it provides creative and inspirational spiritual opportunities across the curriculum.
- Create opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate worship, so that it offers richer opportunities for the school community to grow together spiritually.
- Develop the school's approach for the teaching of world religions to support pupils in knowing more and remembering more about the religions studied.

English (Reading and Writing)

(Liam Ffrench)

I was delighted to be accepted as a parent governor at the beginning of 2023.

The most immediate task assigned to me was to review all three schools' websites to ensure all are compliant with [what the government sets out schools must publish](#).

In May, I was one of three governors to monitor the administration of the end of Key Stage 2 assessments (the SATs); I visited Scholes (Elmet) Primary to do this, referring closely to guidance from the Standards and Testing Agency. Longer term, I have been allocated particular responsibility to oversee the plans and provision around Reading and Writing. I have had the pleasure of visiting all three Sphere Federation schools for visits and meetings. My initial observations are very positive in terms of the standards of teaching and effective leadership in place.

Estates (including health and safety) and GDPR

(Nolan Keep)

I have met with school staff three times this year to check that appropriate processes and procedures are being followed in terms of health and safety and GDPR as well as general maintenance of each of the school sites. School leaders regard health and safety as a priority – an integral part of overall safeguarding. As such, they requested a Health and Safety audit from Leeds City Council in 2021-22. These raised no immediate concerns and the three schools have been addressing recommended or suggested tasks from the audit; the majority of actions are completed.

An audit to ensure we follow requirements under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) responsibilities was carried out. The summary of the review shows no outstanding actions for the schools.

EYFS and Early Reading

(Rachel Cooper)

It has been an exciting time to be the early years foundation stage (EYFS) and early readings governor. Over the last year, I have been able to scrutinise how well the Little Wandle Letter and Sounds programme to teach synthetic phonics has been embedded in our schools. During my visits, once per term, Gayle Beesley, EYFS Leader, and Vicky Latham, Early Reading Leader, have outlined in detail the progress children have made over the year. I have been impressed with the depth and detail of our discussions, with a constant focus on improving children's outcomes across all ranges of ability. I have had opportunity to challenge and question at our individual meetings and at full Governing Boards meetings. It was also a privilege to watch a morning phonics class in a Reception class. The children were clearly learning but also having fun, fully engaged and soon forgot about me! I was therefore delighted to hear and discuss the excellent results in phonics at our final meeting for 2022-23.

It has also been interesting to follow the introduction of the of the Little Wandle reading practice sessions. I wasn't sure how the children would react to reading the same book four times over the week. However, Vicky Latham has been able to clearly articulate the strategy, allowing children to practise the skills of reading. Parents and carers are actively encouraged to celebrate their child's reading success with the books online at home.

I am looking forward to observing the revised EYFS curriculum embed across Sphere Federation.

Finance

(Lorna Miall)

As the strand governor for Finance, I work closely with the Head of Federation and Resources Manager to understand and challenge the procedures and processes in place to ensure funds are being used effectively, appropriately and in line with the schools' plans and budgets.

As a newly co-opted governor from November 2022, I have spent this year getting to grips with the finances in a difficult economic environment, understanding the issues faced by the operational team. The results for 2022/23 have exceeded expectations. The budgets for 2023/24 reflect prudent and pragmatic assumptions whilst ensuring Sphere Federation can continue to deliver exceptional learning outcomes for our children.

In May, I monitored the administration of the end of Key Stage 2 assessments (the SATs) at St James' CE Primary. More widely, I have enjoyed learning more about the Federation schools, their staff and pupils.

Foundation subjects

(Kathryn Wenn)

As well as being a Foundation Governor (a role linked to the church), I am also the link governor for Foundation Subjects. As a relatively new governor, I have spent time developing my understanding of the two-year cycle plan for delivery of National Curriculum Foundation Subjects.

Delivery of Foundation Subjects is driven by a desire to provide a greater depth of learning. The approach benefits from the curriculum leader, Paul Wilks, not having a teaching timetable and being able to lead a consistent approach across Sphere Federation. Teachers and support staff have benefited from professional development, enabling them to confidently teach the subjects. Parents and carers are provided with information to support their children's learning of Foundation Subjects via website information, in particular weekly messages which introduce the Foundation Subject for the half term.

I have been able to complete monitoring visits. These included two with a specific focus on Art and Music; I enjoyed seeing some amazing art displays based on interpretations of the chosen artist and listening to a music lesson where pupils were progressing their compositions and being encouraged to think independently about if / how they could improve them based on learning a new note.

At a full Governing Board meeting, knowledge retrieval was considered, with all governors having the opportunity to examine the approach taken, including a look at some Topic books.

Maths and Science

(Matthew Hick)

This year, I've undertaken three governor visits as Maths Link Governor. Taking place in person and online with the Sphere Federation Maths Leader, Paula Allaway, these meetings have explored how Maths is taught across Sphere Federation, how pupil progress is monitored, and what support is in place to support and develop our teachers. There is a clear line between our vision, what we teach, how we monitor pupil progress and the actions taken to help those pupils who need additional support. Paula Allaway carries out a series of monitoring and evaluating across the three Sphere Federation schools, such as lesson visits, book scrutinies and reviews of lesson plans; this helps to quality assure teaching provision possible. Teacher development is provided through professional development meetings that provide a space for discussion and allow teachers to share their thoughts and ideas. Additional support for Early Career Teachers is provided – there is an ongoing support programme in place.

I've also met with Paul Wilks, the Sphere Federation Science Leader. We have reviewed the science curriculum, discussed how pupil progress is monitored, in particular for SEN groups and those from deprived backgrounds, and explored the role of science across our curriculum. I also had the opportunity to see how science is taught in class. This year, good progress has been made on raising the prominence of Science across the wider curriculum. The introduction of Science to our pupil progress tracking system, alongside other core subjects, has helped with this whilst also providing a useful tool for monitoring trends in student performance. The ability to filter by SEND, Free School Meals etc has allowed us to monitor, assess and address any trends that might arise with additional staff support provided where needed. This year we have also introduced STEM Ambassadors to our schools to showcase real world science to our pupils. Their involvement has proved successful with pupils talking positively about their experience and strengthening an already strong Science offer.

Safeguarding

(Shobha Bentley)

Safeguarding is a priority in all three Sphere Federation schools and therefore a priority for all members of the Governing Board. All governors are expected to undertake at least the minimum requirements in terms of training (including reading [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)), and all are prompted to comment on safeguarding when they visit schools.

As the Safeguarding governor, I work closely with the Designated Safeguarding Leads in each school and particularly with the Safeguarding Lead across Sphere Federation, Clare Weekes.

In 2022-23, I have visited all three schools and have monitored the safeguarding practices across the federation. I have carried out various checks, such as

- the secure transfer of child protection files to other schools, including looking at receipts of transfers and that chronologies have been kept
- the robustness of internet filters and that filter checks that have been carried out in school
- monitored serious incidents (anonymised) and checked how they have been addressed and responded to
- making sure the Single Central Record is fully compliant
- ensuring safer recruitment procedures are in place

As well as the monitoring visits, I have worked with Clare Weekes looking at essential documents and guidance (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 and Sphere Federation Safeguarding and Child Protection policy) and have analysed, in detail, the Annual Review Monitoring that has to be submitted to the Local Authority each year. The review has to be approved by governors and I was able to provide some challenge and suggestions before they were approved and submitted.

I agree with the external audit that the safeguarding procedures are effective and well managed.