

# Primary Advantage Federation annual governance statement September 2019-August 2020

## *Primary Advantage Federation (PAF) vision, schools, and governors*

Our eight schools achieve significant benefits for our pupils by working together. We are committed to a shared responsibility for the provision of the highest quality education and improving the life chances for all pupils in the community, within and beyond our own schools. We continue to refine our governance structures and processes to ensure that they are effective and efficient. Although annual governance statements are no longer a statutory requirement, they are still considered good practice and we think they are an effective way to communicate succinctly with our community.

### *Vision*

- Every teacher is a great teacher; every school is a great school. We aim to move incrementally towards excellence in all aspects of our work.
- All pupils will make good or better progress and will be properly equipped for the next stage of their schooling.
- Learning environments are of high quality where pupils feel safe and secure, known, valued, and motivated to learn.
- Curriculum provision is bespoke, broadens horizons, and inspires our pupils to become successful learners, confident individuals, and responsible citizens.

Our learning community provides growth opportunities for pupils, staff, and families.

### *Schools*

Our federation consists of eight Hackney primary schools:

- De Beauvoir Primary School
- Gainsborough Primary School
- Holy Trinity CE Primary School
- Morningside Primary School
- Springfield Community Primary School
- St John & St James CE Primary School
- St John The Baptist CE Primary School
- St Matthias CE Primary School

### *Governors*

Our 16-person Central Governing Board (CGB) consists of:

- Two parent governors
- One local authority governor
- One staff governor
- One executive principal – ex officio
- Two co-opted governors appointed by the governing body
- Nine foundation governors
- Four Bishop of Stepney appointees
- One London Diocesan Board for Schools appointee
- Two Hackney Deanery Synod appointees
- Two co-opted Governors nominated by other foundation governors and appointed by the CGB

The CGB delegates some functions to the Outcomes & Provisions Committee (focused on standards), the Business & Finance Committee (focused on finance and human resources) and school-based local advisory boards (LABs).

### **Remit**

#### **Central Governing Board**

The Central Governing Board is the proprietary body for Primary Advantage Federation and is the body legally accountable for delivery across all schools within the federation. The CGB plays a vital role in setting the strategic direction of the federation, overseeing educational outcomes and holding senior leaders to account for financial probity and effective use of funds.

Its main responsibilities are to provide strategic direction for the organisation, appoint and dismiss senior staff, approve the budget, approve key policies and to oversee safeguarding across the federation.

#### **Business & Finance Committee**

The main responsibilities of the Business & Finance Committee are to:

- monitor the budgets of schools, teaching schools and the central federation team;
- review financial controls and procedures across the federation and its schools;
- approve the policies delegated to it by the Central Governing Board, these mainly relate to finance and human resources;
- monitor the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and data protection policies & procedures across federation;
- oversee the training and development of governors;
- conduct performance management of the Executive Principal.

#### **Outcomes & Provisions Committee**

The main responsibilities of the Outcomes & Provisions Committee are to:

- oversee educational performance across the federation;
- review and recommend federation objectives and key performance indicators;
- ensure effective processes are in place for monitoring quality assurance of teaching and learning, the curriculum, inclusion and sharing good practice;
- review attendance and exclusions and oversee policies relating to pupil behaviour;
- provide appropriate oversight and challenge to teaching schools;
- oversee the management of risks at the federation.

#### **Local Advisory Boards (LABs)**

The main responsibilities of LABs are to:

- consider and recommend their school's budget to the CGB;
- monitor school income, expenditure, cash flow, balances, debts, year-end and report to Central Governing Board and Business & Finance Committee;
- monitor contracts to ensure schools are getting good value for money;
- approve their school's curriculum in line with federation policy;
- oversee safeguarding at their school, including the implementation of the federation's safeguarding policy;
- monitor the quality of education provided by the school;
- approve their school's staffing structure.

#### **Interests and attendance**

During the 2019/20 school year the CGB and committees all met three times. All meetings were quorate. Data on attendance during 2019-20 is available on the federation's website. <https://primaryadvantage.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Attendance-at-CGB-and-committees-2019-20.pdf>

The Governance Manager is working with LAB chairs and Headteachers to ensure LABs have the right people on them and that they attend regularly. We are working hard to ensure attendance remains high across all eight LABs.

All governors have completed a register of interests. The federation reviewed its conflicts of interest policy earlier in the year. This required all budget-holding members of staff to register their interests in addition to governors and LAB members. To demonstrate the federation's commitment to best practice, this policy goes beyond that recommended by national advisory bodies. The list of interests declared by governors is available on the federation's website. <https://primaryadvantage.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Register-of-interests-2019-20-for-the-website.pdf>

The interests of LAB members are held on individual school websites.

### **Effectiveness and impact**

The federation's key performance indicators (KPIs) for 2018-20 included the following: "to continue the development of governance systems and structures to ensure the effectiveness of the Central Governing Board, its two Committees, and the eight Local Advisory Boards."

At its meeting in February 2020 the Outcomes & Provisions Committee decided that governance no longer needed its own KPI as it has now becoming much more strongly embedded in the federation's culture and management focus was needed in other areas of the business.

The governance of the organisation is now in a period of stability with no major changes expected and the success criteria have largely been met. The focus should now be on continuous improvement and the pursuit of best practice. A separate set of governance objectives are due to be approved by the CGB by the end of the school year.

### **Federation objectives**

*Objective 1: improve attendance so that all schools are at least in the top 50%, with all schools working towards being in the top 30% of schools nationally.*

Schools are working hard to improve attendance and this remains a key issue for governors and LAB members. For the 2018-19 school year three of the federation's schools were above the national average of 96%. Attendance statistics are included in the Executive Principal's report to the CGB and in headteachers' reports to LABs. Some LABs have asked for detailed reports on attendance and appointed an attendance link member.

*Objective 2: focus on improving standards in all eight schools.*

A considerable amount of work has been done in relation to standards during the year. The Central Governing Board received substantial analysis of the previous year's results at its first meeting of the school year. Actions being taken within the federation included:

- a thorough analysis of the outcomes from 2019, including an evaluation of how children were prepared for tests;
- a federation-wide year six summit to share good practice and experiences;
- schools have analysed year five outcomes to ensure secure benchmarking and target-setting;
- schools would monitor year six provision on at least a fortnightly basis;
- schools had reviewed their provision, where appropriate, and were considering whole school impact.

LABs have been tasked with maintaining the focus on a detailed monitoring of standards. All LABs have received their school's year six action plan and some have also received an action plan for year two. All LABs had received the most up-to-date projections on performance before the covid-19 lockdown began in March 2020.

*Objective 3: to review the business functions of the expanded federation and teaching schools to ensure that: (a) finance and admin teams are trained and supported to fulfil their roles; (b) all schools are fully compliant with financial procedures; and (c) the business functions of the federation are efficient and cost effective.*

The Business & Finance Committee maintains an overview of each school's financial procedures and is satisfied that all schools are fully compliant with financial procedures. The federation's Finance & Business Director has run training sessions on finance for headteachers, which was well received. This training will be extended to other senior leaders in the next school year.

The School Financial Value Standard (SFVS) process was completed for all schools by LAB members and budgets were closely monitored in most cases to ensure expenditure is effective. All schools thoroughly reviewed their budgets and considered contracts and debt at each meeting.

Two cluster business managers were appointed during the school year, which has helped spread good practice across the federation. A federation Finance & Business Manager was appointed in autumn 2019 who has provided valuable assistance to schools. The federation continues to develop processes for saving money by sharing staff across sites or to get better value by using federation-wide contracts.

*Objective 4: to continue the development of governance systems and structures to ensure the effectiveness of the Central Governing Board, its two Committees, and the eight Local Advisory Boards.*

As stated above, this objective will not roll over to the next school year. The federation's systems have continued to be developed with the appointment of a new governance manager in June 2019. Several of the administrative systems that support governors and LAB member have been streamlined and the federation's record-keeping has been substantially improved.

Several governance policies have been revised including the process for declaring interests, the rules of procedure and the process for school visits by governors and LAB members. Governors themselves have scrutinised and approved a number of policies during the year including safeguarding & child protection, disciplinary and equalities.

During the covid-19 lockdown, the federation has developed systems for conducting meetings remotely. While they cannot replace face-to-face meetings, they have been successful allowing the management of the organisation to continue unhindered during a very difficult time.

### Challenges

Like the rest of the country, the federation has had to deal with the covid-19 pandemic, which has had a considerable impact on the services offered across all eight schools. Governance has evolved in the same way as everything else. Governors and staff have become adept at holding and managing meetings online so that key decisions and oversight continue. Several senior positions, including a headteacher, have been filled following interviews over Zoom. The Executive Principal and Chair of the CGB have sent regular updates to governors and LAB members.

LAB chairs have been providing essential moral and other support to headteachers as they always have done. For example, they have kept in regular contact with their headteachers via email to provide support and encouragement, be kept informed of staff wellbeing and health, and progress in developing materials. It is essential to ensure the educational and wellbeing needs of the pupils are being met, particularly vulnerable children and those without access to the internet. A contribution was made to the staff bulletin thanking everyone for their huge efforts and commitment and to share the appreciation of LAB members.

Before the end of the school year, the federation will need to consider how to move on from covid-19 and what work needs to be done to support children who have lost valuable teaching time.

In terms of day-to-day governance, the main area for improvement identified in the new governance objectives is to ensure that all governors and LAB members are able to fulfil their duty to scrutinise the work of the federation. To assist with this there is a section on scrutiny in the induction training for new governors and LAB members. The Governance Manager has also started preparing a briefing note for governors before CGB meetings highlighting areas of focus and providing links to additional reading.

Finally, we are working to ensure there is a more consistent approach to financial management from governors and LAB members across the eight schools. Two of the new governance objectives relate to finance. Our priority when recruiting new members is to ensure that each LAB has someone with the expertise and the capacity to support and challenge the school appropriately in relation to financial issues.

## Other work completed by governors and LAB members

### *Training and development*

Governors made use of training offered through Hackney Learning Trust (HLT) and the London Diocesan Board for Schools. They also read some of the regular updates from HLT and the Department for Education. Governors attended an average of 2.75 training events each. There was a good attendance at the federation-wide science inset day in January 2020.

Support was also offered through services such as The Key, Modern Governor, National Governors' Association, and Hackney School Governors' Association.

Four new governors and twelve new LAB members were appointed in the school year. All were sent a comprehensive induction pack and most have attended a training session on governance and had a tour of their school. In future, the federation is committed to offering governance training for LAB members and governors at least once a year.

### *Teaching School*

In addition to our eight schools, Primary Advantage also has a central teaching school, which co-ordinates professional training and development for all federation schools, as well as other schools in Hackney, London, and beyond. The teaching school also develops approaches to teaching and learning, the curriculum, and helps to share best practice. Details of the work of the teaching school can be found on the [Primary Advantage website](#). Governors supported the work of the teaching school and received regular reports about its priorities, performance, and impact.

### *Policies*

Governors have reviewed policies in line with the agreed cycle.

### *School development*

Governors and LAB members actively contributed to schools' development plans. They also attended inset days, link visits, learning walks, and meetings with staff.

### *Events*

Governors and LAB members have attended key school events such as church services and the popular fireworks night at Gainsborough. They were also present to answer questions or listen to concerns at most parents' evenings at their schools.

