

Primary Advantage Federation annual governance statement September 2020-August 2021

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.
- High quality learning environments where pupils feel safe and secure, known and valued and motivated to learn.
- A bespoke curriculum, which broadens horizons and inspires our pupils to become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens.
- A learning community with opportunities for growth 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 risk 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 2020/21 school year the CGB met five times, Business & Finance Committee met three times and Outcomes & Provisions Committee met twice. The CGB also set up a covid-19 working group that met five times from September 2020 to March 2021. All meetings were quorate. Data on attendance during 2020-21 is available on the federation's website. <https://primaryadvantage.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Attendance-at-CGB-and-committees-2020-21.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. To demonstrate the federation's commitment to best practice, the requirements of our register 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/2021/10/Register-of-interests-2021-22.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 is now on continuous improvement and the pursuit of best practice.

An example of the success of the federation's governance is approaches from three other federations during the year asking for guidance on how to form or a grow a federation.

Federation priorities

Priority 1: To improve attainment and progress at KS2

National, statutory, end of key stage assessments did not take place at the end of the academic year. However, all federation schools undertook carefully moderated teacher assessments for all year groups including assessments for pupils at key stage 2. Governors and LAB members have continued to provide oversight in relation to attainment and progress at key stage two. There have been updates on this to all CGB and LAB meetings.

Priority 2: To improve oracy, language and communication

Governors and LAB members have closely monitored how oracy is taught in federation schools. This has included the appointment of an oracy link governor on the CGB and presentations to LABs from oracy leads at individual schools. Across the federation some amendments have been made to the curriculum, particularly at KS1, to address low attainment in reading and writing or oracy.

Priority 3: To embed an excellent curriculum in each school supported by high quality professional development for staff

The aim at the start of the school year was to deliver the full curriculum at each key stage. Leaders are mindful of the need to provide for the social and emotion needs of younger pupils. A new EYFS curriculum is being implemented.

Priority 4: To embed excellent teaching and learning across all schools

Since the wider opening of schools following the first lockdown, schools implemented a transition plan leading up to April 21. This was nominally labelled as the 'restart phase' of the federation four-point plan. The additional lockdown significantly impacted the implementation of the transition plan and will have been detrimental to the learning of some pupils. In spite of the considerable effort schools have made to provide remote learning, the second lockdown compounded many of the issues from the first lockdown and will mean the recovery period will take longer. The federation is looking at tracking this recovery for an initial 18-month period. The impact on learning may be longer for some pupils and it is recognised that focus and rapid progress is required.

School development plans, approved by LABs, will be used to identify outcomes and plan actions to address any learning issues and will include actions to address the curriculum and pupil outcomes.

Priority 5: To provide support and challenge for schools in financial difficulty

Governors and LAB members have continued to provide strong financial support and challenge to all federation schools. Three schools were identified as being in financial difficulty and all submitted recovery plans to the CBG meeting in January 2021. Business & Finance Committee receives updates on these schools at all its meetings. Three-year forecasts have been created for all schools and these are presented to all LAB meetings for oversight.

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. Senior positions, including headteachers, have been filled following interviews over Zoom.

To ensure accountability, the Executive Principal and Chair of the CGB have sent regular updates to governors and LAB members. There was also a governor covid-19 working group that consisted of the Chair of the CGB, both committee chairs and a governor LAB chair. It was attended by the Executive Principal, Finance & Business Director and Governance Manager. Minutes were circulated to all governors.

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.

Other work completed by governors and LAB members

Training and development

Governors made use of training offered through Hackney Education (HE) and the London Diocesan Board for Schools. They also read regular updates from HE and the Department for Education.

The Governance Manager continues to offer training to all governors and LAB members. Two induction sessions were run for new governors and LAB members during the year. The Governance Manager has set up a session on effective challenge that has been very well received and attended by approximately 20 governors and LAB members to date. Feedback from this session has been incredibly positive, with governors and LAB members reporting that they have used some of the techniques from the session in meetings and link visits.

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

Three new governors and six new LAB members were appointed in the school year, including an elected parent governor on the CGB. All were sent a comprehensive induction pack and most have attended a training session on governance. Fourteen LAB members reached the end of their terms of office and were reappointed.

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 and meetings with staff. Most of these took place virtually during 2020-21.

Events

It has been difficult for governors and LAB members to attend events in person this year. However, where possible, they have attended events virtually.

