

# Primary Advantage Federation annual governance statement September 2021-August 2022

## *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 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;
- 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 2021/2022 school year the CGB met five times, Business & Finance Committee met five times and Outcomes & Provisions Committee met three. Data on attendance during 2021-22 is available on the federation's website. <https://primaryadvantage.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Attendance-at-CGB-and-committees-2021-22.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 and federation staff who have budgetary responsibilities is available on the federation's website. <https://primaryadvantage.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Register-of-interests-2022-23.pdf>

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

### ***Effectiveness and impact***

The governance of the organisation has been in a period of stability for some time now. However, governors and staff are closely monitoring the developments from the Schools Bill and a governor working group has been set up to guide the federation's approach on this.

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. In February 2022, the Governance Manager ran a training session for the governors and Headteachers at a new federation in south London.

### **Federation priorities**

#### ***Priority 1: To improve attainment and progress at KS2***

National, statutory, end of key stage assessments took place for the first time since the start of the covid pandemic.

Governors and LAB members have continued to provide oversight in relation to attainment and progress at key stage two. There have been discussions on outcomes at targets at all CGB and LAB meetings.

#### ***Priority 2: To improve oracy, language and communication***

Governors and LAB members have continued to monitor 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. It is likely that oracy will remain a high priority across federation schools for some time.

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

Schools have worked collaboratively over time to develop a curriculum for their own context based on the same model and approach to curriculum design. Curriculum expertise is shared across schools. Schools regularly review and adapt their curriculum. Adaptations were made during and after pandemic restrictions so schools have looked again at their curriculum provision for the start of the academic year. In St Matthias and Holy Trinity more comprehensive work has been undertaken to adapt the curriculum.

In the early years, schools have collaborated to develop a shared curriculum. This is embedding, in its second full year of implementation. Careful curriculum design ensures learning in the early years is built on in the next phase of schooling.

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

School development plans, scrutinised by LABs and approved by the CGB, 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 and this remains a critically important area for the federation and its schools. The Governance Manager has written and delivered a training session on school finance for governors and LAB members and will do so again in the new academic year.

Three schools were identified as being in financial difficulty and all submitted recovery plans to the CBG meeting in January 2021. Since then, one of the schools has improved its position significantly and close monitoring is no longer required. Business & Finance Committee continues to receive updates on the other two 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 continues to deal with the aftermath of the covid-19 pandemic, which had a considerable impact on the services offered across all eight schools. Governance continues to evolve in the same way as everything else.

Governors and staff continue to hold some meetings online, which have proven to be as effective as in-person meetings, while saving time for staff, governors and LAB members.

At a time of falling rolls and increased need at most federation schools, finance has become one of the greatest challenges. Governors and LAB members have spent a considerable amount of time looking at budgets and asking supportive and challenging questions of staff to help clarify their thinking and get the best possible outcomes for children at federation schools.

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. One induction session were run for new governors and LAB members during the year. The Governance Manager has set up sessions on effective challenge and schools finance for beginners. Feedback from both sessions has been incredibly positive, with governors and LAB members reporting that they have used some of the techniques they learned 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.

Two new governors and four 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. Three 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. Meetings and visits are now taking place in person again.

## Events

Governors and LAB members are encouraged to attend as many events as they can and their attendance is always warmly welcomed by staff.

# PRIMARY ADVANTAGE

SCHOOLS ACHIEVING  
MORE TOGETHER



Morningside  
Primary School  
and Children's Centre  
Achieving and Aspiring Together

