

Primary Advantage Federation annual governance statement September 2022-August 2023

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 not 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 2022/2023 school year the Central Governing Board and Business & Finance Committee both met four times and Outcomes & Provisions Committee met three times. Data on attendance during 2022-23 is available on the federation's website. <https://primaryadvantage.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Attendance-at-CGB-and-committees-2022-23.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/2023/10/Register-of-interests-2023-24.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. This solid foundation should allow the federation to respond appropriately to any changes during the next academic year, especially any financial challenges relating to the falling roll.

Two schools had Ofsted inspections during the summer term, both maintaining their overall rating of "good". At Gainsborough, the inspector commented that: *"Leaders, including those responsible for governance, understand and fulfil their statutory duties effectively. They understand the school's strengths and have identified the right priorities to improve further. Staff feel well supported by leaders to manage their workload and well-being."*

Federation priorities

A new set of priorities were agreed by the Central Governing Board in April 2023.

Priority 1: Oracy

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 during 2022-23 and presentations to LABs from oracy leads at individual schools. LAB members have been encouraged to ask about oracy during all their link visits and whenever they meet children in school.

Priority 2: Attendance

All LABs received the latest attendance figures for their school at each meeting. All LAB members also have a link member who covers attendance. The "big question" during the summer term related to persistent absence, which led to valuable discussions during LAB meetings and helped members become better informed on this issue.

The Outcomes & Provisions Committee, which is responsible for attendance at a federation level, received an update on attendance at all its meetings during 2022-23. This included a detailed breakdown of attendance by different groups across all eight schools.

Priority 3: Sustainability & climate change

Governors and LAB members have had limited direct input into work on this priority. However, this is mainly due to its relatively low profile during the last few years. LAB members have engaged individually on this issue as part of link visits and been active in supporting schools to adopt a sustainable approach to their energy usage.

Priority 4: Outcomes

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

National, statutory, end of key stage assessments took place in the summer of 2023. 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 and targets at all CGB and LAB meetings.

Priority 5: Sustainable leadership

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 Central Governing Board has also set up a working group to consider the future of federation and how it can respond to the changing political and economic climate.

Challenges

Finance and rising levels of need were the greatest challenges facing federation schools in the last year. 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.

For LAB members at De Beauvoir, the biggest challenge was the proposal by Hackney Council to close their school, with a final decision due to be made in December 2023. The LAB has supported the Headteacher and school staff as they deal with the situation.

At a governance level, the main challenge has been recruiting governors and LAB members.

LAB chairs have been providing essential moral and other support to headteachers as they always have done.

Other work completed by governors and LAB members

Training and development

Governors have been offered training by 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 run training to all governors and LAB members. All new governors and LAB members now receive a 1:1 induction session. The Governance Manager has set up sessions on effective challenge, school finance for beginners and being strategic. Feedback from all internal training has been very positive, with governors and LAB members reporting that they have used some of the techniques they learned in meetings and link visits.

Training on safeguarding became mandatory for all governors and LAB members at the start of the year.

Support was also offered through services such as GovernorHub Knowledge, Modern Governor, National Governors' Association, Hackney School Governors' Association, Inspiring Governance and Governors for Schools.

Recruitment

Two new governors and seven new LAB members were appointed in the school year. These included a new elected staff governor. All were sent a comprehensive induction pack and most have attended a training session on governance. Three governors and four LAB members reached the end of their terms of office and were reappointed.

Safeguarding nugget & the big question

One innovation that took place during the year was the introduction in March 2023 of the safeguarding nugget and the big question at all CGB and LAB meetings.

The safeguarding nugget is a short scenario that governors and LAB members discuss with staff at the meeting. It's used to illustrate a specific safeguarding issue, such as allegations against staff or cyberbullying.

The big question asks governors and LAB members to reflect on and discuss a key issue affecting federation schools. The big questions in the 2022-23 academic year were:

- how have you addressed the workload issue?
- how effective have efforts to address persistent absence been across the school/ federation?

Both questions were very effective in developing the knowledge of LAB members and governors. They also allowed for support and challenge of staff. Governors and LAB members who have been involved in Ofsted inspections since the big question started have all commented on how valuable it was in helping them to prepare.

Engagement with the safeguarding nugget and the big question have both been very good.

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.

Events

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

