

You may be aware that during the summer term of 2018, the Governing Body undertook a voluntary external review to reflect on the board's strengths and areas for development. The review was conducted by Ruth Agnew who is a former local authority governor services manager and an experienced governor trainer and consultant. Ruth is the Chair of Governors of a primary academy as well as being a governors at a secondary school. She is also a governor at a special school. Ruth was designated as a National Leader of Governance (NLG) in April 2012 and has undertaken a substantial number of external reviews of governance since that time in a wide range of settings. She is also an experienced Governor Mark assessor.

Ruth met with all of the members of the Governing Body as well as the Headteacher and members of staff. We are delighted to be able to share the feedback from the review.

### **Key findings**

"In the last few years, the governing body has worked hard to improve its own effectiveness and have enabled the following areas of good practice to flourish:

- "The committee structure has been streamlined to ensure that all areas of governing body business are covered in an efficient way. The two-committee structure which has been adopted is in line with National Governance Association (NGA) guidance and appears fit for purpose".
- "The chair, vice chairs and committee chairs have formed a group called the "Governors' Planning Group", which meets half termly with the Headteacher to oversee and plan the work of the governing body...This is good practice and ensures the work of the whole governing body maintains a strategic focus"
- "Considerable work has already been undertaken to ensure that meeting agendas are focused and streamlined"
- "The governors' annual calendar includes an annual governors' strategy day, a joint meeting with the governing body and senior leadership team. This is another example of good practice and ensures the governing body has time and space to identify its key priorities for the year ahead."
- "The governing body has recently conducted a 360-degree review of the chair and both vice chairs. Another governor facilitated this and delivered the feedback. The key areas for development were around succession planning and meeting effectiveness. Work has already begun to address these. This demonstrates the governing body's commitment to self-reflection and self-improvement."
- "The chair and vice chairs have commenced a programme of one-to-one meetings with all governors to discuss governors' contributions and plans for the future, and this will contribute to on-going reviews of the aligned roles, committee membership and leadership and other areas of governor involvement and succession planning. This is in line with recommended best governance practice."
- "Since identifying a concern around governor visibility with staff a lot of work has been done to improve this. Aligned governors visit school on a regular basis; governors regularly attend school events; one lunchtime each month some governors have their lunch in the staff room so that they can informally chat with staff; staff governors coordinate feedback to staff from governors' meetings; governors have visited staff during holiday revision sessions, to thank them. Governors also take an active role around undertaking staff exit interviews, the key

issues of which are then reported back to the governing body. Staff voice has also captured through a well-being questionnaire that has been reported back to governors.”

- “A number of governors have specific roles which have been aligned with the responsibilities of a member of the senior leadership team. The current “aligned roles” are ‘health, safety and wellbeing (incorporating safeguarding)’, ‘looked after children and pupil premium’, ‘community’, ‘fundraising, business development and special educational needs’ and ‘ alumni association development’.
- “Governors are also actively involved with “quality assurance days” at the end of each academic year. These have an agreed focus and include governors, alongside senior leaders, undertaking learning walks, work scrutiny and interviews with pupils and staff. All governors are invited, and key learning points are reported back to the governing body, ensuring all governors are well-informed about the life of the school.”
- “Governors are aware of the financial challenges facing the school and have worked hard with senior leaders to ensure some contingency is in place to support the school as it grows.”
- “The implementation of an electronic filing system means that all governors have access to current and historic governor papers.”
- “There is a considerable amount of useful information about the governing body and individual governors on the school website, which is compliant with the requirements in the Academies Financial Handbook.”

The following were identified as areas for development and are part of the Governing Body’s Action Plan for this year:

- Continue to embed the good practice identified by the review
- Continue to succession plan and ensure that a range of skills are covered in the governing board particularly in finance and law.
- Continue to develop a governors training programme to ensure that there is strong induction in place for new governors as well as continuing to keep the board fully updated with developments in education.
- Work closely with the Headteacher and all stakeholders to ensure that there is a clear strategic plan for the development of the school.
- Ensure that the Governing Body continues to analyse and respond to all performance data and quality assurance relating to the school.

Please do take the opportunity to visit the Governors section of the website to find out more about the governing body:

<http://www.tytheringtonschool.co.uk/governance/governors/>

Many thanks for your continued help and support.