

Monkfrith Governing Body Annual Statement 2020

Overview of 2019 / 2020 academic year

The key focus for governors during the 2019/20 academic year has been dealing with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on our school. This has involved ensuring the safety and welfare of pupils, staff and the whole school community.

Governing activities were altered following the closure of schools in March 2020. All governor meetings switched to virtual Zoom meetings which worked well and improved meeting attendance. Additionally, instead of meeting in committee silos the governing body held regular non-committee specific meetings throughout the spring and summer terms to discuss any issues that had arisen over a given period of time. This enabled all governors to have the fullest understanding of operational, strategic and financial issues and insight into how the SMT were addressing matters. It also enabled ongoing discussion and constructive challenge at a time when governors were physically distanced from the school.

Welfare, H&S & risk have been at the forefront of discussions with learning and financial considerations also being rigorously debated. We agreed and reviewed a number of existing and new policies and procedures to be adopted by the school.

Through discussion and challenge governors gained a thorough understanding of how the school was:

- managing safeguarding of its most vulnerable pupils
- keeping all pupils and teachers safe within school
- providing a good level of remote and onsite learning
- optimising staffing resources to best serve the whole school community
- assessing and managing H&S risks
- Responding to staff anxieties and supporting their mental health
- complying with fast changing government regulations

Governor discussion and feedback has helped shape and fine tune the school's coronavirus response.

In line with government guidance, safeguarding has remained a key priority throughout the year and especially whilst children were out of school. Regular safeguarding discussions between the headteacher and safeguarding governor took place and the topic was always prioritised at every governor body meeting.

Governors scrutinised the coronavirus risk assessment that was developed whilst school was only open to vulnerable and key worker children and to revisions that were made prior to large numbers of children returning to school. Despite the school being largely closed to visitors, a governor H&S walk did still take place in the summer term prior to bubbles of children coming back to school.

The finance committee met during the autumn term and resumed meetings in the summer term. The impact of the pandemic on the budget was closely monitored and there were strategic discussions about the long-term implications for the school. Governors were able to consider how loss of income and rising costs due to the pandemic could be reconciled and how financial resources could be used effectively.

Three governors and the School Improvement Partner met to set the Head teacher's targets at the beginning of the year and to review her performance at the end of the summer term. This year's performance management cycle was unique due to the pandemic and so governors took a more qualitative approach to assessing the exceptional performance of the head teacher.

The autumn 2019 term started as usual with governors evaluating and discussing the school improvement plan, analysing the previous year's attainment data for all year groups and discussing trends. Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of staff and pupils was prioritised as a key focus for the year. Budgetary alignment with school priorities was monitored throughout the term.

We held our first whole governor day in January 2020. All Governors were invited to spend the full day in school and there were scheduled activities including learning walks, classroom drop-ins, sessions with the children to see some of their work and hear their views, opportunities to talk to teachers, a presentation from the HT and a strategic discussion around governance. The day was well attended and governors found it very useful. Due to its success, it was decided that this would be an annual event.

In the first half of the 2019/20 academic year the governing body welcomed two new co-opted governors on board.

2019/20 has been a truly unique year and governors have been agile and responsive to new ways of working to support the school during this unprecedented period. The governing body has ensured that the core priorities of Monkrith continue to sit at the heart of its coronavirus response.