

Governing Body 2019/20 Annual Report

Dear Parents and Carers.

At this time of summer, the governors reflect on the past school year. Few of us could have predicted what the year would have in store and the challenges we've faced as a school, as families and pupils have been unparalleled.

Governing boards are not required to produce an annual report; however, at Rhodes Avenue we believe it is important that, as a governing board, we are open and transparent with our school community and have, therefore, decided to continue to publish an annual report which explains the work of the governing board over the past year.

The Governor's page on the school [website](#) also contains this and other information that you may find useful.

Without exception, this past year has been the most challenging the education sector has experienced for many years. Our report to you this year will be slightly different than previous years, in which we reported to you on the various priorities and monitoring activities of the governing board from throughout the academic year. This year, we will share with you details of the essential areas of governance we have focussed on in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting lockdown.

Review of the Year

In usual times, one of the key functions of the governing board is to undertake strategic monitoring activity, the purpose of which is to triangulate information shared with governors by the senior leadership team. The governing board, in usual circumstances, undertakes a wide range of monitoring activity, including:

- Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
- Inviting members of the senior leadership team and subject leads to governing board and committee meetings to report on key areas
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent
- Monitoring visits within school to meet with subject leads and discuss aspects of the school development plan
- Pupil, staff and parent surveys
- Strategic Leadership – the decision making based around the values, aims and aspirations of the school

The first half of the academic year was very busy carrying out the monitoring activities described above. All of the governing board's committees had new Chairs and governors supported the school in responding to the new Ofsted framework. We also implemented a new Safeguarding Framework to ensure that safeguarding governance continued to be

effective. In January, Alison Vaughan stepped down from her role as Chair of Governors after 18 years and was replaced by Katy Jackson and Helen Walsh as Co-Chairs.

The school's response to the coronavirus pandemic and wider reopening of the school

From March, when the school closed to all pupils other than vulnerable children and key workers' children, our support has been focussed on the school's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We adapted governance to cover essential business only, monitoring health and safety, pupil and staff wellbeing, safeguarding and school finances.

With regard to **health and safety**, we kept in touch with the school leadership team and monitored the situation throughout the period when the school was closed to most children. In advance of reopening to some year groups in June, we convened special governors' meetings to discuss the wider opening plans, inspected the new Covid-safe arrangements and scrutinised the comprehensive risk assessment for the wider-reopening. Throughout this period we supported the school's plans for managing staffing at school and home learning, and prioritised supporting the **wellbeing** of staff who were working at home or at school whilst, like many of us, often dealing with difficult personal circumstances. Our school leaders have had to make a huge number of important and difficult decisions over this time and as a governing body we have both challenged and fully supported all the decisions made.

Safeguarding

The current unusual circumstances and change to school provision brought various safeguarding issues to the fore, both in relation to pupils who continued to attend school, and those who were at home. We worked with the school to address or monitor issues such as: changes to the school's child safeguarding policy; ensure adequate support for the designated safeguarding lead; arrangements for vulnerable pupils or those that might become vulnerable during this time; safeguarding with regards to the use of technology and teaching; and provision for pupils and families with specific needs. Schools play an essential role in protecting children and offering early intervention. This is a role which Rhodes Avenue Primary not only takes seriously but prioritises, and has continued to do so during this difficult period.

School Finance

Since the end of March our School Business Manager, Tracy Graham, has worked harder than ever, managing our school budget, the admissions for September and all of the additional admin that has been created as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. The school's finances have been badly impacted by the pandemic and it has been very difficult to plan for the coming year, not knowing when and how school would reopen. Tracy had to prepare a number of budgets, based on different scenarios and we are very grateful for all her work on this. Through her diligence, our school finished the last financial year in good shape to face the difficult years ahead.

However, over the last few months the school lost much of the income it usually raises. Some additional funds may be forthcoming from the local authority and central government, to reflect additional costs and lost income caused by the response to the pandemic, but at this stage it is unclear how much that will be. The government has also announced that schools will receive

additional catch up funding in the Autumn to provide support to children who have fallen behind while out of school. Again, we do not yet know how much funding this will amount to.

Faced with this uncertainty, like many schools, the school has had to set a deficit budget for next year. We have submitted plans to the local authority for paying off the deficit over the next 4 years, but the next few years are going to be very challenging, funding-wise. Income generation is going to be more essential than ever. Supporting extended provisions like our extra-curricular clubs, holidays clubs, before and after school care, RAPSAs and the many other ways we generate income will be more vital than ever.

Responding to Black Lives Matter - evaluating and reviewing our BAME curriculum and strategic focus

As we reported previously, like all of you, the governors were profoundly affected by the death of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests which followed. We continue to listen to the concerns that our school community has raised; we support you and recognise the anxiety, anger and frustration many of you are feeling. We held an Extraordinary Governors Meeting to discuss this topic and the related question of the school name. We were pleased to see that a small group of interested parents subsequently met with school leaders to discuss the school's response to the Black Lives Matter movement, and much more work will follow. We are looking forward to larger groups of parents being able to meet in the Autumn to discuss broadening the curriculum.

Our ambition does not stop there: this will be a year-long project, looking not only at the curriculum but also at the wider context and culture of the school. As governors, we will not only input into and approve curriculum changes, but we will be reviewing the school's vision and ethos to make sure it adequately reflects the diversity of our community and the school's renewed focus on tackling racism.

On the related topic of the school name, during the Autumn term, we are hoping to hold a consultation with staff, parents, carers, children, alumni and local residents to get an idea of their views on whether to rename the school, and how to fund any such change. If the reviews set up by the local authority and the Mayor of London have reported by then, we will also take their views into consideration. This would inform a decision by the GB.

Moving Forward

The governing board's priorities for the year ahead remain focused on the safety and wellbeing of all school staff and pupils. We will continue to focus on essential areas of governance and support school leaders as the coronavirus situation evolves. However, the normal school business hasn't stopped and in the midst of dealing with all these new challenges, Adrian and the school leaders have hired new staff, have remotely welcomed all our new Nursery and Reception families, and are organising a special, COVID safe leavers' event for the Year 6 children. It is the school's aim that we will be able to reopen to all in September; however, we must prepare for every eventuality and plans are being made accordingly.

When the children do return, staff will assess and address any knowledge gaps individual children may have and are planning creative and engaging ways to begin the school year that will focus on ensuring that the children feel secure and happy at school. Once all pupils are safely back at school we hope to look at “lessons learnt” from the lockdown home learning in order to support the school should further lockdowns occur.

Governing board priority areas for 2020/2021

The governing board's priorities for the year ahead remain focused on the safety and wellbeing of all school staff and pupils. We will continue to focus on essential areas of governance outlined above and support school leaders as the coronavirus situation evolves. In addition we intend to refresh the school's Vision and Ethos as part of our strategic leadership.

The governing board will undertake a self-review of its own performance in the Autumn Term. This year we have chosen to reflect on and review governance during the coronavirus pandemic.

RAPSA

We are delighted that Julie, Claire, Rachel and Lucy, Elianna, Pamela, Becks, Sarah, Louise and Tara have offered to stay on for an additional year as RAPSA Chair and committee, and we can't thank them enough. They have all done so much already in terms of dedicating your time, energy and resources towards the school community, and the school is going to need them more than ever this coming year, in terms of raising much needed funds.

Thanks

We'd like to thank all of you for your continued support, kindness and patience during this challenging time. We know how tough things have been for many of you and appreciate all of the effort you have made to keep your children learning and in supporting each other. It is the community that makes Rhodes Avenue what it is and that has been evident this year. We would like to say how proud we are of the children who have kept going with their learning at home, adapted to the changes at school, and who have borne the brunt of this time with all of their routine taken away from them and their friendship circles distanced through necessity.

The leadership, resilience and professionalism of the school staff has not faltered. Thanks to Adrian, the SLT and all the staff for rising to the challenge, and for the enormous effort that went into planning and reorganising the school in order to have as many children as possible back. Thanks also to the teachers, TAs and support staff, working tirelessly supporting the children, parents and families - both at home and within school. There are many others who have worked extremely hard over the last few months to help the school cope. So thank you to Tracy and the office staff for your important work on the budgets and school administration; thanks to the caterers, who have kept a school food service going throughout lockdown; thanks to the cleaning staff, whose work is more vital than ever; and thanks to Andrew and the site staff who have completely remodelled the school, introducing multiple entrances and one-way systems, to make it all as safe as possible for everyone. .

I'm sure you will all support us in thanking the unfaltering effort, passion and commitment of all the staff at Rhodes Avenue.

Wishing you and your children a safe and healthy summer.

Helen Walsh and Katy Jackson

Co-Chairs of Governors on behalf of the Rhodes Avenue Primary School Governing Body

Additional Information

Contact information

Co-Chair of governors' name:	Katy Jackson & Helen Walsh
Chair of governors' email address:	rhodes.governors@gmail.com
Clerk to governors' name:	Hannah Cleary
Clerk to governors' email address:	hannahmjc@aol.com

Governing board membership

Role	Governor
Parent governors	Helen Walsh
	Katy Jackson
	Camilla Bolt

	Deborah Smith
	Lucy Freestone
Co-opted governors	Dianne Bluemink
	Fiona Doyle
	Alison Vaughan
	Ally Tansley
	Cost Contantinou
Staff governors	Sally Eustance
	Sophia Papworth
LA governor	Simon Green
Headteacher	Adrian Hall
Associate members	Maria Panayiotou
	Emily Gazzard
	Tracy Graham
	Andrew Satwick

Governors who have left the governing board this academic year

Governor	Date term of office ended
Sam Perkins	25/01/2020

Mike Green	20/09/2019
Governor vacancies	
The governing board currently has the following vacancies:	
Co-opted Governor	

Governors' attendance at full governing board meetings

As of 20/3/2020 the governing board – in line with government advice – has met remotely via an online platform. We have maintained all our statutory requirements for meetings of the governing board during this time. Before this date, meetings were held in person. [Link to Full Governing Body meeting attendance.](#)