

# Governors' Annual Report to Parents 2020/21

Governors are proud to be part of the Rhodes Avenue School community; this report is to let you know about some of the areas of school life the Governing Body has been involved in this year.

Every member of the school plays a vital part in our vision to provide the very best for all. We would like to voice a sincere and heartfelt thank you to all staff for their outstanding work this year and since the Covid crisis began. Thanks to Adrian, who together with Maria, Emel and Emily, has worked tirelessly and relentlessly in the face of every challenge. The impact of Covid on the school has lasted until the very last day of term. Thanks to the teachers, TAs, learning support staff, Tracy and the administrative team, site staff, and the cleaning staff and all of those keep the school running every day. Rhodes Avenue has been led and managed exceptionally well during these challenging times, channelling energies and constantly moving forwards.

Special thanks to those staff moving on: thank you for all you have done - you will be missed. It has been a real pleasure as governors to work with you. We wish you every success in your new homes, new jobs and new countries.

Rhodes Avenue Governing Body would like to thank parents and carers for all the support they have given to the children and the school during another disrupted year to help education to continue. We recognise your hard work in supporting your children's learning while many of them were at home. Thanks to all of you for your flexibility whilst necessary changes have been put in place, including staggered school pick up and drop off times, early closure on Fridays and, for most children, remote learning. We know that some of this may have been a challenge for you - so thank you for your support and understanding.

Enormous thanks to the pupils for the high level of flexibility and resilience they have had to show throughout this year - what an incredible bunch of children! We must also give a farewell to those students moving on, and a special farewell to the year 6 children who have been self isolating throughout their last week of primary school. We wish them and their families every success for the next stage of their journey. They have missed so much over the past year and a half, but we hope this will not detract from the wonderful memories they made whilst at Rhodes Avenue.

As governors we are conscious that upon return to school in September it will take time, patience and commitment to help the children to continue with their learning but equally importantly to continue rebuilding their confidence, resilience and well-being. We are confident that this will continue to be a focus in the Autumn Term and beyond.

Wishing you and your children a happy and healthy summer.

Helen Walsh and Katy Jackson

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

## Key Functions of the Governing Body

School governors have a varied role helping the school run effectively. The governor role is strategic rather than operational; governors don't get involved with the day to day running of a school, instead supporting and challenging the school's leadership team to drive school improvement.

The governing board undertakes a wide range of monitoring activity, including:

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

We have had to be adaptable this year, but apart from in-person visits to school, we have managed to carry out all the above tasks remotely.

## Overview of the Year

Since the beginning of the pandemic, 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 were so grateful that the school opened again to full capacity in September 2020.

During the Autumn term we continued to adapt our governance to cover essential business only, as the school dealt with bubble closures and remote learning. Our priorities were 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, inspected the new Covid-safe arrangements and scrutinised the comprehensive risk assessment for the wider-reopening, and the many revisions to risk assessments resulting from changes to the Covid situation.

On mental health and wellbeing, despite Covid restrictions making it impossible to go into school to speak to children and staff, monitoring their mental health and wellbeing has been an important focus for governors this year. It has been a fixed item on the agenda at governing body meetings, with governors being given regular updates and asking lots of questions.

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.

We'd like to thank everyone who has donated to the school's Just Giving appeal. Your donations have helped to ensure the continued provision of the excellent teaching, learning and care that we aspire to deliver to all our students. Once again, we thank **RAPSA** for their endless commitment to raising funds and solidifying the spirit and cohesion of our school community.

## Governing Body Priorities for the Coming Year

- Diversity and Inclusion
- Wellbeing - impact of the last 18 months, mental health, behaviour
- Safeguarding
- Impact of Lockdown on education
- Coordinate the name change consultation
- Preparation for Ofsted

## Equality, diversity & Inclusion

We have reviewed our committees and link roles and introduced some new roles to correspond with changing priorities. We are introducing a new committee to monitor **Equality, diversity & Inclusion**. This committee would take over the role of the BAME working party and expand its remit to include all aspects of diversity (religion, disability, health, sex), as well as pupil wellbeing and inclusion. There will continue to be a focus on race, and anti-racism. This committee would also monitor behaviour and bullying.

## Whether to keep or change the school's name

We have begun our consultation into a possible change of school name, beginning with our parents, who we surveyed last week. We hope to gather the views of staff and children in the beginning of the Autumn Term, followed by members of the local community. We thank everyone who participated in the parent consultation, and for those who sent us thoughtful comments.

**This initial consultation is to decide whether to keep or change the name only.** Although the final decision on whether to keep or change our school's name will be made by the school's governing body, we wish to take the views of the wider school community into account. We recognise that many people feel strongly about this issue and we respect that there is a range of views.

If the decision is to change the name, a further consultation would follow on what the new name should be. This would again involve staff, children and families. Governors are clear, however, that if the school is renamed, it will not be named after any individual.

## Ofsted

The school and the governing body are preparing for a long-awaited Ofsted inspection, now that the government has decided that schools like ours, which have not been inspected for quite a few years, should be returned to the regular inspection cycle.

# Additional Information

## Governing Body Membership

Co-Chair of governors:	Katy Jackson & Helen Walsh rhodes.governors@gmail.com
Vice Chair	Fiona Doyle
Clerk to governors:	Hannah Cleary hannahmjc@aol.com

Parent governors	Katy Jackson, Camilla Bolt, Deborah Smith, Lucy Freestone, Jo Yurky
Co-opted governors	Helen Walsh, Alison Vaughan, Ally Tansley, Fiona Doyle, Costa Contantinou, Pawan Dhir
LA governor	Simon Green
Staff governors	Sally Eustance, Sophia Papworth
Headteacher	Adrian Hall
Associate members	Maria Panayiotou, Emily Gazzard, Tracy Graham, Andrew Satwick, Alex Morgan (BAME working party)

## Governor Body Vacancies

The governing board currently has the following vacancies (from August 2021):  
Co-opted Governor

## Governor Attendance at Meetings

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 body during this time ([view Governor attendance](#)). From September, we are planning to adopt a hybrid model of working with some face to face meetings and some virtual ones. All minutes are available on the [Governor's page](#) of the Rhodes Avenue website.

## Engagement with Parents and the Community

Restrictions due to Covid have meant that the Governing Body has had to adapt the way it engages with parents; previously we had actively gained feedback at parents'

evenings as well as being visible at many school events. This year we have engaged with parents in different ways.

## Surveys

- Governors parents' survey, Nov 2020
- Governors also considered the surveys carried out by school:
  - The school surveyed every family whose bubble closed, including children from years 5 and 6, and adapted its procedures in response to this feedback.
  - School parents survey -June 2021

## Parent Events & Coffee Mornings

The Governing Body held a Black Curriculum Review meeting for all parents of the school. We also held a coffee morning in May for Black parents and parents of Black children and a second in June for any and all parents who identify as being part of an ethnic minority group and parents of children who identify as being part of an ethnic minority group.

Following the success of the coffee mornings, next year we plan to run regular coffee mornings/drop in surgeries for all parents.

## Pupil Voice

We have missed coming into school and engaging with the children as part of our monitoring. Fiona Doyle, the BAME link governor met with a group of pupils in the Summer term. We are looking forward to hearing more from September.

## Governor Monitoring Activity

All governor visits are recorded on the website.

## Governing Body Development

The Governing Body's priority is to ensure governors fulfil their strategic role to support and challenge the school's leadership team. We plan to conduct a skills audit and self evaluation at our Governor's Strategy Day in the Autumn term. The areas for improvement identified in our self-evaluation will feed into our Governor Development Plan, which is a working document.

# Reports from Committees and Link Governors

## 1. Safeguarding - Lucy Freestone, Safeguarding Governor

The 2020/21 academic year has been characterised by frequent changes in government guidance. This has required constant change in the school provision ranging from most pupils being educated in their home, whilst safely ensuring face to face classes for key groups of pupils, through a return to class for all pupils and then several individual class isolations. This has led to a unique year. However, despite these challenges the school has kept safeguarding at the heart of its offer. The Governors ensured safeguarding standards were kept high by conducting the following: carrying out school visits; reviewing policy and strategy; holding school leaders to account by asking challenging questions; checking that records were maintained appropriately and other activities. The school continues to play an essential role in protecting children, promoting their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, as well as identifying opportunities to support families. Rhodes Avenue Primary sees safeguarding as a collective responsibility and staff members endeavour to make it their priority.

## 2. School Finance - Simon Green, Chair of Resources Committee

The 2020/21 School year has been a huge challenge for everybody. In normal years it is a real challenge to make the most of the limited funding available to the school and the leadership team along with School Business Manager Tracy Graham do an outstanding job maximising the resources available to provide the fantastic learning experience for all the children at Rhodes Avenue Primary School. The last year has obviously proven to be an even greater challenge.

Income generated from sources such as school lettings, breakfast and afterschool clubs and the extra funding from the RAPSAs events has been severely restricted compared to previous years. Additionally the school has faced additional costs associated with the operational changes to keep pupils and staff as safe as possible during the pandemic.

The uncertainty around dates the school might open/close, the lack of clarity as to additional government funding and the inability to predict the easing of restrictions and their impact on the ability to generate additional income from lettings has meant a number of budget models have been prepared by the school and these have been adjusted throughout the year. Having adopted a relatively conservative view during this process, the school finances are now faring relatively well, given the difficult circumstances.

Last year we reported that the financial impact of Covid meant the school had to agree a licenced deficit budget for 2020 and secure a local authority loan to cover the deficit, repaid over 4 years. Fortunately the financial situation has not been as severe as first predicted, allowing the school to increase repayments in the first year, which will free up additional funding during the next 3 years.

The Governors would like to thank the School Business Manager and senior leadership team for their efforts during this challenging time.

### 3. Curriculum - Ally Tansley, Committee Chair

The curriculum committee was re-established in January and we picked up where we left off a year prior. Our focus with the curriculum committee is to give governors an overview of progress and attainment across all core and foundation subjects; the committee monitors specific areas of the curriculum as linked to the school development plan. We had to be creative this year, as we were not able to have school visits and actually look at the children's work. However, staff subject leaders were able to present their subjects virtually. This included:

- In depth presentation from Natasha Morgan curriculum leader
- Overview and analysis of the remote learning offer
- Presentation from D&T subject lead
- Overview of progress data across the last two years

### 4. Premises / Health & Safety - Alison Vaughan, Committee Chair

The committee would like to say a huge thank you to our facilities manager Andrew Satwick and his team. This last year has been difficult for everyone in school, and we would like to acknowledge the facilities staff who keep the indoors clean and safe, and outdoors pristine and welcoming for the children. The team has continued to make improvements throughout the year. In particular, we now have new outside doors in the Early Years building, and substantial repairs to areas on the roof in the Key Stage 2 building. Costs for these have all been covered by the original contractors as warranties are still in place. Over the summer break, the team has a schedule of works that will provide improvements to the premises and also checks for all health and safety considerations.

### 5. Inclusion /SEND - Jo Yurky, Link Governor

I became the Inclusion and Diversity Link Governor at the start of 2021 just as the Government closed all schools – for the second time – due to the Coronavirus pandemic. This was an exceptionally challenging time for our whole school community: both our children and their families and our staff.

I spoke with Emily Gazzard (SENCO) in early February to find out about the impact the closure was having on our children. Emily confirmed that all children on the SEN Register had been invited to attend school if it was considered to be in the child's best interests to do so. This was an offer that went beyond the Government's requirement to provide places to vulnerable and key worker children only. The outcome of this was

that the majority of children took up the offer and those that didn't were in contact with Emily with the decision kept under regular review.

Once the school reopened, we agreed the following Inclusion monitoring priority:

- How are we measuring, monitoring and promoting pupil wellbeing?

The school developed and extended its Emotional Wellbeing provision following lockdown to meet the needs of the pupils during the pandemic. The needs have increased dramatically particularly as many children have heightened levels of anxiety and the waiting list for CAMHS has increased.

Karen Lever, our school psychotherapist, continues to lead a team of five trainee therapists. Our Rhodes Avenue team now offers 1:1 therapy for 25 children and also offers support for parents. The school is also now able to arrange private referrals when this is appropriate. The effects of the pandemic will continue to be felt by our children and our strategic focus on wellbeing will therefore continue into the Autumn term when our new SENCO and Assistant Head, Matthew Henson, joins our school.

## 6. Early Years - Camilla Bolt, Link Governor

This year, as the EY link governor, I have:

- Discussed and reviewed baseline assessments in the Autumn term. These are the first set of the new baseline assessments, which we piloted the previous year (2019)
- Attended a strategic planning morning with Adrian and the EY team, to create and update EY SDP and Action plan (This was done with reference to the new Birth to 5 matters framework, which comes into effect in Sept 2021)
- As part of the above, we reviewed EY CPD programme for Summer/Autumn terms, reviewed the parent report format in line with new assessment guidelines and other ways to fully incorporate the new framework into our EY practise.
- Reviewed EY end of year performance data
- Reviewed EY admissions - number of Nursery/Reception places applied for, offered and wait lists.

## 7. Wellbeing / Staff Mental Health - Alison Vaughan, Link Governor

This is a role that I was happy to take on, but one that is a bit frustrating given COVID restrictions. I would have liked to go into school and speak with pupils and staff but that was not possible. I have had a couple of Zoom sessions with the staff Well Being governor (Sam Perkins) to ask how the school is supporting well-being and mental health and am reassured that many measures are in place. I also joined a Zoom staff meeting to get feed back which was overwhelmingly positive. As ever, our school is making sure it looks after its own.



## 8. BAME - Fiona Doyle, BAME Link Governor & Vice Chair of Governors

This year has been a busy one for the BAME working group - firstly with a lot of discussion about the term 'BAME' itself. We acknowledge it doesn't work for a lot of people and it's not a term we have felt comfortable using as a group; from September we will be moving away from it as we encompass a wider focus on equality, diversity and inclusion across the school. I would like to reassure parents however, that we absolutely continue to hold the lived experiences of People of Colour at the centre of our thinking and planning.

This year the working group organised a number of events, including:

- A group discussion for Black pupils and pupils of dual or multiple heritage
- A Black curriculum review evening for all parents
- A coffee morning for Black parents and parents of Black children
- A coffee morning for any and all people who identify as an ethnic minority
- An open forum event for all people who identify as an ethnic minority and allies

Through these events, the governors have been privileged to meet and engage with a number of parents across the school who have shown enthusiasm, passion and interest in what the committee are working towards. They have also provided invaluable feedback and ideas which have given us much food for thought, helping to shape the direction we would like to go in as we continue our work.

I'd like to thank all the parents who have met with us this year, emailed, chatted and shown their support. We look forward to continuing to work together with you in September. A special thanks also to associate Governor Alex Morgan and staff member Olivett Newing for joining the working group and for their insight, encouragement and dedication.

As we move forward in September with our aim of becoming an actively anti-racist school community, we are keen to engage with as many parents as possible in order to continue to build an allyship. Please do keep an eye out for further events and opportunities to get involved and show your support as an ally. If you'd like to get in touch about any of the above, please feel free to email [Rhodescochairs@gmail.com](mailto:Rhodescochairs@gmail.com) - we welcome open and honest discussion so are always happy to hear from parents.

## 9. Strategic Planning (School Vision and Values) - Helen Walsh, Working Party Chair

Given the effect that the pandemic has had on all our lives and on the school, and the school's renewed focus on anti-racism, diversity and inclusion, now seems like a good time to consider our school's values and to revisit our school's vision and ethos. The Strategic Planning Working Party has been considering how best to do this.

As a first step, we have been considering what values are important to us as a whole school community. Governors have been thinking about this; Adrian led a session with staff to discuss which values were important to them, and similar conversations were held with children. We had hoped to hold an event for parents before the end of term but Covid has meant we have had to postpone this until 14 September.

We are looking forward to reviewing the results from the different groups. Once we have done that, we propose to hold a wider consultation about the School's Vision -

that is, where we all want the school to be in 3 to 5 years' time. We will seek the views of staff, parents and children in the Autumn Term - look out for the invitations.