

Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

This document gives a brief overview of the activities of the local governing body for Perryfields Infants School for the academic year – September 2021 to August 2022. It is organised around the three primary objectives of the local governing body:

- to set the strategic direction of the school;
- to hold the school's leaders to account; and
- to ensure the financial well-being of the school.

The academic year 2021/22 is the fourth year that the school has formed part of a multi-school Academy Trust (MAT) - the Chelmsford Learning Partnership (CLP). The Trust's 7 other schools are Barnes Farm Infants and Junior Schools, The Boswells Academy, Tyrells Primary School, Lakeland Primary School, The Beaulieu Park Primary School and Roding Valley High School.

With the election of a new Chair of Trustees, the year saw further progress in moving to common management & administrative processes and governance arrangements across Trust schools. The year has also seen significant recovery in the daily experiences of our children since Covid-19.

Covid-19

The education sector was one of many that were affected acutely by the pandemic. During 2021/22, staff and children continued to require time off when testing Covid-positive, but school life did return to a more normal pattern. Parents returned for open afternoons and face to face workshops. Also, the school was again able to offer a wider range of external teacher-led clubs and school trips, as well as attend sporting competitions as we returned to full opening. However, our Year 2 cohort (who had contended with the disruption to their education in both their Reception and Year 1 stages) were given targeted support to help them make expected progress. As part of the CLP, Perryfields Infants has also benefitted from the resilience provided by being part of a Multi-school Academy Trust.

Governors were aware of robust and effective measures that the school had implemented during Covid to mitigate the adverse impact on children's learning, including initiatives that helped the education of those unable to attend school – information was made available to parents, including on-line education, advice on other educational resources, newsletters and regular contacts with class teachers.

The government provided Covid 'catch-up funding' which has been spent on a range of educational interventions, focussed tuition and additional support and resources, all designed to get our children's learning back on track.

Setting the strategic direction of the school

As a part of a Multi-school Academy Trust, our overall strategic direction is considered and planned in the wider context of the Trust. A clear scheme of delegation allows the school to operate effectively within the overall supporting framework of the Trust. This has brought benefits through financial economies of scale, capacity building and resilience, training and learning for our staff, sharing of best practice and comparative work between Trust schools and access to a wide range of professional advice when required.

With the support of the Trust, the Perryfields Infants school's ethos and character have been maintained. All decisions by the Trust's Board and the School's local governing body have been made with the interests of the children being the priority and with consideration for the long-term viability and improvement of the school.

During this year, the school also instigated subject leaders' meetings with their colleagues at the Perryfields Junior school (who are not part of the Trust) to share curriculum plans and understand the progression of lessons, thus enhancing the smooth transition of pupils from Year 2 to Year 3.

Holding the school to account

The local governing body has a responsibility to ensure that the headteacher and staff adhere to the school's policies and deliver the best possible outcomes for all children and that the work of the school in the Trust is given appropriate recognition. As part of its role the governing body holds a Curriculum, Attainment and Progress Committee that meets once each half term to focus solely on these topics.

Links between the School and the Trust have been strengthened, with more communication and reporting back between our local Governors and MAT Trustees.

Using relevant data, school staff have developed predictions to inform curriculum planning for future years and to identify areas for educational improvement. The governing body has continued to work extensively with staff to analyse, test and challenge the results from the development of the curriculum.

Governors have always undertaken visits and walks around the school to ensure familiarity and understanding of school life, to provide additional conversations with the children and ask questions of the teaching staff. During Covid, Governors were not able to access the school as frequently, but governors are now back in school and one Governor assisted the older children with their reading throughout the year.

The school has all the relevant statutory policies in place and a system for regular review. The governing body oversaw the introduction of Data Protection Regulations (known as GDPR) and ensured compliance, facilitated by the specialist professional knowledge of another governor. Safeguarding arrangements are in place, are reviewed regularly and remain strong.

The governing body is also responsible for monitoring progress against objectives highlighted in the school's improvement plan, which has been well supported by those resources within the Trust's central team that lead on schools' improvement.

Ensuring the financial well-being of the school

Pressure on school budgets grew during last year, particularly for small schools and, given the external challenges of funding and spending, all staff at the school take credit for ensuring the school's budget is spent wisely.

Updated financial systems and procedures have been improved by the Trust's central finance team, who take responsibility for maintaining these systems. The school's local governing body has a responsibility for ensuring that the annual budget and longer-term financial plan are viable and that all spending is focussed on helping to deliver the best outcomes for the children.

Perryfields Infant School has long had a strong financial position, but governors are aware of future risks from budget pressures and we continue to monitor our finances regularly to ensure best value for money. Decisions were made last year to reduce costs where possible to help meet pay and price increases outside our control. The school has applied part of its reserve balance to meet one-off costs of supporting school priorities. These include additional resources and training to improve writing standards across the school and updated reading scheme books. Covid-19 brought additional risk to our budget, but some additional government funds and careful use of our reserve mitigated that risk - the school's overall financial position was not adversely impacted.

Perryfields Infant School Governors

Our local Governing body comprises 11 members and we have several recently elected Governors. Vacancies were filled at the end of the year by matching willing volunteers to our skills audit lists.

In September 2015, rules were introduced requiring governing bodies to publish information about their membership, attendance and their business interests. We update this throughout the year and publish information on the school website at the end of each academic year.

Local Governing Body (LGB) Terms of Reference for the Perryfields Infant School, Governors' attendance records and their business interests (if any) can all be found on the school website.