

Otter Valley Federation (OVF) Governance statement 2015-16

The work of the Governing Board (GB) centres on THREE KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensuring clarity of the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the schools
- Holding the Head Teacher to account for the educational performance of the schools and their pupils and for the performance management of the staff.
- Overseeing the financial performance of the schools and making sure that the money is well spent.

Mindful of these responsibilities, during 2015-16 the GB has increasingly focussed on working with the school leaders to identify key areas for development, TAKING DECISIONS WHICH ARE INTENDED TO MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE and then seeking to evaluate the impact of those decisions.

Tipton Class structure

From September 2015 a 4 class structure at Tipton was resourced with the result that each class combines 2 year groups, removing the need to split year groups.

In response to local need the Tipton FSU was opened in April 2015. The GB and staff have been able to draw on the success factors from Feniton's FSU to help inform and establish the Early Years integrated pre-school /FSU at Tipton, providing a positive picture at both schools in 2015-16.

A new teacher has been appointed at Tipton to enable the change in staffing structure to take effect from September 2016. As at Feniton, the Head of School will no longer have a class teaching responsibility and will be able to teach across all classes thereby gaining a clearer understanding of the children's learning and progress and informing his leadership of staff and pupils.

Finance and budgets

The Federation has continued to develop under our single Governing Board and from April 2015 we moved to a single (although still divisible) budget.

Despite facing austere times the GB has set and maintained a positive budget and has still had the confidence to make staffing structure changes in support of the children's learning.

Collaboration

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and GB have continued to promote the sharing of the expertise of our teachers across the Federation in a programme of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to the benefit of both schools.

The Federation also allows some flexibility in staffing between the schools at all levels when required e.g. during the absence of a member of staff, sometimes to support 1:1 interventions and in using expertise proportionally across the schools, for example in support of SEND provision.

Building on our experience of collaboration within the Federation and the local learning community an informal link has been established between St Martin's Cranbrook, Withycombe Raleigh and the OVF schools. These EAST DEVON CHURCH GROUP schools share similar visions and values and have started to identify and share good practice through a developing programme of shared events and CPD aimed at improving pupil outcomes and educational experiences. The governors of the three schools will participate in this programme and seek to share ideas and experiences.

Looking further ahead, the governors have been attending presentations, making visits to other schools and inviting speakers to help us to explore the pros and cons of possible options for future formal arrangements with other schools, perhaps by expanding the Federation or through academisation and membership of a MAT (Multi Academy Trust), whether by joining one already in place or being involved in a new initiative.

Monitoring school improvement

Although the role of the GB is strategic rather than operational, the governors have become a more visible presence in the schools.

Each of the governors has contributed to a systematic programme of visits not only to underpin their own role as a lead governor but also to support the School Leadership Team in MONITORING THE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANS (SDPs) and EVALUATING the OUTCOMES.

The monitoring visits have informed the GB of progress through pupil talk, learning walks, book scrutiny, thinking about wall displays, talking with staff and have also evidenced the findings and suggested development points made during visits to the schools by advisers.

The Plans included our own Governance SDP which identified and implemented changes designed to further enhance the effectiveness of the leadership and management of our schools.

Each year's SDPs reflect the priorities for improvement in key areas whilst progressing these towards the strategic vision set for the next 3 years. The governors evaluated the outcomes of the SDPs from 2015-16 and then worked closely with the SLT to set agreed key outcomes for the 2016-17 Plans.

Safeguarding

An external audit in April revealed that the safeguarding at our schools is strong. Appropriate training has been provided for staff and also made available to volunteers including the governors.

Investment is ongoing in premises to promote safeguarding and security, which is why some building works were carried out at Feniton during the summer holidays.

Relocation of Tipton School

In response to the flooding which occurs on the lower site and in the road which splits the upper and lower sites the governors have actively confronted the need to SECURE THE FUTURE OF TIPTON SCHOOL by seeking public funding to relocate away from the floodplain.

Following the response from the DfE that there will be no funding from central Government for relocation in the village and that we should seek a local solution we have very limited

options, but one remaining possibility is to move the school to a location at the King's end of Ottery St Mary.

We have consulted with Devon County, the Diocese, our local MP and councillors about the viability of this proposal, raised awareness of this new option and started to consult at meetings with parents and the wider community to explore the potential of this move

Vision

The governors worked with the schools this year to create a shared Vision for the Otter Valley Federation (OVF) expressed as 'believing and achieving together to be the best that we can be'. This Vision, alongside the schools' values, is the bedrock which expresses our purpose and ambition.

How the Vision is to be fully realised and what it looks like for the schools, governors, pupils and parents will be a focus to take forward in 2016-17.

Strong Governance

The governors have carried out a skills audit and our RECRUITMENT is strategic, with particular skills sets in mind so that we have a balance of governors with appropriate experience and interests.

The GB will be at full strength for the start of the next academic year with the welcome arrival of Karen Davies and Martin Smith as parent governors and the recruitment of a Foundation Governor

Governors have also been active in undertaking training to update skills and to take on board the changing and expanding expectations placed on the Governing Board.

In this way we ensure that we have the knowledge and mindset to carry out our statutory responsibilities, to provide strategic leadership and that we are able to work effectively with the SLT whilst holding them to account for the progress of the schools.

The business of the GB is organised by our Annual Cycle of Business (ACB), which has been progressively clarified and updated. Each lead governor has a vital contribution to make to the successful delivery of the ACB

We commissioned a voluntary external Governance Audit which was carried out in April. The outcome was positive and validated the developing approach of the Governing Board.

Conclusion

The Governing Board had a busy and productive year. We intend to build on the changes and developments which we have addressed in 2015-16, work to ensure that our decisions in key areas make a positive difference and that we deliver high quality governance across the Board.

If you are interested in making a contribution to the community by joining our team of Governors and would like to know more about the work of the Board please contact the Chair of Governors via the office at either school.

Best wishes John Sherwood Chair of Governors