



## **Annual Governors' Statement The Winchcombe School**

September 2021

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### **1. What government requires from the Governing Board**

In accordance with the Government's requirement for all governing boards, the 3 core strategic functions of The Winchcombe School's Governing Board continue to be:

- **Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;**
- **Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and all of its pupils;**
- **Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.**

### **2. Governance arrangements**

The Governing Board was re-constituted in June 2016 and is made up of 12 governors as follows:

- two parent governors
- one governor nominated by the local authority (West Berkshire)
- one staff governor
- one headteacher
- seven co-opted governors

Co-opted governors are appointed by the Governing Board and are people who have the skills needed to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school. At the time of writing we have 6 vacancies. The full Governing Board meets six times during the academic year.

The Finance & Human Resources Committee is a sub-committee of the Governing Board which focuses on income and expenditure planning, the structure for staff performance management and pay and monitoring financial performance. The Finance & Human Resources Committee meets four times during the academic year.

### **3. Attendance record of governors**

Governor attendance at meetings is good and it has not been necessary to cancel a meeting this year because it was not 'quorate'(the number of governors needed to ensure that legal decisions can be made).

In line with Government guidance in respect of Covid 19, all Governor meetings moved to an online virtual platform between March 2020 and July 2021. Face to face meeting resumed from September 2021.

Because of Covid 19 restrictions Governors have not been able to spend as much time in the school this past academic year. However, the Chair of Governors met with the Head teacher on a weekly basis, and link governor meetings for SEND, Finance, Curriculum, Pupil Premium/Disadvantaged pupils and Health and Safety took place. The level of Governor engagement and participation has been appropriate to their Governor position in offering a strategic view of the school's progress, particularly during the challenges of the pandemic.

The working relationship between governance and the school is strong with a mutual level of respect, role awareness and critical challenge. This has been developed through honest and open communications with clear objectives and boundaries of governance. Governors are visible and approachable to all.

A list of governors and their attendance records is available on the school's website.

### **4. The work that the Governing Board has done during the past year**

In 2020/21 the Governing Board has continued to develop its own capacity and capabilities to support the school further. This has been possible while safely adhering to Covid 19 restrictions: meetings being held virtually and all visits to the school being by appointment or online.

There is a vacancy for an elected Parent Governor, however Covid 19 restrictions hindered elections. It is therefore planned to run a parent election in 2021/2022 to fill this vacancy and we are hopeful that with the new 2021/22 pupil in-take and increased publicity there will be interest in the role. We are actively recruiting co-opted governors to fill 5 vacancies and we have interest from 2 potential candidates, although the Governing Board is mindful of its obligation to appoint on the basis of appropriate skills and experience. Over the next academic year, we will be working together to develop our skills and knowledge in school governance. This, together with the experience of our longer serving governors gives us a strong and committed governing board.

In further developing the knowledge, skills and professional development of the board, governors have each taken responsibility for an area of the School Improvement Plan. This has further enriched the knowledge of governors and enabled a thoughtful and educated challenge. This transfers to appropriate critical thought, reflection and challenge from governance.

Governor reports on SEN, PPG, Safeguarding and Health and Safety are routinely provided to the governing board. The reports have clear objectives that recognise and value school progress. They also allow critical challenge that is welcomed in support of continued progression that further develops the school.

The Governing board have taken the time to meet with parents and students at school events (where possible) alongside supporting the Friends of Winchcombe. The Governing Board have further developed a visual presence to parents and welcome such contact. This will continue in the coming year with more opportunities to meet parents due to the return of school events post Covid.

The school continues to grow in popularity and now has 464 children on roll. Governors recognise that the success of The Winchcombe would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of the 84 members of the staff team led by Mr Pilsworth.

### **Ofsted**

Following inspection in November 2016 and a rating of 'Good' from Ofsted, the Governors have encouraged the school to continue to build best practice and learning outcomes. The school confidently awaits the next scheduled Ofsted inspection which is forecast in the current academic year of 2021/22.

A key group of governors have attended training in further understanding the Ofsted inspection framework which was revised in September 2019. Governors understand their governance responsibility under the inspection framework and their level of accountability.

Governors have knowledge of the School Improvement Plan and key areas the school are developing. The Governing Board understands the vision, ethos and strategic direction that is intended for The Winchcombe School.

### **Educational Performance**

The 2020/21 Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) were cancelled for a second year due to the pandemic. However, the school worked hard to

provide consistency and routine for pupils during the school closure from January to March 2021.

Governors have been impressed by the IT support provided during this period for children who have remained at home through DB Primary online learning platform and the dedication of teachers ensuring children engaged with online tasks. The Governing Board also acknowledges the valuable contribution of support staff who worked in school throughout the school closures supervising and supporting children of keyworkers and SEN pupils.

A recovery curriculum was implemented from September 2020, which has been praised by the Local Authority as a model of good practice.

During that last academic year, in consultation with the school community, The Winchcombe School motto was changed to 'Improving As One' .

The Governing Board endorses the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and is excited by the schools' emphasis on primary and secondary knowledge. Governors will be monitoring assessment of pupils in the forthcoming academic year.

## **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding children remains a primary objective of The Winchcombe School fully supported by the Governing Board. The appointed safeguarding Governor completes regular visits to the school and has an oversight of regulatory requirements such as the Single Central Record. A record of such visits is made available to the governing board termly.

The Governing Board are suitably trained in safeguarding to include advance specialisms (Prevent) and safer recruitment in schools. All governors are in receipt of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) guidance to support their professional development.

Safeguarding measures were creatively and robustly managed during the Coronavirus pandemic. This included adaptations to policies, ensuring all children were safe while home learning and additional safeguarding measures for the most vulnerable. The school was able to confidently uphold their ongoing commitment to safeguarding during the pandemic.

The school demonstrates a culture of ensuring safeguarding is transferred to daily practice within the school. The use of an online child protection system ensures accurate records are kept and shared with the appropriate agencies. There are two in-house family support

workers and a team of designated safeguarding leads comprising of the senior leadership team and family support workers.

The Governing Board remain confident that children at The Winchcombe School are safe and that safeguarding children is a commitment of the whole school.

### **Health & Safety**

The school has continued to meet its responsibility for Health and Safety. Governors ensure that routine visits are completed that assess the school's compliance to Health and Safety requirements.

During the Coronavirus pandemic the governors were able to assess the school's position in adherence to policy changes. The school demonstrated that it was able to meet DfE requirements and ensure all required guidance was upheld by the school. These measures were completed by the school in a prompt, clear and effective manner with regular communications with all parties.

The school has continued with its development plan to expand this last year with the construction of an additional building for Happy Kids Pre-School, freeing up space within The Winchcombe School. This will further provide space and opportunities for pupils and was completed in October 2020.

### **Finance**

The 2020-21 financial year has been one of the most challenging for the school. In February 2021 the Governing Board approved a series of measures to address the predicted in-year deficit. The 2021-22 budget plan was approved at the full governing meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021; there was a modest carry forward across all funds, but future forecasts are a cause for concern as in-year funding deficits are predicted. The financial constraints must be balanced against the need to deliver high quality teaching and support. The Finance & Human Resources Committee will continue to monitor the situation.

The Phoenix (out of hours) Club income was hit by the need to close the facility at the start of the coronavirus lockdown and again in January 2021. The club opened its doors on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2021 and from September 2021 numbers are picking up.

In February 2021 the school was audited by West Berkshire Council and was rated 'well- controlled'.

## **5. Future plans for the governors**

In 2021/2021 governors will focus on:

- Working collaboratively with the Head teacher and senior leadership team to ensure continued progress to maintain the school's high standards.
- Supporting the school in long term and medium-term planning and development towards the next Ofsted inspection due in 2021/2022
- Developing knowledge, skills and experience amongst our own membership to fully support the school with the 3 core strategic functions.
- Scrutiny of education performance across the whole school. This will support School Improvement Plan with a focus on educational progress and attainment for every child. Governors to have strategic oversight of the curriculum and how this is embedded in classroom learning, off site learning and home learning.
- Working with the school on budget monitoring and longer- term financial plans.
- Encourage the school to support and extend levels of physical activity for all our children and participation in school sports. This includes after school clubs and forecasted expansion of the Phoenix Club.
- Continuing internal development so that each governor is enabled to contribute with appropriate training and support. Succession planning will be part of our consideration so that as a team, we can be more resilient to changes of membership.
- Continue to ensure that the students voice is appropriately embedded in governance and that views and options of all stakeholders is routinely sought.
- Continue to ensure that Governors' are appropriately accessible and visible to all stakeholders.
- Encouragement of community and school events that bring together families and celebrate success of each student.
- Supporting the Head teacher in the recovery from the impact of Coronavirus.
- Recruit governors with the skills and enthusiasm to continue the work and commitment of the governing board.

## **6. How you can contact the Governing Board**

We always welcome suggestions, feedback and ideas from parents – please contact Clerk to the Governors, Mrs Skinner, via the school office. You can see the full list of governors; their attendance at meetings; minutes of Governing Board meetings and more information about what we do, on the [governors' page of the school website](#).

Rachel Redgwell  
 Chair of Governors  
 The Winchcombe School

