

St Michael's CE High School

Rowley Learning Campus
Curral Road
Rowley Regis
West Midlands

B65 9AN

Governance Review Date

January 2017

Overall Effectiveness of Governance

Strategic Governance
Performance Governance
Financial Governance

Governance Review Findings

Governance in St Michael's CE High School is strong.

- The quality of governance is developing rapidly, due to the work of the headteacher in many areas of leadership.
- Governors receive a great deal of high quality information.
- The quality and value of relationships between governors, senior leaders, team members, parents and pupils are strong and improving
- The school uses good quality communication methods between these groups, which has a very positive impact on school improvement.
- Governors are involved in setting the priorities for the school and maintain strong relationships between parents, pupils and members of staff.

Recommendations for Development

Governors may wish to consider:

- Improving the school's website by publishing governor profiles, governor attendance and reports and minutes of open meetings;
- Establishing an annual strategic planning, monitoring and training calendar;
- Improving the evidence which demonstrates the impact of their work in a systemic manner.

*Governance is evaluated using the descriptors **weak**, **sound**, **strong** and **very strong**.*

Overall Effectiveness

Governors operate in such a way that statutory duties are met and priorities are approved.

- 1.1 Governance in this school is generally strong; in the main this has much to do with the arrangements the headteacher has introduced to strengthen governance by improving the quality, range and depth of information which governors receive. This improvement has had a number of wide ranging consequences:
 - At the heart of governance is an open and focused relationship between governors and senior leaders;
 - Governors are increasingly equipped to make strategic decisions;
 - Questioning concerning the quality of provision and the subsequent outcomes for young people and hence the level of challenge, is increasing and improving.
- 1.2 Governors recognise that one of their tasks is to continually look at their own work in support of the school, and to fill gaps in knowledge and experience. Before the appointment of the current headteacher, governors understood that there was a lack of rigour in their oversight of education. However, the insightful way governors have been helped to meet the requirements of their roles has helped the development of monitoring, support and challenge.
- 1.3 Governors understand their statutory responsibilities, particularly in regard to safeguarding. This is accomplished in several ways. The appointment of a professional clerk has made the review of duties far less haphazard, and subsequently meetings are effective and run efficiently, as reports and information are received ahead of meetings, allowing governors time to review the data provided; governors attend meetings well prepared. Membership of training packages has given governors access to useful updates and planning governors' work over a school year has given meetings a structure and focus on improvement issues.
- 1.4 A change in the school's governance status from Voluntary Controlled to Voluntary Aided and a skills audit has resulted in some changes to the structures and membership of the governing body. Governors understand the skills and experiences needed to ensure the committee structure is focused on listening carefully to leaders, monitoring the quality of provision and ensuring that the outcomes for young people are the critical factor in any decision making. Recently appointed parent governors offer the school supportive but keen insights into the impact of policies and proposed changes to provision.
- 1.5 Governors have access to comprehensive training and support packages and in some cases learning is passed on to the whole governing body. However, governors may wish to consider focusing their training on the priorities of the school improvement plan so they are more able to take on active monitoring. Completing evaluations of training would add to the efficacy of governance and would benefit other governors.
- 1.6 Individual parents are invited into the school for a variety of reasons and pastoral work and links with other schools are strong. Governors take opportunities to visit schools when parents attend for a variety of functions. The school's website is not well developed to demonstrate the range and impact of governors' work. Governors may wish consider whether they publish governor profiles, governor attendance and reports and minutes of open meetings.

Strategic Governance

Governors ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.

- 2.1 Strategic governance is strong. The recent discussions regarding the school's status supported the governors' determination to continue the school's focus on inclusivity and the depth and breadth of this discussion affirmed many aspects of the school's provision and outlook. Governors are committed to increases in the rate of young people's progress and seeking improvements in the quality of provision. Governors have a clear and unequivocal view of their school's purpose and how this should be reflected in internal practices and external evaluations.
- 2.2 The format and accessibility of the school improvement plan and the planning process has improved and is now moving towards being strong. As governors have requested, once the improvement plan is fully costed, the plan itself will be strong and will be a very useful platform for monitoring provision and evaluating outcomes. During an observation of a full governing body meeting the headteacher gave a very good account of the changing structure of the improvement plan; it is now strategic and lends itself to the development of good corporate governance processes.
- 2.3 In an open, constructive and, what could have been perceived as a very challenging session, senior leaders gave very good accounts of the priorities that have been identified and the changes to provision which would bring about improvement to outcomes. As a result, governors' knowledge and understanding was extended and clarified. The improvement plan is the result of analyses of results, parent and pupil questionnaires and evaluations of the quality of provision. As such it has encouraged governors to identify linkages between provision and outcomes and how senior leaders intend to address issues of particular subjects, aspects of teaching and how leaders will report back to governors. It has helped define the proper differences between senior leaders' operational accountabilities and the strategic monitoring role of governors'.
- 2.4 Governors receive large of amounts of open and straightforward information; this includes subject reviews, written reports across a range of aspects and visual presentations from school leaders. Included in this data set are questionnaires and consultations carried out by the staff among the parents and pupils. This information enables governors to meet several of their responsibilities, including:
 - The identification of what parents would consider to be priorities, in terms of pastoral care and the conduct of pupils;
 - The further development of actions based on evaluations;
 - The monitoring of the improvement plan priorities;
 - Evaluations of the successes, or otherwise, of leaders' action plans based on the responsibilities of their roles.
- 2.5 A review of the school improvement plan is part of each full governing body meeting. The consequent evaluations by the current leadership team are of good quality and enhance governors' understanding. In addition, established governors visit the school and take part in monitoring activities conducted by senior leaders. The information gathered by governors in these visits, supports the conclusions reached by leaders. To further support governors' monitoring duties, governors may wish to establish an annual strategic planning and monitoring cycle which would set out the activities and the governors who would undertake these tasks.

Performance Governance

Governors contribute to the school's self-evaluation and understand its strengths and weaknesses, including the impact of their own work.

- 3.1 Governors have a good and growing understanding of how they work to support improvement in outcomes for young people. The current leadership team, under the recently appointed headteacher, provide a great deal of high quality information gathered from a variety of sources. The way the leadership team have tackled this is admirable. They display strong advocacy for what the headteacher is attempting and the deployment of senior staff to the priorities the headteacher has set, clearly demonstrate a keen focus on ramping up the gains to be made in rates of progress, standards of attainment and the quality of pupils' personal development.
- 3.2 This sense of purpose is communicated to governors most effectively in the presentations made by senior leaders to the governing body. Rather than depend on written reports, during each of the observations made, very high quality and focused presentations, brought the background, current provision and the issues facing the school to governors' attention. These presentations served several purposes including having high quality contact with senior leaders, developing an understanding of the complexities of improving provision and direct information about the 'state of the school'.
- 3.3 Governors are beginning the process of linking the quality of teaching to the standards and progress achieved by young people. This adds to the considerable drive for improvement evidenced in the observed meetings. In addition, evidence is gathered by the governors from attending marking scrutinies, task groups, the engagement of parents and the work to capture the opinions of young people. All of this adds to the store of knowledge to which governors have access and which would indicate the impact of teaching on standards.
- 3.4 Governors have a developing understanding of the school's performance and how this is measured in terms of the contributions individual members of staff make to the school's overall performance. They carry out the normal duties of performance management and understand the processes which tie good practice to outcomes for young people. Questioning in full governing body and committee meetings focusses on how provision can be improved; some of this questioning is challenging while remaining professional and balanced.
- 3.5 The governing body sets rigorous targets for the headteacher which in turn generate targets for other senior leaders and their teams. Evidence is gathered from the school's improvement adviser, discussions with members of staff and the data set provided by the school.
- 3.6 The quality of governance is improving rapidly and governors are taking opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding. However, governors may wish to consider how they demonstrate the impact of their work in a systemic manner, which matches the evidence of impact provided by senior leaders.

Financial Governance

Governors ensure solvency and probity and that the financial resources made available to the school are managed effectively, including Pupil Premium.

- 4.1 Financial governance is strong and governors use many systems and checks to ensure financial probity and the proper use of funds to support improvements in learning. This entails the school bursar, independent finance officer, senior leaders and governors working closely to plan expenditure, monitor the use of funds and evaluate the success of spending. The skills of certain governors are very useful in tracking spending and understanding the flow of funds in and out of the school.
- 4.2 The usual processes of seeking several estimates and balancing the costs expressed with the quality of provision predicted by the quotes is conducted in a thorough and capable manner. Many of the skills and experience needed for this exacting work has been developed by the governing body having to monitor expenditure and contract value within the private finance initiative, which was used to build and maintain the school. This review found evidence of the governing body and members of staff, taking unusually thorough but entirely appropriate steps to maintain a close eye on how this basic system affects the budget and working relationships within the school building. The appointment of members of staff to oversee these financial systems has ensured that other leaders are free to concentrate on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- 4.3 Governors have a good grip of the data that shows the differences between the achievement of groups of pupils. They know that a key task for the school is to decrease these differences and ensure that any finances, including Pupil Premium and other hypothecated funds, are used to improve the rate of learning of disadvantaged groups of students. Governors are supplied with data which illustrates the rates of progress compared to the rates achieved locally and nationally. In turn this data is used to prioritise spending and how interventions will be monitored and evaluated.

School details

SCHOOL CATEGORY Voluntary Aided

Chair of Governors Colin Nichols

EVIDENCE BASE

Review Plan:

Set up meeting	1.5 hours
Scrutiny of Minutes and reports	2 hours
Scrutiny of improvement plan	1 hour
Observations of meetings	4 hours
Interviews conducted	1.5 hours

Total of compiling evidence 10 hours

Review Team Brian Aldridge



GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Action required	By when	By whom	Success criteria
Improving the school’s website by publishing governor profiles, governor attendance and reports and minutes of open meetings;			Parents and other community members demonstrate greater use of the website
Establishing an annual strategic planning, monitoring and training calendar;			Calendar is established and used to plan the work of the governors
			Governor training is planned on the basis of improvement plan priorities
			Evidence of impact is improved
Improving the evidence which demonstrates the impact of governors’ work in a systemic manner;			All governors contribute in a planned and systematic manner to gathering and evaluating data
			Evaluations of training by individual governors are maintained
			Governors’ making an increasing contribution to prioritisation, monitoring and evaluation of provision and outcomes