

GOVERNANCE STATEMENT - The Free School Norwich 2018

School Vision

The school aims to: Provide a truly broad and balanced primary school education for children. Enable children to identify and develop their individual strengths and interests so that they can achieve their potential in life.

Help increase the economic well-being of children by enabling their parents to work.
The ethos and mission of The Free School Norwich is to provide 'Opportunity and Achievement for All'.

Scope of Responsibility

As Governors, we acknowledge we have overall responsibility for ensuring that The Free School Norwich has an effective and appropriate system of control, financial and otherwise. However such a system is designed to manage rather than eliminate the risk of failure to achieve business objectives, and can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss.

The Governing body has delegated the day-to-day responsibility to the Principal, as Accounting Officer, for ensuring financial controls conform with the requirements of both propriety and good financial management and in accordance with the requirements and responsibilities assigned to it in the funding agreement between The Free School Norwich and the Secretary of State for Education. They are also responsible for reporting to the Governing body any material weaknesses or breakdowns in internal control.

Governance

The information on governance included here supplements that described in the Governors' report and in the Statement of Governors' responsibilities.

The Governing body has formally met 7 times during the year. Attendance during the year at meetings of the Governing body was as follows:

Governor	Meetings attended	Out of a possible
A Skeggs (Co-opted), Chair	7	7
G Stevens (Co-opted), Vice Chair	5	7
T Sidney-Roberts (Staff)*	5	7
C Woodhouse (Co-opted)*	4	7
R Nash (Parent)	6	7
C Hodds (Co-opted)	5	7
P Langford (Co-opted)	6	7
S Sands (Staff)	3	7
D Sweet (Staff) appointed 14 Mar 2018	3	3
L Miles (Parent) appointed 16 May 2018	1	2
D Webster (Staff) resigned 14 Mar 2018	2	4
A Gurney (Parent) resigned 14 Mar 2018	2	4

* = member of Finance Committee

The Governing body has continued to develop as a team since the three new governors joined in 2017, making use of the breadth of skills they brought, and a further two governors (one Parent and one Staff) have joined since.

The governors have also been working closely with the senior leadership team to improve the school performance.

The Governing body provides a critical yet supportive network for the school. This includes analysis and challenge of the school's performance both in terms of results, ongoing monitoring of the school development and improvement plan and financial management as well as feedback from key stakeholders.

The Governing body is mindful of its own development and carries out an annual skills audit to identify any gaps as well as a self evaluation process to review performance and identify development areas. Governors are required to attend training sessions on safeguarding and are actively encouraged to attend other training

sessions to further their understanding of the education arena.

In the last twelve months, the Governing body has further developed as a strong team and has been working well together making use of the skills of each governor and meeting the needs of the school.

The Governing body has actively provided feedback on the data being provided in relation to reports and attainment results from the school. This has resulted in the production of more streamlined and focus reports and the Governing body has a much better understanding of the attainment data that is distilled from ASP and the school's own internal systems. This provides the Governing body with the ability to be able to challenge the results and get to know the story behind them. This is important within a school with such small cohorts and one or two pupils can have a significant impact on the statistics.

The Finance Committee is a sub-group of the main Governing body. Its purpose is to review and monitor the financial performance of the school. This included formal budget approval, adhering to spending of GAG, Pupil Premium and SEN funding in accordance with EfA requirements as well as ensure the spending of funds represents value for money. The finance committee has responsibility to reviews the schools finances to ensure the school is functioning in line with expectations and funds are being managed effectively in line with the schools needs that the school is fulfilling its primary function as an educator.

This function is supported by one annual external audit and two internal audits to ensure the controls and procedures within the school are effective and fit for purpose.

All annual and periodic findings are reported to the Board of Governors at each of the six Governing Body Meetings.

No particular challenges were experienced in this academic year.

The Finance Committee has formally met 6 times during the year. Attendance during the year was as follows.

Governor	Meetings attended	Out of a possible
T Sidney-Roberts - staff	5	6
C Woodhouse - governor	6	6
S Bacon - associate member	6	6

Review of Value for Money

As Accounting Officer, the Principal has responsibility for ensuring that the school delivers good value in the use of public resources. The Accounting Officer understands that value for money refers to the educational and wider societal outcomes achieved in return for the taxpayer resources received.

The Accounting Officer considers how the school's use of its resources has provided good value for money during each academic year, and reports to the Governing body where value for money can be improved, including the use of benchmarking data where appropriate. The Accounting Officer for the school has delivered improved value for money during the year by:

Improving Educational Results

The Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body ensures that funds are allocated to the most appropriate areas throughout the school with the primary focus being the continuing development of our pupils. This includes our diverse curriculum, specialist staff to support our SEN pupils as well as specialist staff in areas such as sport and music. The staff are deployed appropriately to ensure pupils are getting the best from their time and supported in all areas (with a particular focus on the differing needs of each pupil).

The school regularly reviews performance of staff and pupils to ensure it is being effective in achieving its educational aspirations. These reviews help to highlight areas that may need attention so that staffing arrangements can be revised if required to help focus on specific areas if appropriate.

Cost Effective Purchasing

The Finance and Procurement policy sets out how the school will ensure value for money. The consideration of value for money is not solely based on cost alone, consideration is also given to the quality of the service/products, reputation of the business and on-going service/guarantees for the products and/or services provide

Existing contracts with providers are reviewed either annually or when they reach the end of the term to ensure that they are still suitable for the school both in terms of quality and value for money.

Income Generation

The school continues to run its out of hours Squirrels club to support working parents. This helps to generate some additional income for the school which in turn contributes to added value expenditures the whole school benefits from.

Capacity to Handle Risk

The Governing body is continuing to update a formal risk register to enhance the existing risk process that is in use to manage the risks the school is exposed to, and has further developed the financial and compliance controls to mitigate those risks. The Governing body is of the view that the risk register provides a robust and formal process for identifying, evaluating and managing the school's risks. The risk register is reviewed regularly at Governing body meetings and is up to date for approval of the annual report and financial statements.

The Risk and Control Framework

The school's system of internal financial control is based on a framework of regular management information and administrative procedures including the segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability. In particular, it includes:

- comprehensive budgeting and monitoring systems with an annual budget and periodic financial reports which are reviewed and agreed by the Governing body;
- regular reviews by the Finance Committee of reports which indicate financial performance against the forecasts and of major purchase plans, capital works and expenditure programmes;
- setting targets to measure financial and other performance;
- clearly defined purchasing (asset purchase or capital investment) guidelines.
- delegation of authority and segregation of duties;
- identification and management of risks.

The Governing body has considered the need for a specific internal audit function and has decided to appoint Lovewell Blake LLP as internal auditor.

The internal auditor's role includes giving advice on financial matters and performing a range of checks on the school's financial systems. In particular the checks carried out in the current period included:

- review of financial planning, oversight, monitoring and management
- proper and regular use of funds
- internal control

An internal audit report is issued and is reviewed by the Finance Committee and any key findings taken to the Governing Board.

Review of Effectiveness

As Accounting Officer, the Principal has responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. During the year in question the review has been informed by:

- the work of the internal auditor;
- the work of the external auditors;
- the financial management and governance self-assessment process;
- the work of the executive managers within the school who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework.

The Accounting Officer has been advised of the implications of the result of their review of the system of internal control by the Finance Committee and a plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

Approved by order of the members of the Governing body on and signed on their behalf, by:

**A Skeggs, Chair
Governor**

**T Sidney-Roberts
Accounting Officer**