



CLARENDON GOVERNING BODY ANNUAL REPORT 2022 – 23



This document provides a brief summary of the work of the Clarendon Local Governing Body over the last school year. We are a group of volunteers, with a variety of skills and experience, who give up their time to get to know the school well and to act as a sounding board and 'critical friend' to the headteacher and senior leadership team in school. We are there to both provide support to the headteacher and his team and to ensure the quality of everything the school does and provides. We monitor this through paperwork and reports; a series of meetings to discuss all the information we receive and ask questions and above all through visits to all the school sites to see everything that is going on; to meet pupils, staff and parents and to ensure we know the school and its context well.

The board is made up of a wide range of school stakeholders including parents, teaching and support staff and co-opted governors from the wider local community all contributing their knowledge and perspectives to discussions. We all undertake training to ensure that we are properly equipped for our roles. As a group we work with the headteacher and school leadership team as well as the trustees and leaders within the wider Auriga Academy Trust and we have overall responsibility for the following areas for Clarendon:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction. Here we take into account Clarendon's own particular circumstances while remaining aligned with the priorities of the wider Trust.
- Holding the headteacher and senior leaders to account for the educational performance of the school, for the progress of its pupils and for the effective development and performance management of staff.
- Overseeing the financial performance of Clarendon and making sure its money is well spent alongside ensuring wider statutory compliance.
- Ensuring that the voices of all stakeholders are heard and taken into account.

There have been some changes in the governing body over the year with more to come as the year comes to a close. A warm welcome to Lavinia Groves who has joined us as a co-opted governor and to Zoe McGregor who is filling the support staff vacancy. Then thanks to Jane Sherlock (parent), and Keith Tysoe and Jo Dixon (co-opted governors) who are all stepping down at the end of the summer term. We are also grateful to Lindsey Patience who, with less time available to commit to the governor role, has agreed to stay on as an associate governor to provide some experience, continuity and mentoring through a time of transition. Most of the vacancies have been recruited to for September while one parent and one co-opted governor remain. The board have identified that previous school governance experience would be particularly valuable at this time. There has also been a shift in responsibilities between the Board of Trustees and the Local Governing Bodies this year. The Trust Board is taking more responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of the cross trust central functions (finance, admin, human resources, health and safety and estates) with the local governing bodies able to focus the core work of the school: education, school improvement, pastoral support and pupil experience along with staff development and wellbeing. This has been a positive development.

Full Board Meetings

There are five full board meetings over the course of the year and an additional strategy meeting in the summer term when the development priorities for both the board and the school are considered in greater detail. Papers feeding into meetings are supported by visit reports from lead governors for safeguarding and finance as well as a wider set of agreed governor visits that are largely focussed on the school development priorities to monitor their progress. These visits enable governors to ask questions of a wider range of staff as well as pupils and sometimes parents. Visits post -covid have now increased significantly in number and have included both training sessions and

learning walks around the use of Teaching Assistants, Maths and Phonics learning walks at Primary, discussions with the Life skills teaching leads at both Primary and Secondary and joining the school council sessions.

This year has seen a focus on succession planning for both the school and the Governing Body. Three Clarendon governors played an active part in the Trust appointment panel that undertook the planning, shortlisting and interviewing for the two rounds of headteacher recruitment that resulted in the appointment of Mr Dumigan as headteacher from September 2023. Then as part of the planning for changes in the governing body Kalli Selioti has shadowed the chair role through this year as preparation for taking on the role, again from September 2023. There has also been a focus on upskilling the whole governing body through training and coaching through the year, alongside the use of a fresh induction programme for new governors.

The after effects of covid were a feature in Clarendon at the beginning of the year as elsewhere and tackling these was necessarily a part of this year's school development plan. National figures showed that at the beginning of the year decreased attendance and the impact on learning of missed schooling and the well-documented effects and widespread effects of the pandemic on well-being and mental health were significantly affecting schools across the country. There was a role for the board this year in helping to stabilise the school post-pandemic and provide support as it focussed on getting back on track. There has been feedback that the regular presence of governors in school this year has been valued by staff.

For each meeting of the board there is a full report from the headteacher. Over the year governors have requested some more detailed information, particularly on behaviour and attendance to support greater understanding and deeper discussions. Alongside this a governor attended one of the meetings with the education welfare officer attached to the school to inform governors of the work that they are doing with pupils and families together with the school to support improved attendance. While attendance will continue to be a priority, levels have now returned to those pre-pandemic through a range of strategies.

There are increasing issues around staff recruitment and retention in schools and Clarendon has found this year that staff absence has continued to be high (including from ongoing Covid infections). As a result regular topics for discussion for governors have included staff development and wellbeing, although this is an issue without easy answers and will continue to be a particular focus for development for both governors and leaders in the coming year. Educational target setting and pupil progress are always a key area for discussion, and while excellent progress has been made and the majority of pupils have returned to their pre-pandemic trajectories governor also want to hear of the exceptional barriers to progress that some pupils face and the strategies that the school is using to support them.

Governors have also requested more frequent stakeholder surveys that had previously been the case and particularly to hear the pupil voice more routinely and a new programme of more regular surveys has been instituted this year with largely very positive feedback from pupils, parents and staff. Actions are being taken to address those issues, particularly around communication, which have been raised and will be monitored by governors going forward.

Finance

This year saw the evolution of the governing model for Finance, from a Finance Committee to the identification of two Governors to act as Lead Finance Governors. Their review and scrutiny of the financial performance was primarily achieved through regular review of the Management Accounts, ongoing dialogue with the Director of Finance, and subsequent wider discussions at the local governing bodies meetings. These reviews while focusing on under and overspend against planned and revised budgets, also seek to ensure sustainability of finances to support the Trust and School objectives and of major capital expenditures such as the Clarendon Primary playground refurbishment. The governors would like to highlight that the Management team have been effective in managing expenditure through a high inflationary period.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding in education is crucial and is a 'golden thread' in everything we do at Clarendon and is everyone's responsibility. Training everyone to ensure that they know how to keep children safe and what to do should they have any concerns is the first step to creating that safe environment. There are two lead governors appointed for safeguarding who work closely with the school's safeguarding leads and the head teacher to ensure that effective systems are in place and everything necessary is accurately documented and monitored, while safeguarding is an area that all governors now have training and annual updates in. The head teachers report also provides summary information to be discussed at the full governing board meetings and governors are aware that the pupils within the care of Clarendon are particularly vulnerable. One of the safeguarding governors attended the whole school safeguarding update at the beginning of the year and governors followed up on the systems to check that all staff have had training, how those missing sessions catch up, how induction through the year for new and agency staff includes safeguarding and how staff knowledge is kept up to date. There is a range of pastoral support initiatives in school for those pupils who need it monitored by governors and a need for increased access to art therapy has been identified and agreed. Also over this year the school has undertaken an accredited project in attachment awareness with coaching from an educational psychologist, training being provided to all staff and work on consistent use of emotional language and literacy across staff and pupils, with positive feedback from pupils and staff. There has also been work this year talking to pupils about feeling safe and supporting pupils to identify an adult in school who they are happy to talk to about any worries or concerns, with subsequent positive feedback in the pupil survey.

Conclusion

Once again the Clarendon commitment to knowing pupils individually and supporting their learning, wellbeing and growing independence has been exemplified by the whole staff again this year. Their exceptionally hard work has been appreciated by parents and governors alike. The celebration event at the end of term for the year 11 leavers demonstrates how much the pupils achieve through their time at Clarendon: the wonderful artwork, their evident self-confidence and readiness for their moves onto college or sixth form and particularly by their very personal contributions to the evening. This evening is always one of the highlights of the school year for governors. Similarly, the annual achievement assemblies at Primary and Secondary provide a similar uplifting celebration of the academic and social achievements of the pupils and remind us that it is the pupils for whom we give up our time.

Our ongoing commitment as a governing body is to continue to support and challenge our colleagues within school to aspire to the Clarendon aim to be a centre of excellence where all pupils are supported and encouraged to:

- Achieve their full potential in their academic, social, creative, personal, physical and moral development
- Grow in confidence and become as independent as possible
- Make a positive contribution to the school and the wider community, in which they are valued as individuals

The Clarendon Governing Body

Jo Dixon (Co – opted); Kelly Faulkner (Parent); Bharat Gopalan (Co – opted); Lavinia Groves; John Kipps (Headteacher); Zoe McGregor (Support Staff); Lindsay Patience (Co – opted); Kalli Selioti (Co – opted); Jane Sherlock (Parent); Michael Sinanan (Teacher) and Keith Tysoe (Co – opted)

Below is a summary table of the responsibilities taken on, training undertaken as well as visits and attendance for all Clarendon governors over the last year.