



# The Swanage School Governance Impact Statement 2023-24

A governing board has three core functions:

- To ensure clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction
- Challenging school leaders ensuring high educational standards for the school and its pupils, and for the effective performance management of staff
- Overseeing financial performance and making sure money is well spent

In addition, governors are responsible for overseeing and approving a programme of internal scrutiny to provide independent assurance that its financial and non-financial controls and risk management procedures are operating effectively.

## **Strategic Direction: What difference has governance made?**

- Governors supported and challenged the Headteacher and Senior Leadership in the development and delivery of innovative developments in the curriculum, improved community links and enhancement of extra-curricular opportunities, digital literacy, employability skills and aspirations for students.
- Governors approved the annual School Development Plan. They used this, and the school's Risk Register, to guide their focus during the year, ensuring that leaders reflected and reported on the progress of objectives, considered steps needed to meet the objectives over the remainder of the year. This helped leaders to maintain a focus on the "big picture" in addition to managing day-to-day operational matters.
- Governors influenced agendas and discussion at meetings to ensure that important topics were raised in a timely manner, with discussion on a wide range of school activities both underway and proposed. Governors challenged leaders to assess the impact of any strategies implemented and to explore even better ways to achieve the school's goals.
- The Chair and the Vice-Chair of Governors continued to talk regularly with the Headteacher, providing a sounding board and an "arm's length" perspective useful for reflection and planning.

## **Quality of Education and Staff Performance: What difference has governance made?**

- At the start of each year the Chair of the Student Committee works with the head teacher to agree what progress should be expected at different points during the school year on aspects of the school development plan that are overseen by the committee. The agendas for the half-termly committee meetings then include summary reports on progress on each relevant development objective at key points – usually there will be two reports on each objective over the year. As well as understanding the activities undertaken towards each objective, the committee asks for an assessment of the impact and a review of whether the initiative has been an effective use of time and money. In this way, the committee can help the leadership to determine what is worth continuing and what needs a change.
- In the first term of each year the committee reviews the plans for use of the pupil premium income to ensure that it is targeted to appropriately support disadvantaged students. The committee checks that the annual pupil premium statement is published on the school website.
- The Student Committee collectively has the skills to interpret the educational performance data provided from the DfE Compare school and college performance data, Ofsted Inspection Data Summary Reports, the FFT Aspire service and from the school's internal 4Matrix and Arbor reporting systems.
- The committee reviews educational performance data at least 3 times each year, following termly assessments and final Key Stage 4 qualification results. The committee uses this data to assess the impact of specific school policies and strategies including items in the school development plan for the current year and the effectiveness of leadership and professional development for teaching and learning.
- The Student Committee also reviews behaviour data twice during the year, and raises questions about trends and anomalies in order to understand causes and assess the impact of behaviour management strategies.
- Link governors and committee members visit the school to discuss specific areas with relevant school staff and report back or provide case-studies to the committee: for example, in relation to safeguarding, SEND, mental health, e-safety and pupil premium.
- The committee reviews policies as they come up on the calendar for renewal or earlier if a matter has arisen indicating that a policy could be improved. The committee discusses with the leadership team whether each policy is practical and whether it is achieving the desired outcomes.
- If the committee has areas of concern, then these are raised with the audit and risk committee for inclusion on the risk register, and with the Staffing, Finance and Premises committee for consideration in budget and recruitment. The student committee reviews the risk register items relating to its remit at least twice each year.

- Towards the end of each year the committee reviews the school curriculum and considers whether it is meeting the needs of the cohorts of students currently at the school. The committee discusses with the senior leadership team any areas that may require focus for the next academic year.

### **Financial Performance and Best Value: What difference has governance made?**

- Regular monitoring of budget variances, key performance indicators and cashflow ensure school finances are understood and managed proactively. A monthly finance report is produced by the Business Manager and circulated for governor scrutiny outside of regular committee meetings.
- Governor expertise and questioning have assisted in matters relating to school premises, in refining the three-year budget, in ensuring that the school benefits from available funding and in ensuring that plans are in place for the destruction of records in accordance with the data retention policy.
- Governors have ensured the school's financial procedures and policies continue to comply with rules set by the Department for Education and other bodies.
- Regular monitoring visits by the link governor for health & safety has given confidence that the school premises are safe and compliant, and that necessary remedial works are scheduled, and that the school has appropriate processes for dealing with and reviewing any accidents or near-misses.
- Governors contributed to new teacher appointments by sitting on interview panels.
- As policies came up for review, Committees considered whether they continue to have a purpose and are effective.

### **Audit, Scrutiny and Oversight: What difference has governance made?**

The Audit and Risk Committee has:

- Directed the Trust's programme of internal scrutiny
- Ensured risks are being addressed appropriately
- Reported on the adequacy of the Trust internal control framework
- Conducted ongoing review of the school's risk register thereby ensuring that risks are appropriately prioritised and actioned.
- Undertaken a review of internal and external auditor arrangements including the re-tendering of auditor's contracts.

Committees assessed how well risks on the Risk Register are being managed, reinforcing the importance of actively managing risks to reduce the likelihood and impact of an identified risk occurring.

Governors have reviewed concerns and complaints, and have convened panels to review exclusions as appropriate over the course of the year.

Details of our governance arrangements, the composition of our Board of Governors, meeting attendance and how to request minutes can be found on the [governance](#) page of our website.