

# Sheldon School

## Annual Governance Statement 2023-24

### The Board of Governors

Sheldon's Board of Governors comprises:

- seven parent governors elected by parents
- three teacher governors elected by teachers
- one staff governor elected by the non-teaching staff
- the headteacher (HT), as an ex-officio governor
- six community governors appointed by the Board
- one community governor appointed by the Local Authority (or by the Board if the Local Authority fails to make a nomination)
- up to three Associate Members appointed by the Board

In addition, the Deputy Headteachers (DHTs), School Business Manager (SBM) and Assistant Headteachers (AHTs) attend Board meetings and committee meetings.

The Full Governing Body (FGB) core roles are to:

- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Hold executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff; and
- Oversee the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

There are four governor committees: Strategy and Audit; Community and Culture; Quality of Education; and Resources. These meet up to five times each year. The FGB meets five times a year; at each meeting reports from the committees and a report from the HT and / or DHTs are presented.

Most of the governors' work takes place at committee level and is reviewed at FGB meetings. During 2023-24 we have received updates from the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Governor, the Safeguarding Governor, the Child Protection Governor, the Well-being Governor and the Pupil Premium Governor, and we have discussed a wide variety of topics including the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) inspection, the Sheldon Student Opportunity Fund, admissions, the budget and financial plans, examination results, risk management, health and safety, estates planning, and governor succession planning.

Link Governors are attached to each faculty and report back to the FGB, enabling faculty staff to share good practice and progress, and for the FGB to see the impact of their decisions. A further focus group between Heads of Faculty (HOFs) and Link Governors is planned for 2024-25 to discuss how they can work better together and support each other.

Governors are also invited to attend parent activities and forums in school for each year group and to share feedback with the FGB.

The Chair of Governors, appointed (or re-appointed) at the start of each academic year, meets with the HT at least once a month and between meetings they discuss any matters that need attention.

FGB objectives set in October 2023 were:

1. Continue to monitor emerging and on-going risks to the school's financial position.
2. Assess impact of activities aimed at supporting staff and student well-being and mental health initiatives.
3. Ensure all governors are equipped with the knowledge and awareness to respond appropriately to likely Ofsted areas of questioning.
4. Ensure all governors have the opportunity to provide inputs to the development and implementation of the Operations Strategy within the context of the School Evaluation Framework (SEF).
5. Continue to monitor progress towards achievement of SEF targets and associated risks.
6. Monitor investment in school infrastructure and consider future investment priorities.
7. Continue to pursue and record learning and development activities, including effective induction, mandatory training, experiential learning, and knowledge acquisition (through sources such as The Key and the National Governance Association (NGA)).

These were reviewed at the FGB meeting in May 2024 where it was agreed that most progress measures had been satisfactorily achieved.

The focus areas for the coming academic year will be agreed at the first full FGB meeting in October 2024.

Ahead of 2023-24, the FGB agreed to restructure the sub-committees that report to the Board. The purpose of this was to consolidate and further focus the work of the governors and to ensure a governance structure that was fit for the future and aligned better with the Leadership Team (LT) structure. This work built on a positive review of governance that was held in 2023.

Sheldon governors agreed to reduce the number of committees from five to four and to refocus the committee agendas, using the Scheme of Delegation / Decision Planner to ensure all tasks were accommodated. New committees were established:

- Strategy & Audit
- Community and Culture
- Resources
- Quality of Education

This annual governance statement reports on the operation of these new committees in 2023 –24.

## Strategy & Audit

### Role

The Strategy & Audit Committee (SAC) is chaired by a Governor other than the Chair of Governors. It comprises the Chair and Vice-chair of Governors, the Headteacher (HT), and Chairs of the Resources, Culture & Community, and Quality of Education Committees. Other members of the FGB or LT may be invited by the Chair and/or HT for specific items of discussion.

The purpose of the SAC is to monitor the school's strategic direction and the effectiveness of its business governance. SAC's role is to ensure appropriate oversight, continuous improvement and innovation, through synthesising the knowledge and expertise of the Committee Chairs, the Vice-chair and the HT. It also acts as the Audit Committee for the school, ensuring that the school is compliant, has both effective internal and external assurance in place and has oversight of Sheldon School's overarching strategic risks.

In order to achieve this, the SAC:

- Meets before each FGB meeting
- Engages periodically with the LT, including after the LT Conference, to review strategic themes with the HT
- Agrees governor involvement in formulating and monitoring the Raising Attainment Plan (RAP) and Scorecard, in consultation with LT
- Makes recommendations to the FGB to establish ad hoc teams for specific purposes e.g. a building project or preparation for Ofsted inspections
- Ensures the work being undertaken by committees, ad hoc working groups and individuals is coordinated and reported to the FGB as required
- Acts as a sounding board for the HT, providing advice, as required and appropriate, on matters of particular difficulty, sensitivity or urgency
- Considers how the school will address issues and changes nationally and locally relating to matters including staffing, funding and admissions
- Annually reviews the overall operation of the FGB to evaluate its efficiency and effectiveness and acts on feedback to ensure continuous improvement
- Annually proposes objectives for approval by the FGB
- Ensures the FGB has in place the required mechanisms and processes to enable it to fulfil the three roles of governance and its core functions effectively, as outlined in The Governance Handbook and other reference documents
- Participates in the recruitment and selection of senior members of school staff.
- Supports governance through the risk register, ensuring appropriate audit and assurance processes are in place, reviews the top risks at each meeting and brings these to the full FGB
- Oversees the process of financial reporting including receiving accounts prepared by external auditors
- Appoints internal auditors, sets priorities for internal audit and monitors action against audit reports
- Approves external and internal audit plans

- Monitors Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set by the FGB for the effective management of resources and the quality of education

During the last school year, the SAC successfully:

- Proposed FGB objectives and led a progress measurement activity which confirmed the objectives remained valid
- Agreed an internal audit programme with LT and monitored its progress, including action plans resulting from the audits
- Considered governor succession planning - this remains a work in progress and is a top risk on the cross-cutting risk register, notwithstanding the mitigations put in place
- Considered proposals for improving governor visibility
- Revised the Governors' Skills Audit and the FGB self-evaluation survey
- Monitored staff appointments, staffing issues and staffing KPIs, especially on staff absence
- Participated in the recruitment and selection of senior appointments, including the Head of Modern Foreign Languages and the School Business Manager
- Participated in the selection of the school's cleaning provider
- Reviewed all cross-cutting risks along with the individual committees' top or deteriorating risks
- Continued to discuss options for becoming part of a Multi-academy Trust (MAT)
- Reviewed admissions (including Sixth form) numbers and likely future scenarios and considered with the Local Authority (LA) an appropriate Pupil Admission Number for Year 7 in 25/26
- Reviewed budget forecasts for 24/25 and recommended to FGB what the annual budget should be.

## Community & Culture

### Role

The role of the Community and Culture Committee (CCC) is to support the FGB in ensuring that all decisions relating to school life take into account the views and experiences of its stakeholders and considering if the decisions meet the requirements of the law and are amended as legislation is introduced or changed.

The CCC ensures that there are systems in place for monitoring:

- Safeguarding, child protection and Prevent
- Wellbeing, including students, staff and governors
- Inclusion
- Attendance
- Behaviour and exclusions
- Enrichment opportunities and participation
- Communication and engagement including the Sheldon Student Opportunity Fund
- Complaints
- Policies where there is a clear link to the school community

These are monitored and evaluated in conjunction with the SEF, the RAP, Ofsted Action Plan and those policies delegated to it by the FGB.

In consultation with the Headteacher and LT the CCC:

- reviews and updates as necessary any policy which the FGB regards as within the remit of the CCC and any statutory policies, making recommendations to the FGB for approval as appropriate.
- agrees systems for monitoring, evaluating and reporting strategies to be used to inform the FGB regarding its statutory duty to ensure that Safeguarding and Child Protection is being robustly monitored and compliantly implemented throughout the school.
- arranges for one member of the FGB to have specific responsibility for overseeing the school's Safeguarding, Child Protection, Safer Recruitment practices and Single Central Record (SCR) arrangements (Ofsted and the DfE have recently clarified that, although governors are responsible for ensuring that safeguarding procedures are adequately followed in schools, this does not require their direct involvement in reviewing the school's SCR).
- monitors those aspects of the Ofsted Action Plan and SEF which fall within the remit of the CCC.
- assesses the impact on the well-being of students and staff from all decisions made. Reviews evidence from staff well-being surveys, student voice, exit surveys and student reasons for departure data to identify trends and direct appropriate challenge. Appoints a well-being link governor to meet regularly with the LT.
- assesses the impact on well-being and mental health of students, staff and parent/carers from the implementation of policies such as behaviour and anti-bullying. Ensures appropriate stakeholder engagement and feedback prior to review and implementation.
- monitors behaviour strategies to ensure that they are designed to maximise

educational outcomes for all pupils.

- monitors the school approach to inclusion ensuring compliance with current legislation, creating a culture where every child is able to fulfil their full potential and focusing on improving the lives of our most vulnerable students.
- monitors attendance data and associated actions to achieve and sustain improved attendance for all pupils.
- recommends to the FGB the school's policy for uniform whilst considering an accessible, affordable and inclusive approach.
- monitors impact of curriculum on pupils' outcomes and their personal development, behaviour and welfare, in conjunction with the Quality of Education Committee.
- focuses on pupils' confidence and self-assurance as learners and their pride in achievement in conjunction with the Quality of Education Committee.
- establishes links with the local community and businesses.

### **CCC objectives achieved in 2023-24**

To cultivate a learning environment that allows all students to fulfil their full potential by being 'The Best You'. To improve behaviour and low-level disruption to allow teachers to teach.

To acknowledge the duty of care to safeguard, protect and promote the welfare of all students and a commitment to ensure all safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities and government guidance and complies with best practice. To ensure all staff and governors are appropriately trained and empowered to support this process.

To ensure the impact on the well-being and mental health of all the school community is considered with every decision made.

To achieve and sustain improved attendance for all pupils, but particularly disadvantaged students, with an aspirational target of 95%. Reduce the numbers of pupils with persistent absence annually.

Create an inclusive education culture by removing all barriers, with the goal of ensuring children from all backgrounds and abilities can learn together. Also creating a culture where all staff feel included and supported.

Raise awareness of Sheldon School amongst its stakeholders and where the school is viewed positively. Increased social media presence. Manage and protect the reputation of Sheldon School.

## Resources Committee

### Role

The role of the Resources Committee (RC) is to support the FGB in ensuring that appropriate standards of internal financial control and administration are adhered to, as set out in the Companies Act 2006, by OFSTED and the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in its Academy Trust Handbook and Letter to Accounting Officers. The RC should ensure that there is a robust system in place for monitoring the progress of expenditure and income during the year which enables the RC to act in good time to prevent budgetary difficulties. The RC also ensures there are plans in place for the development, maintenance, and security of the school's estate, as well as the delivery of support services by external contractors.

The RC directs and monitors the management of the school's finances and estates, and, in consultation with the Head:

- Makes financial plans (including the agreeing the initial draft annual budget and its presentation to the SAC and then FGB)
- Determines broad financial priorities and ensures 'best value' is achieved in the use of Sheldon School funds
- Ensures the soundness of policies and systems for recording and managing expenditure, income (including earned or voluntary income) and assets
- Monitors and, as necessary, agrees adjustments to the progress of budgeted income and expenditure.
- Leads on the development of the school's Operations strategy and monitors the wider programme of implementation.
- Monitors the condition of and strategic plans for the development and maintenance of the school buildings and grounds.
- Monitors the resilience and security of the School's IT infrastructure and data protection
- Oversees Health & Safety policy and monitors Health & Safety practice in the school
- Oversees resources risk strategy, identifies, monitors and mitigates risks
- Ensures adequate business continuity plans and critical incident procedures are in place
- Monitors action against audit reports affecting school finances or estates.
- Ensures the school has adequate insurances in place.

## **Objectives for 2023 – 2024**

Our objectives in 2023-4 were:

- To ensure that the RC has clear Terms of Reference and a set of reports which support strategic decision making and to ensure effective Committee operation
- To finalise and oversee the implementation of the Sheldon School Operations Strategy
- To continue to work towards a balanced budget for the school
- To ensure that resources risks are identified, monitored and mitigated
- To assure ourselves that Sheldon is compliant in terms of all our statutory reporting requirements
- To consider the move towards becoming a zero-carbon school in all decisions
- To monitor the resilience of our IT infrastructure
- To ensure Sheldon's major contracts are delivering high quality and public good to the school

## **Achievements in 2023-24**

The Committee reviewed its objectives in July 2024 to determine how well it had achieved them in the year. We agreed that we had effectively established the new RC with a clear set of objectives and Terms of Reference.

We have received a wide-ranging set of reports throughout the year including:

- Management Accounts to enable us to track School income and expenditure
- Updates to the Resources Risk Register
- Regular reports from the School Business Manager covering a wide range of financial and premises issues
- Special reports on IT resilience and assurance, health and safety and analysis of the condition of our premises

Sheldon's Operations Strategy was reviewed in the year and revisions are expected to be made in the coming year to ensure the alignment of this strategy with Sheldon's wider School Development Plan.

We are yet to finalise our report and accounts for 2023 - 2024, but we believe we have met our objective of returning a balanced budget for the year. We have regularly monitored and adjusted our Resources risks, identifying additional steps we can take to reduce the likelihood and impact of risks, identifying new risks and retiring risks where they are no longer appropriate.



Sheldon made all its statutory and non-statutory returns in 2023-4, often ahead of deadline including our Annual Accounts to ESFA and Companies House.

We discussed the prospects for adopting more carbon neutral technology when replacing school boilers that had failed and agreed to the leasing of the Sheldon roof for the purpose of installing solar panels. Generation of electricity from these panels now offsets Sheldon's energy usage.

We received and reviewed reports from Sheldon's IT Network Manager in relation to our IT resilience and invested in further measures to secure our network from cyber-attack.

We reviewed our major contracts and re-tendered Sheldon's School's cleaning contract. Governors were part of the panel which oversaw the bids and selected the new contractors.

In addition, Resources governors were part of the recruitment and selection process of our new School Business Manager who joined Sheldon in Term 5.

### **Objectives for 2024-25**

The RC has not yet set its objectives for 2024-25. We will determine the committee's focus at the first meeting of the academic year. However, many of the themes of 2023-24 are likely to continue as a focus for our work.

## **Quality of Education Committee (QofE)**

### **Role**

The QofE committee supports the FGB in ensuring the curriculum offered is broad and balanced, good progress is made by pupils from all groups and at all stages, and that emotional wellbeing and pupil destinations are monitored. The committee ensures that all aspects of the curriculum meet the requirements of the law and are amended as legislation is introduced or changed. The committee ensures there are systems in place for monitoring pupil progress and the curriculum.

This includes:

- Reviewing and updating the curriculum policy for the school
- Agreeing systems for monitoring, evaluation and reporting strategies to ensure that the National Curriculum is being followed throughout the school
- Considering strategies to offset any proposed changes to spending on curriculum and monitor impact of results and well-being
- Monitoring aspects of the Ofsted Action Plan which fall within the committee's remit
- Reviewing and updating appropriate policies which fall within the remit of the QofE
- Requesting information on teaching strategies employed and resources used, learning environments provided and learning initiatives adopted to ensure that pupils have equal access to a high standard of education
- Monitoring Teaching and Learning (T&L) strategies and Teach Like A Champion (TLAC) toolkit to ensure that they are designed to lead to good educational outcomes for all pupils
- Arranging for one member of the committee to have specific responsibility for overseeing the school's provision for children with SEND
- Recommending the school's policy for providing sex education for pupils, having due regard to moral considerations and family life
- Monitoring impact of curriculum on pupils' outcomes and their personal development and behaviour and welfare, in conjunction with Culture and Community Committee
- Focusing on pupils' confidence and self-assurance as learners and their pride in achievement, in conjunction with Culture and Community Committee
- Maintaining an overview of destination of leavers
- Establishing and embedding a whole school approach to disciplinary literacy.
- Ensuring a model is in place to measure the impact of literacy targets across the school

### **Objectives for 2023/24**

- Increasing student engagement and progress through inclusive, in-class, quality first teaching

- To deliver an ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils
- To ensure students, particularly disadvantaged pupils, are given the opportunity to achieve the best possible academic outcomes
- Monitoring and reviewing curriculum KPIs which include closing the disadvantaged pupil gap, improving Progress 8 and attainment scores, and raising academic outcomes at GCSE and 'A' level

### **Achievements in 2023/24**

- The key focus for T&L in 2023-24 has been on Inclusive Classrooms to ensure that all students have access to learning in lessons, that they belong to the Sheldon Community and to ensure that the needs of all students are known and supported in class by their teachers to make expected levels of progress. After OFSTED's visit in March 2024, some improvements were identified which focused on more consistency in lessons. However, many changes had been made from the previous OFSTED visit in December 2022 which are now embedded in the school and contributed to a 'Good' outcome. The implementation of the new Homework policy and emphasis on T&L (TLAC) have been well received. Further initiatives have been put in place which include 'Step Lab' – a way of recording best practice in the classroom
- The presentation of Head of Faculty reports in conjunction with 'Whole Child' descriptions from each year group. These provided all governors with a greater understanding of subject level plans, progress and development of pupils as they progress through the school. The structure of Link Governor reports has been modified and standardised to improve the useful insights they provide alongside these reports.
- There has been a continual focus on the benefits of the school's curriculum and provision on disadvantaged pupils, monitored through the (revised) Pupil Premium strategy. We will ensure that that this group is continually monitored next year with appropriate interventions in place.
- Presentations were received from a number of faculties including SEND as well as T&L, looking in detail at their curriculum and how it is delivered. This was reviewed in conjunction with faculty wide School Improvement Plans.
- We have maintained a risk register with regular discussion of and adjustment of the risks around curriculum. High risk scenarios are regularly reviewed. While the actions taken by school leaders this year have lessened the likelihood of these risks, there are some external considerations such as government policy which have impacts on our budgeting, which we cannot control. We will continue to monitor risks closely.

### **Objectives for 2024/25**

The committee will determine its focus at the first meeting of the new academic year. As well as performance data, this will include scrutiny throughout the year on

disadvantaged and less able pupils, with close attention on the Pupil Premium Strategy, SEND pupils as well as attainment. We will also be concentrating on literacy and how this is measured throughout the school.

We will continue to focus on Faculty presentations, Whole Child, and Link Governor reports and align the Committee objectives to the school Scorecard.

## SEND Governor

The Board of Governors has legal duties in relation to pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). According to the [Governance Handbook](#) the functions these duties require can be delegated to a committee, an individual Governor or to the Headteacher; although the responsibility is still with the FGB itself to ensure that the functions are carried out. It should decide, with the Headteacher, the school's general policy and approach to meeting pupils' SEND.

At Sheldon, the SEND Governor, as a member of the Quality of Education Committee, assists the Governors to fulfil their legal duties under the Children and Families Act 2014, School Admissions Code and the Equality Act 2010.

The SEND Governor helps ensure that the FGB has regard to the [Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#) and that [information](#) is published on the school's website about the implementation of the Board of Governors' policy for pupils with SEND.

The SEND Governor's principal function is to keep the Governors informed about the way the school manages its provision for pupils with SEND and ensure that the Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities by:

- Familiarising themselves with relevant documents and legislation, including relevant school policies
- Meeting regularly with the SENCO to become better informed about the assessment of special needs, the numbers of pupils with SEND, provision made, staffing and funding levels, how pupils access the curriculum and SEND priorities in the SEF
- Making visits to the school to see what pupils need, what resources are available for SEND pupils and how teaching methods work
- Advising on any FGB decisions which have implications for SEND pupils
- Overseeing the implementation of the [SEND Policy](#) and [Equalities Policy](#) •
- Attending INSET days and Governor training courses relating to SEND
- Reporting regularly to the FGB.