

# Longwill School Governance Statement: 2022– 2023

## Governing Board Functions and Structure

School Governors are required to ensure a clear vision and strategic direction for the work of the school; to hold the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; to oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well-spent.

Governors meet five times a year to discuss these matters, to approve school policies and the school budget. Committees usually meet at least three times a year each to discuss the finances, the curriculum, the staffing, the buildings and any health and safety matters. If necessary additional meetings are scheduled.

We have 3 committees, these are

- Finance, Staffing, Pay and Premises
- Curriculum, Community and Progress
- Head teachers Performance Management

## Core Governing Body Functions

### Ensuring a Clear Vision and Strategic Direction

The governors are confident that the Headteacher has continued to lead the school extremely well. At the start of this year, we were all still recovering from the disruption of the previous 2 years caused by the pandemic, however as the year has progressed things have continued to return to normal.

During the Autumn term the school was visited by Ofsted for a Section 5 Inspection. This was a gruelling experience for everyone but the end result was phenomenal, and fully well deserved. Longwill was graded as 'Outstanding'. Having previously been graded 'Good'. The Ofsted report is a delight to read and really proves what a great school we have.

“The commitment to ensuring that every child is proud to be deaf lies at the core of this fantastic school” Ofsted November 2022

The governors are extremely proud of everyone who has been involved in the success of Longwill Primary School for Deaf Children this past year and we are all looking forward to a positive future.

## Holding the Head Teacher to Account for the Educational Performance of the School

### Teaching and Learning – including Curriculum, Assessment and Pupil Progress

This year, governors have had presentations on a wide and varied selection of themes including:

- Pupil Progress
- Personal Development
- Pupil Premium Strategy
- Computing Curriculum – including online and cyber security
- Attendance

These presentations have given Governors a wealth of information on the work of the school and the rich learning environment it provides for the pupils. Governors have had the opportunity to ask questions and seek more information if they have deemed it necessary.

Governors are aware of the increased focus on attendance since the end of the pandemic and this is discussed and remains a regular focus at our meetings.

There is a strong commitment throughout the school to the Connected Curriculum offer which is adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. The curriculum was also praised during the Ofsted inspection.

Longwill has been awarded Arts Mark Silver this year and has also retained its Basic Skills Quality Mark award.

### Progress and Attainment

There continues to be a focus on pupil progress particularly in Reading, Writing, Maths and Science, along with a strong focus on Language development and the fact that every lesson is a language lesson. The Governors receive reports on pupil progress at least annually, the board have also seen samples of pupils' work showing progress they have made.

The board receive detailed plans for the spending of Pupil Premium and Sports Premium.

In our final meeting of the school year, we received the headline data from all year groups as well as the results where pupils had been entered for statutory tests. This was very positive and informative.

## **Holding the Headteacher to account for the Safety and Wellbeing of the Pupils**

The safety and well-being of pupils as always is a consistent thread throughout the year, all governors have read KCSIE and have completed Safeguarding training. Governors have also completed Prevent training.

The Governor with Safeguarding resets regularly with the DSL and reports to the full board on how well the school implements its safeguarding procedures. The SCR is checked annually by the LA and regularly by SLT to ensure compliance.

Governors receive regular reports from the Head Teacher on developments within the school. These include information on:

- Attendance
- Safeguarding Data

Attendance at Longwill has always been excellent, and although it was affected during the pandemic it has now recovered well this year. This is thanks to the good relationships the school builds with families and also the children want to come to school. Attendance at the end of the school year was 89.9%, which although higher than the Special School average we hope to see this percentage improving during the next school year. We also will continue to support the school in lowering the persistent absence which currently stands at 34%. Any child not in school is kept in touch with via the safeguarding team.

The Head teacher reports on safeguarding and attendance at each Full Governors meeting.

There continues to be a focus on well-being and this is part of the ethos of Longwill school. This focus extends not only to the pupils but also to the staff and more recently the Governing body. The school is very proactive in this area and has taken advantage of any training opportunities in this area which have been offered for example the introduction of Mental Health First aiders and the Head teacher has also completed the Leaders Mental Health training. More recently myself and the Vice Chair of Governors have attended presentations on supporting Mental health for staff, pupil's and Governors.

## **Overseeing the Financial Performance of the School and ensuring money is well spent.**

The Finance, Staffing, Pay and Premises Committee meet 3 times each year. At each meeting the budget monitoring report is presented by the School Business Manager and is scrutinized by governors.

This has been a challenging year for the school due to the introduction by the Local Authority of the new ORACLE system. This has been nothing short of a disaster and has made all areas of finance and much of HR extremely difficult. Huge credit must go to the senior team and the Business manager for their resilience when dealing with the challenges this has thrown at them.

Despite the problems this new system has caused the school ended the financial year 22-23 with a small in year surplus. This has been due to the diligence of the management team supported by the Finance committee.

The budget for this year is once again extremely tight but we were able to set a balanced budget.

The budget at Longwill is always affected by the number of pupils, this can vary greatly from year to year and there is always a balance to be made by ensuring that the staff numbers which are a key asset are sufficient to ensure the outstanding quality of education is continued.

Health and safety has continued to be a priority, during the course of the year the Governors have received copies of several reports about the condition of the building. This has been a cause for concern and there have been several meetings with the local Authority in order to get a coordinated response.

We are now very hopeful of improving the accessibility of the building, including the provision of a new lift for our wheel chair users as well as new toilets in the primary department. We are fairly confident other works will follow including necessary work on the school roof.

This year Evac chairs have been purchased and staff have had the relevant training to ensure that these can be used appropriately if necessary.

The school have appointed a new building services manager who has completed his mandatory training and is proving a great asset to the school.

## **Birmingham Special Schools Cooperative Trust**

The Special Schools Cooperative has now been in existence for 5 years and continues to go from strength to strength. Longwill School has been part of the cooperative since the beginning.

Two of our Governors are Foundation Governor appointed by the Cooperative. The Chair of Governors also sits on the Board of Trustees for the Cooperative and attends a meeting of BSSCT each term.

This year the Trust has developed a termly newsletter detailing its work this has been sent to all schools who are part of the group, and has been very well received. It is extremely informative and ensures that Governing boards have the information they need with reference to the work of the Trust.

There continues to be a focus on training across the 8 schools within the trust and this year has seen the introduction of the Peer Review process which Head teachers of the Trust schools have valued.

The pupils in the trust schools have been taking part in arts projects which has culminated in and week-long exhibition at the MAC. This “Common Ground Arts Project” has been fantastic in enabling the pupils to benefit from additional funding to work alongside specialists to improve specific areas of the arts which the schools identified as requiring development – in the case of Longwill the chosen area of the curriculum was digital art and filming. The results were phenomenal and really showcased our fabulous school and its pupils. Clips can be seen on the school website or on the Common Ground Arts website.

## **Governor Training**

We believe that as a board of Governors that it is important to continue develop our skills and understanding of school related issues. During the past year most, Governors have attended virtual training provided by the LA. This is funded by school. All new governors are expected to complete the LA Induction training as soon as possible following appointment to the board. A log is kept of this training.

The board also held an additional away day meeting during the summer term which focussed on the journey of a child at Longwill through the eyes of the parent. This was not only very moving but also gave Governors a greater awareness of some of the difficulties families have very negotiating the education and Health systems.

The chair of Governors has attended the termly briefings provided by the local authority during the summer term the Chair and Vice Chair attended a half day training on Mental Health and well-being.

## **Succession Planning for Governing Body**

All Governors complete the Skills Audit document annually. When vacancies occur on the board this document ensure we can look for people with the skills to fill any identified gaps.

We have been extremely fortunate to be able to fill any vacancies on the board by people who have the skills and attributes we require. We are however now requiring new parent governors. We are sure we will be able to fill these vacancies in September 2023.

## **Governors School Visits**

All governors are welcome to visit school at any time are encouraged to make planned class visits. We believe that these visits provide important information about the outcomes of the school’s work.

The whole board have had a tour of the school to see the fabulous work which takes place and to view the changing display boards. All our meetings this year have been face to face which we believe makes for more productive meetings and more detailed discussions.

The Finance committee have also toured the school to gain a deeper insight into the difficulties with the building and especially it's accessibility. Governors analyse their observations for further understanding of current good practice, as well as the challenges for the school.