

Governors Accountability Statement March 2018

As a governing board we are now required annually to publish details of some of the activities of the Governing Board and how it has affected the students at Sir James Smith's School

LGBTQ group known as Unite!

Staff and students at school have set up a LGBTQ group in school. This has been done to respond to Schools Transgender Guidance written in collaboration with The Intercom Trust, Devon & Cornwall Police, Cornwall Council and Head Teachers. The guidance is specifically aimed at supporting Transgender pupils and students. Actions so far have been:

- To raise staff awareness through whole school training
- To identify staff lead
- To work with key students to set up LGBTQ group in school
- To access support and advice through Intercom Trust
- To identify resources for school library.

The impact on students has been to provide them with a forum for discussion of LGBTQ issues. The support provided by the group, called 'Unite!' and Intercom Trust has enabled a number of students to feel able to attend the meetings which are held in the school library at lunch times. Students have commented how it would be impossible in a rural area to achieve the same level of support outside school. This work has helped to make all students more welcoming and tolerant and reduced the number of homophobic, racist or other incidents to an almost non-existent level.

Link Governor Programme

The LG programme is the main mechanism for getting governors into school to meet both staff and students. The structured visits provide this purpose. The Link Governor scheme continues to be refined to make the process smarter for the users and more useful for all participants. In the last year, we have reviewed the Link Governor scheme again, especially the LG3 questions. These are structured conversations with Subject Leaders; the questions will be based on amended Subject Self Evaluation. The completed LG3 pro forma informs SLT planning and is shared with Subject Leaders as it allows comparisons across subjects. The focus has been to make sure the information that has been gathered is used by governors to better inform them of the strengths and challenges of each subject area.

The impact on students has been to involve them (15% of students are involved) directly in the running of the school by gathering their views on the quality of provision and teaching and learning across the school, ensuring SLT are aware of these views and then following up action where appropriate. This is empowering for students.

School Development Plan

The SDP sets down the key school improvement priorities. The adoption of Ofsted Section 5 inspection headings proved to be most useful and has encouraged all governors to focus on what matters most and not be diverted by peripheral issues. The Headteacher will no longer be expected to produce a massive document to support the school's key improvement priorities. This means more of his time can be spent monitoring and evaluating what is actually happening on the ground.

The termly review has continued to be refined so that governors can quickly establish the schools' status with regard to the actions taken to meet SDP priorities. The Chairs Group is able to review progress to date and ask for further clarification and/ information – this has proved to be useful in ensuring all governors can easily locate the information on-line at any time. Understanding of SDP priorities has improved in line with better access.

The layout of the document has been amended for the 2017 SDP to include focussed success criteria and an overall conclusion as to whether each individual action has been achieved or not. This will make it easier to plan for 2018.

The impact on students is less tangible because this is a strategic document. However, all the key priorities are intended to improve their school experience, raise standards and lead to improved outcomes for all.

Staffing and recruitment

Governors have acknowledged that recruitment is problematic with most adverts attracting few and in some cases no suitable applicants. Despite this governors have insisted standards will not drop. The school will continue to advertise nationally. Salary levels should not be decisive when choosing a candidate. All permanent posts will be advertised to attract the brightest and the best candidates and if in doubt the school will not appoint. Where the appointment process has run twice and the field of candidates is still 'thin' the successful candidate is likely to be offered a temporary contract. Governors know and understand that securing and maintaining high quality teaching is their utmost priority.

The school has started to use Facebook and Twitter to access specific groups of subject specialists. There is a Twitter community for mathematicians which many schools use to successfully 'advertise' vacancies. These social media platforms are still largely embryonic and are not yet able to replace traditional media outlets such as TES, TESOnline and E-Teach.

The impact on students is that they will have the best teachers which will result in improved outcomes. Students are involved in all staff recruitment and their views are included and valued in the recruitment process. Recent appointments have yielded some excellent candidates and the improvement in school results has led to SJS attracting more high quality applications.

Headteachers Report

This continues to be improved. The most recent change has seen reports from Subject Leader and Year Director changed to provide more information on progress and the impact of any intervention programmes. The traditional prose style format has been largely replaced with a shorter and more

focused succinct report based on data. This makes it quicker to read and better informs governors. The Headteachers' Report now concentrates on Subject Leaders' comment on progress of sub-groups.

The impact on students is less tangible because this is a termly strategic document designed to enable governors to monitor school 'activity' in-year. However, all the key actions are intended to improve their school experience, raise standards and lead to improved outcomes for all. The better use of data allows more focussed intervention especially in KS3; prior to this much of the reporting was historical based on GCSE results.

Data

Governors improved understanding of progress data and the system that creates it, has meant they have been able to ask the SLT to change the frequency of whole school data collection by creating one more data point during the year. This will enable governors to view student progress every 8-10 weeks and ask questions about the effectiveness of intervention. As a result of the extra data point, the SLT has decided to introduce a mid-year academic review day for all students.

The other big change has been the introduction of the on line SIMS Learning Gateway system that has encouraged greater parental engagement by providing real-time information about attendance, behaviour, assessment and homework. Governors are now satisfied that parents are better informed than ever before.

Governors questioning of links between student progress data and rewards has led to several new initiatives to recognise and reward more students for consistent performance. It is important that not just the very able or very talented are rewarded.

Governors have also made sure that teachers' use the data systems objectively to identify any student whose academic data (actual performance in terms of progress being made and attainment reached) is not supported by attitudinal data (HERBs). This means individual students cannot 'fall through the net' just because they are polite and plausible but in fact are underperforming.

The impact on students has allowed the school to devise new rewards for consistent performance and not just for the very academic or very sporty. Students have reported how their parents are now logging onto the Learning Gateway to check on their progress and homework. Governors have questioned the correlation between HERBS and YARG to ensure that reporting on progress and behaviour to students and their parents / carers is consistent and understandable to enable students and their parents / carers understand what they need to do to make best progress throughout their time at SJS.

Professional management and performance related pay

Governors have been very clear about the need to have regular (redacted) updates on the outcomes of performance management lesson observations to help gauge the quality of teaching and learning and the extent to which staff are meeting professional standards. Where staff have not met PM objectives progress up the pay scale has not been accepted; this affected three teachers during the 2015 pay review.

The impact on students is to keep the issue of consistently high quality teaching and learning at the top of the school's list of priorities. This will reduce in-school variation. Governors are confident that improvements to T&L are happening in those areas lagging behind the best.

Finance

The proposed introduction by Government of Fair Funding has not produced the expected results; reduced financing will impose extra strains on the budget. Governors have contacted the local MP and parents explaining their concerns and its effect on the school. Will impact on non-teaching staff, and may require further reduction in admin staff and teaching support staff. The Subject Leader in DT has written to parents asking for payments for materials if they want to keep items made by their children. Other Subject Leaders are considering asking parents for extra funding.

Acting in unison with schools across Cornwall and elsewhere, Governors drafted a letter to the local MP in February and have sent letters to parents. A second letter to the MP was sent in March; this letter is the result of collaboration between governors in Cornwall and West Sussex.

The impact on students will be noticeable but Governors work will try to minimise this. Governors (through the Staffing and Finance Committee) have concentrated on setting up systems to monitor UPR contributions by staff to ensure maximum benefit to students and to give students more opportunities in and out of school. The decision to change the Pay Policy to allow withdrawal of UPR in some circumstances will reduce the pressure on some staff to do this extra work and improve their well-being and perform to their best in the classroom.

Year Directors

Governors invited YDs for a second follow-up report on the move to year groups. In particular they wanted to know how the move has been accepted by staff and students and whether the change has had any impact on students' progress and attendance. The evidence provided by the YDs, gathered through questionnaires, shows staff and students feel the move has been very successful. One significant advantage has been improved communication with no complaints from students that their tutor had forgotten to pass on important notices; that used to be a regular complaint! It has been suggested that an increase in the uptake of the DoE Award Scheme this school year is a result of improved and consistent well targeted communication.

The impact on students has been marked with the vast majority indicating they feel better informed and better supported at key transition points. Students say Year Directors and tutors are more knowledgeable about year specific matters. There has also been an improvement to the tutorial programme of study. Student Council is now working much better which allows Student Voice to be more effective in the school.

Middle managers

Governors have been keen to invest in middle managers as part of their commitment to leadership succession. To see the 'fruits' of this investment, key middle managers engaged with NPQSL courses have been asked to attend Full Governors' meetings to share their action research. So far this year governors have heard about boys' engagement (YD9) and FSM (YD10).

The impact on students has been largely focused on those involved in the projects. There has been improved attendance and fewer behaviour incidents amongst the participants.

Staff welfare and representation

Governors have recognised the immense pressure all staff are under especially at a time of increasing austerity and associated cut backs and redundancies. Governors have been pleased to support the establishment of a Staff Welfare Group. To increase staff confidence during these uncertain times, governors have encouraged a member of the teaching staff to join the governors alongside a member of the support staff. Governors are acutely aware of the sensitivities around workload and have been keen to show their appreciation of what staff are doing where that is appropriate.

Students will benefit from highly motivated staff, supported by senior leaders who allow staff to focus on T&L and not get diverted by less important time-wasting peripheral activity that fails to impact on raising standards.

Multi-academy trusts

Governors have previously discussed these issues and directed the Senior Leadership Team to investigate the changing options for SJS with a view to making a decision on the preferred option by June 2017 at the latest. Recent developments mean that the decision may need to be made sooner. Once plans are clearer students and other stakeholders will be involved in the consultation. Governors have worked hard to ensure they keep ahead of the curve. The HT was asked to produce a briefing paper for governors drawing attention to the things governors should be thinking about when considering MAT partnerships and in particular the delegation of authority and associated level of accountability.

Students will be involved in the consultation. One of the potential benefits will be better cross-phase transition allowing secondary staff to build on strengths and plug gaps in key subject areas. Governors are working to ensure that the future of SJS and our partner primary schools is decided locally in the best interests of the students and not by outside bodies.

Governors' self-evaluation audit for training purposes

Governors are aware that the educational landscape is ever changing and that new 'expectations' require specialist training. Using a skills audit governors have been asked to determine their 'confidence' when dealing with complex issues such as CSE, FGM, and the Prevent Duties as well as wider school matters such as key performance indicators. The outcomes will determine future training for governors. This is in addition to the wide range of training already completed.

Students will benefit from attending a school where governors and staff are acutely aware of wider societal pressures. The top priority for all adults is keeping all students safe.