



Governor impact report 2021/2022

Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre's governing body helps provide strategic direction, accountability, and an independent oversight of the management and operation of the Centre. The Governing Body also makes sure that money is well spent, the website is compliant, the quality of our services is maintained and improved, standards are raised and that the children, parents and carers using our Centre are happy, safe and make good progress in all their endeavours.

To achieve this aim, the Governing Body must continually evaluate the role it has played within the life of the Centre and its impact on Centre improvement. This report is part of that evaluation.

Centre Development Plan

Governors have worked with the Head Teacher and senior leadership team to monitor the Centre Development Plan for this school year and make sure that the priorities set have been met as far as possible, given the continuing disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each of the two sub committees (Children & Learning and Resources & Staffing) have linked their monitoring visits to the plan to make sure we see the changes in action and report back effectively to the Full Governing Body. Governor visits are now recorded against each plan priority to ensure we are monitoring effectively.

Governor recruitment

Clair Taylor, our Chair of Resources and Staffing Committee, stepped down from her role in December. Chris Slator, who had been an associate governor on the Children and Learning committee, ended her term in July and also stepped down. Both governors had contributed to the Governing Body for several years, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank them both for their service and commitment to the Centre.

As a result, Andy Bagwell became the new Chair of Resources & Staffing and we recruited two new governors onto the team. Lauren Thomas was co-opted into the Resources & Staffing committee. Lauren has experience in corporate philanthropy and managing both charity partnerships and employee volunteering programmes. Steph Hasler, who has a primary school teaching background, joined as an associate governor for the Children & Learning committee.

Both Lauren and Steph are also parents of children at the nursery, which strengthens the Governing Body's view of the parent perspective. It is particularly important for a nursery school to have current parents on the Governing Body as children are only with us for a few years as opposed to the seven years spent at primary and secondary schools.

Governor visits

As covid restrictions lifted, governor visits returned to a mixture of face-to-face and Zoom meetings this year. Being able to get back into the Centre, meet staff, children and families and view the practices is invaluable and enabled the Governing Body to monitor progress more effectively.

Each visit focused on specific Centre Development Plan priorities, helping the Governing Body to provide improved support and challenge. Governors also made more informal visits, for example, staff inset days, Christmas lunch, sports day, and other social events, to meet staff and parents in a more relaxed environment and show our support for a range of activities.

Visit themes this year included SEN provision, staff well-being, our Froebel approach, condition of premises, and communication and language. Visits were also conducted across all sites: Hazel Avenue, York Road, and The Spinney.

Safeguarding visits were conducted each term and in great detail to better inform the Governing Body. The NSPCC Governor Safeguarding audit was also undertaken. We are confident that it is a very high priority for all members of staff and good practice is in place. Health & safety visits were also termly, with a focus on emergency drills.

In part due to covid, our contact with parents/carers has been somewhat limited again this year but is hoped that the Governing Body will be able to meet more parents in 2022-2023.

Staff recruitment

The governing body has kept on top of safeguarding requirements for recruitment – for example the use of online searches of social media for potential hires.

Governors were directly involved in the recruitment of a teacher and family support worker.

Policies

There is now a rolling schedule of policies for review at appropriate times of the year, to make sure that all policies are kept up to date. Each committee has reviewed said policies, signing off most and challenging those that need further work.

Financial management

The pandemic continues to impact finances – for example the number of FEET two-year-olds coming to nursery is lower than pre-pandemic and wrap around care is less in demand.

The way SEN places are funded by the local authority has also changed and is less predictable which is putting a strain on both finances and forward planning in terms of staffing structures. Increased financial allowances per child agreed by the government are also not passed on in full by the local authority to GNSFC, which adds to the challenge.

On a positive note, lettings have seen a significant improvement, and becoming a Froebel Trust hub has improved the financial picture for the next two years.

The Governing Body continues to work with the head teacher to challenge the local authority and seek further funding where possible, as well as constantly reviewing and monitoring the budget.

Governor meeting attendance

The Head Teacher and Chair of Governors meet or talk on half-termly basis to discuss governance and Centre related matters. There are four formal meetings of the Full Governing Body each year and committees also meet each term.

In the 2021-2022 school year, all Full Governing Body and Resources & Staffing committee meetings have been virtual, while Children & Learning meetings have resumed face-to-face at York Road and Hazel Avenue. Meetings are well attended, and any absence is fully explained and noted.

Impact statement

The Governing Body, Head Teacher and all members of staff are constantly striving to improve and develop Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre. So it was with great pride that a two-day Ofsted inspection in October led to a 'good' rating and evidenced significant improvements across the centre since the last inspection. Eight out of ten governors met with the Ofsted inspector over those two days.

The Chair of Governors and Chairs of both committees attended a two-day strategic away day with senior leadership to provide another level of insight and help shape the future of the Centre. The result of this is a clearer set of targets for the next school year and beyond, focusing on the areas that can have the best positive impact on outcomes for children, families, and staff.

The Governing Body also gave strategic consideration to the admission policy and effectiveness of the sensory provision at both Hazel Avenue and York Road, spend for which was signed off last year. The governing body has also suggested an annual Froebel event to raise awareness of our practice among existing and potential families as well as the wider community.

Face-to-face visits and meetings have increased our ability to monitor progress effectively and the work on safeguarding in particular has been extremely detailed. This has allowed the Governing Body to be confident that good practices are in place and that action will be taken where any weak points have been identified. Regular visits ensured that health & safety systems are in place and effective and careful monitoring of emergency drills this year has led to improvements in performance and knowledge.

By having focused sessions on inclusion, persona dolls and Froebel, the knowledge base of members has also increased helping governors to better monitor, challenge, and support. For example, Governors were able to report back on sharing learning journeys with children and witness effective safeguarding in practice.

While funding is still an issue for nursery schools, the Governing Body remains proactive in terms of challenging the local authority and seeking to improve the financial sustainability of the Centre, as well as to raise its profile.

Sam Kubunavanua
Chair of Governors
July 2022