

2019/2020 Annual Governance Statement

The Department for Education suggests that each year all schools explain what their governing body has done in their Annual Governance Statement.

THE GOVERNING BODY

The Lambeth Nursery Schools' Federation is made up of the 5 Maintained Nursery Schools in Lambeth; Holmewood, Maytree, Triangle, Effra and Ethelred. The Lambeth Nursery Schools' Federation has fifteen governors, which includes two governors elected by parents of children attending the nursery schools, one appointed by the local authority, the Executive Headteacher, one member of staff elected by staff, and ten people who have been 'co-opted' (selected) by the governing body because they have skills or experience that can help the schools. You can see information about the governors and their attendance records on our schools websites.

The key role of the governing body is to:

- ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- hold the Executive Headteacher to account for the well-being and progress of children and staff at all of the federation's nursery schools
- oversee the financial performance of the federation and make sure it's money is well spent.

It also appoints the Executive Headteacher, who oversees the whole federation, and is involved with the recruitment of the Heads of School at each nursery school.

The governors work with the school's leadership team to provide strategic leadership and hold them to account.

The full governing body meets to discuss the federation as a whole and to receive information from the Individual School Committees (ISC) and the Resources Committee. There is an ISC for each of the nursery schools (5 in total - Effra, Ethelred, Maytree, Holmewood and Triangle) which focus on each individual school's needs and development. This committee includes members of the governing body, the Executive Headteacher and the Head of School. They also welcome the input from staff and parents/carers and other stakeholders. In addition to these committees there is the Resources Committee which focuses on all financial, health and safety, human resources and premises matters.

WHAT HAS THE GOVERNING BODY DONE IN 2019/20?

We have met as a full group three times during the school year (termly) as have the Resources Committee and Individual School Committees. Due to the extraordinary circumstances faced in 2020, we have also held 'Extraordinary Meetings' for both the Full and Individual School Committees remotely. Governors have also been involved in recruitment interviews, safeguarding reviews and the Executive Headteacher's appraisal. They have made school visits (until Covid safety requirements prevented them) to monitor the attainment and progress of all children with specific attention to children with special educational needs and looked after children.

The sections below explain what we've done this year for each of the key responsibilities we have.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The main focus of the governing body has been to ensure the long-term future for the nursery schools and children's centres and joining forces as a federation has been a key part of this. Charity status has been sought, led by one of our Heads of School and supported by the governing body. A new board of trustees will be formed to support this.

We have also had a major restructure to our children's centres and won a bid to manage the collective of children's centres for the Clapham and Brixton Hill Better Start Area; the new team is now appointed. The governing body gave assistance with the bid and has supported the Children's Centre Manager and Executive Headteacher with this transition.

Finally 2020 has been a challenging year for the nursery schools, they have had to adapt to the ever changing safeguarding and well-being concerns for both staff and children that Covid 19 has created. The nursery school leaders and staff have risen to the challenge and adapted to the changing need, working throughout the lockdown and holiday periods to provide key workers and vulnerable children a safe and happy environment. All nursery schools have managed the reopening to a wider intake, in a safe and responsible manner, whilst also ensuring the safety of staff. The children's centres have played a key role in providing outreach support and food parcels to those most vulnerable. The governing body is incredibly proud of the work achieved by all the nursery schools and children's centre staff. The governing body endeavoured to support these efforts in whatever way we could and monitored the safeguarding assessments of each nursery school.

HOLDING THE NURSERY SCHOOLS AND CHILDREN CENTRE TO ACCOUNT

An important part of the governing body's role is to ask questions. There is a lot of information for governors to look at about children's achievement, staffing and attendance. We look at children's assessment data to see whether any group, for example, gender, children with special educational needs or ethnic group) is not making as much progress as other groups. If they are not, we ask what the nursery school is doing to address this. Our aim is always to provide the best possible care for all the children attending each of our nursery schools.

We make regular visits to the schools to monitor what has been discussed at meetings and see the schools in action. Where this has not been possible due to Covid 19 restrictions we have followed up with virtual meetings.

2020 has created a huge safeguarding and wellbeing challenge for both staff and children. The nursery schools and children's centres have risen to this challenge and the governing body has pushed to try and keep not only all the schools safe but also as high functioning as possible. We understand the importance of our role in the local community, especially to those who are most vulnerable.

FINANCIAL WELL-BEING OF THE NURSERY SCHOOLS

The Resources Committee meets three times a year to discuss funding and spending of all the nursery schools, together with applicable policy and health and safety matters. It feeds back relevant items to the full governing body.

Funding of nursery schools continues to be challenging, as contributions from the local authority have remained static for several years, while costs, in particular staffing costs, continue to increase on an annual basis. The larger federation has enabled schools to continue to offer Outstanding provision to the children and families on the roll. More creative approaches to funding have also helped, and we now provide parents with access to extended hours and holiday provision.

Each nursery school has had its finances audited by the Local Authority and the school is continuing to reduce costs and take advantage of the federation's ability to share resources and efficiencies where possible.

A key concern of the governing body looking forward is to ensure that each school is able to continue to provide this outstanding provision to the children and families it serves, despite the ongoing financial pressures. Charity status has been sought to allow access to broader funding sources for the nursery schools as a whole. Campaigning to seek better funding, to local councillors and MPs as well as central government has also taken place.