



Summer 2019

Annual Governance Statement for the Governing Body of Jesse Gray Primary School

The Department for Education (DfE) defines three core functions of the Governing Body¹. These are:

- The requirement to set the vision and strategic direction of the school;
- To hold the Headteacher to account for the school's educational performance; and,
- To ensure that financial resources are well spent

The DfE also sets out as best practice the expectation that the Governing Body of maintained schools should publish an annual governance statement to explain how it has fulfilled its responsibilities. Below is the annual governance statement for the Governing Body of Jesse Gray Primary School for the academic year 2018-19.

Overview

2018-19 has been an incredibly busy year for Jesse Gray's Governing Body. As well as successfully leading the first Headteacher recruitment process at Jesse Gray in 20 years, the Governing Body also went through a transition of its own, with several Governors stepping down and new Governors joining the group. It was fantastic recognition of the great work that all the Governors do supporting and challenging the school when we won the award for the 'Most effective governance for the whole Governing Body' at the Governance East Midlands Awards in June 2019.

Governance arrangements at Jesse Gray Primary School

Jesse Gray's Governing Body consists of 12 Governors and the Headteacher. Seven of the Governors are co-opted for the skills and experience they bring to the Governing Body. There are also three elected Parent Governors, one Local Authority Governor and one Staff Governor. More details on each of the Governors can be found on the school's website.

The Governors fulfil their responsibilities through a series of Governing Body meetings, Committee meetings, working groups and monitoring visits:

- *Governing Body meetings* – Jesse Gray's Full Governing Body meets twice each term with one meeting focused on standards and the other on business. At the standards meeting, Governors review the progress pupils are making and assess how this is reflected in the school's data. Governors also ensure that the school is on track to deliver on the key areas of focus in the School Improvement Plan. At the business meeting, other business is reviewed, including school policies to ensure they comply with statutory requirements and deliver effective outcomes for pupils.

¹ The School Governance (England) Regulations 2013

- *Committee meetings* – The Full Governing Body is supported by several separate committees to whom specific responsibilities are delegated. These include the Resources Committee, the Pay Committee, the GDPR (data protection) Committee and the Pupil Discipline Committee. The Resources Committee typically meets once each term, although they may meet more frequently as the annual budget is finalised. Their role is to oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure money is well spent. The other committees only meet as required.
- *Working groups* – Dedicated working groups deal with specific key activities. For example, a working group of Governors and external advisors was established in late 2018 to oversee the selection process for the new Headteacher. Other examples include the Distinctiveness Working Group who lead thinking related to Jesse Gray's vision and values as well as equality and access arrangements at the school.
- *Monitoring visits* – Each Governor is linked with both a year group and subject. In addition, Governors also provide dedicated support for key topics such as safeguarding, children with special educational needs and health and safety. This helps Governors develop close relationships with staff and a better understanding of specific subjects within the school. Every term Governors meet with staff to discuss the progress being made by the relevant year group and understand the current areas of focus for their linked subject.

Non-confidential minutes from Governing Body meetings can be found on the school website, along with details of which Governors attended each meeting.

Setting the vision and strategic direction of the school

Jesse Gray's vision and strategic direction are underpinned by the school's values of: Inspire, Achieve, Challenge and Enjoy. The Governors have continued to set the vision and strategic direction of the school throughout the year in the following ways:

- *Headteacher Recruitment* – The Governors oversaw the search for and selection of a new Headteacher who will take over leadership of the school when Sarah Law steps down after 20 years at the end of 2019. Governors ensured that the selection panel consisted of members with extensive experience in executive recruitment, finance, the Local Authority and education. In addition, staff representation was key as were external advisors who provided guidance on specific areas of expertise. The successful candidate impressed the panel with their passion for learning, ambition, creative ideas and energy whilst also embodying the school's values.
- *Governing Body Membership* – During the last year Governors have successfully planned for changes in several key roles on the Governing Body. In September 2018, the Vice Chair took over the role of Chair of Governors when the previous Chair left the Governing Body. After that, succession plans were also successfully triggered for the roles of Vice Chair and Chair of the Resources Committee. In addition, three new Governors have joined the Governing Body with a skills audit being completed to determine key areas of focus during recruitment.

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- *Academisation* – Despite the fact that mandatory academisation is not current government policy for all Local Authority maintained schools, the Governors have continued to consider whether Jesse Gray would benefit from joining a multi-academy trust and, if so, which trust may offer the most advantages. Following extensive internal discussions and exploratory conversations with several local schools the Governors firmly believe that academisation is not currently in Jesse Gray’s best interest.

Holding the Headteacher to account for the school’s educational performance

Assessing the educational performance of the school is one of the key areas of focus during the termly standards meeting of the Full Governing Body. Key discussions this year have included:

- *Director of Teaching & Learning* – The Governors requested that the Director of Teaching & Learning provides regular updates on the impact of the work they are leading to embed an ethic of excellence across the school. This work has led to several significant initiatives during the year, including the introduction of a team-teaching approach to staff training and training to help staff understand what excellent teaching looks like. Feedback from staff has clearly demonstrated the positive impact it has had.
- *Pupil Progress Data* – All Governors are involved in the review of whole school pupil data on a termly basis. They ask questions so that they can better understand the trends over time, the impact of specific teaching and learning initiatives and hold leaders to account. Developments in how staff gather and analyse pupil data are also discussed in detail to ensure Governors have a clear understanding of how chosen approaches to curriculum and assessment are leading to better outcomes for the children.
- *The Impact of Technology* – As well as approving a substantial investment in technology during the year (see below), the Governors have also prompted the Headteacher and the Technology Working Group to consider how that investment will be incorporated into classrooms and what additional knowledge teachers may need to use it effectively. As a result, the procurement process focused not just on securing the best value for money for the hardware purchased, but also incorporated a unique managed service to ensure that the technology can be deployed quickly and easily as well as regular training for staff. In addition, the investment was expanded to also upgrade the school’s wi-fi and telephone networks to ensure that they are future-proofed against further expansion. Finally, Governors supported the recruitment of an experienced new technology lead to ensure a smooth transition when Mr Price leaves to take up a new teaching post in Dubai.

Ensuring that financial resources are well spent

The current financial climate for schools is challenging and is characterised by increasing staff costs and the implementation of a new national funding formula. The new funding formula has seen a greater proportion of funds directed towards schools with more significant deprivation and away from schools such as Jesse Gray. The Governors have continued to ensure that Jesse Gray is well positioned to navigate the challenging financial landscape by:

- *Significant Investment in Technology* – After extensive research into different options for how to transform Jesse Gray's technology infrastructure, Governors approved a significant investment in new iPads and upgrades to the school's wi-fi and telephone networks in the summer term. Careful financial management over several years meant that the school was able to invest this money from accumulated reserves without impacting operational budgets. In addition, Governors ensured value for money by overseeing that all requirements of the school's Finance Policy were complied with.
- *Investment in Buildings* – Jesse Gray has extensive buildings and grounds for the children to enjoy. However, the buildings are over 60 years old and require regular maintenance. During the year, Governors have approved several investments including the refurbishment of the original flooring in a number of key locations throughout the school, the replacement of several windows and the installation of new play equipment in the playgrounds.
- *Financial Planning* – In order to manage the school budget effectively at a time of significant change the Governors have introduced a three-year planning cycle to ensure that income and costs remain appropriately matched in the medium term.



Chris Walker
Chair of Governors
Jesse Gray Primary School