



Applegarth School Governing Body Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

Welcome to our annual governance statement 2020/21. We intend to provide one of these on an annual basis going forward, so that parents, carers and others in the community can see how we have been working over the last school year, what issues we have focussed on and how we have helped to ensure the continued improvement of the school.

Information about the governing body and its members (including terms of office and attendance) can be found on the school website at www.applegarth.n-yorks.sch.uk/our-school/governing-body/ and copies of our monthly meeting minutes are available to view through the school office.

About the governing body

The governing body has three core functions:

- To oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well spent;
- To hold the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils;
- To ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.

We meet monthly to rigorously review the school's progress in meeting its aims and vision. We comprise twelve governors who represent parents, the wider community and staff. Each governor also has a 'link role'; normally a subject area or issue delegated to one or two governors to monitor throughout the year (see "Monitoring activity") below.

We help to set priorities for the school, in conjunction with the senior leadership team. Priorities are identified through various activities including: looking carefully at various data collected in and out of school, monitoring the curriculum and seeking external audit/opinion.

Our priorities for 2020/21 were, in the main, set by our review of school data (internal testing and monitoring plus previous years' external results), our need to ensure proper use of funding awarded to the school and our ongoing responsibility to ensure the safety of all pupils. However, clearly, the events of 2020/21 in terms of the Covid-19 pandemic brought additional and pressing responsibilities, which are reflected below.

The Governing Board's focus during 2020/21

Below are some of our key areas of focus over the last year, some of which continue to be monitored in 2021/22.

Impact of Covid-19

During this exceptionally difficult period, our primary focus has been to ensure the continued wellbeing and safety of our pupils (and their families) and all school staff. This has included:

- Ensuring that suitable risk assessments were put in place by the leadership team to support the safe return of pupils and staff to school;
- Monitoring that appropriate arrangements were put in place during lockdowns for more vulnerable pupils and their families;
- Seeking an update from the Headteacher at each board meeting on staff and pupil wellbeing. This led to additional wellbeing training being provided for staff;
- Ensuring the school provided access to learning for all families, including computer and internet provision for more vulnerable or disadvantaged learners;
- Reviewing engagement with online learning across the school;
- Considering, with the leadership team, how to ensure an effective return to school for all pupils and how to ensure pupils are supported to 'catch up'. This included agreeing use of the government's Covid 'catch-up premium' for targeted interventions ([see link to Catch Up Strategy document](#)).
- Regularly checking in with our link staff members, to offer support and to thank them for their continued hard work.

We will continue to monitor the impact of the Covid catch-up funding on learning outcomes across the school.

Safeguarding – Safeguarding and the need to support our most vulnerable pupils has been paramount. The school, through the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), the safeguarding team and all staff, has provided early help to ensure, as far as we are able, all pupils had equal access to learning and, in the interests of the children, has gone beyond what it would be obliged to do. In addition, the DSL arranged for North Yorkshire Education Services to carry out an audit of the Single Central Register to ensure that all adults in school, working with children, have all of the necessary checks in place. Whilst there were small improvements recommended, some of which the school had already identified itself, the audit was extremely positive overall. The school has invested in membership of the Safeguarding Network which has included training for the Safeguarding Lead Governor and staff, provides up-to-date information, and guidance whenever it is needed. We have also benefitted from School Improvement Network safeguarding training, including safer recruitment. We have seen in action the robust systems of monitoring and recording safeguarding matters and the governing body is confident the school is providing an environment that is safe for children, one in which they are well cared for and are able to learn and flourish

School improvement – notwithstanding the difficulties presented by the pandemic, governors have been keen to ensure that the school continues to improve on pupil outcomes and that a broad and balanced curriculum is provided. The governing body has a highly constructive

relationship with the staff and senior leadership team in our role as ‘critical friends’ to the school and we are mutually focussed on ensuring the best education for all.

Over this year, we have been particularly keen to ensure continued improvement to outcomes across the school for phonics, reading and maths and that the gaps between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged learners are narrowed. An external audit of phonics and early reading was carried out in Spring 2020/Autumn 2021 which has enabled the school to work rigorously to further develop our phonics provision in line with updated government guidance. As a result of this audit, the school was able to acquire funding to implement and resource “Little Wandle Letters and Sound Revised” as our validated systematic, synthetic phonics programme. Phonics results have continued to rise with 90.2% of our Year 2 pupils achieving a pass in the phonics screening check in December 2020. Across school, continued improvements have been made in reading with every year group making excellent catch-up progress in the summer term. In addition to this, a large majority of disadvantaged pupils in each year group attained the expected standard or greater depth in reading, thereby further narrowing the gap. Governors will continue to monitor this closely.

Improvement to pupil outcomes for vulnerable or disadvantaged children. We have this year introduced a link governor with responsibility for Special Educational Needs (SEN) and examining how the school supports SEN pupils. This will strengthen our understanding of this area and monitoring will be reported back to the full governing body. [Our three-year Pupil Premium Strategy was finalised prior to the first lockdown.](#) This sets out ambitious targets – agreed jointly with the senior leadership team – for closing the gap in attainment between Pupil Premium and non-Pupil Premium pupils.

Effective use of resources. We have ensured that the school maintains a balanced budget, while also investing in areas such as having a dedicated Year 1 teacher/class and a new server for the school. We are supported by a school bursar from the County Council who has helped the governing body to forecast our budget over the next three years and to make informed decisions. We have undertaken the Schools Financial Value Standard to ensure that we, as governors, are confident that we have the requisite knowledge and skills around finance matters to be able to govern effectively.

Governance action plan. We have developed an action plan to help us to further enhance our efficacy as governors. The plan included setting our vision, values and strategy for the next three years; ensuring we are regularly and robustly monitoring the curriculum; and further enhancing our professional approach to our work with training and excellent clerking support. We undertook a skills audit at the end of 2020, to help identify ‘gap’ areas in expertise and we have continued to recruit governors who can help to fill these gaps for us. We were pleased that an external governance audit conducted by the County Council in April 2021 established that there is very strong practice in place in respect of governance at the school and we will continue to build on this over the next year.

Committees

Delegating aspects of our governance responsibilities to committees enables the governing board to remain strategically focussed on the agreed key areas of school development and work in an efficient way. It is decided which governors will join each committee by analysing governors' skills and experiences through a skills audit and assigning committee membership accordingly. Committee membership and the committee structure is reviewed at the beginning of each academic year.

We currently have the following committees in place:

Committee	Overview of work this year	Impact of the committee
Performance Management	New members to the committee have undertaken NYCC training in order to deliver performance management for the Headteacher. Annual and mid-year performance reviews have taken place.	Objectives were set for the Headteacher for 2021/22 which also fed into the strategic plans for the governing body and the school.
Complaints	Committee members all undertook training in complaints handling and led on further assessment of current policy and processes, in conjunction with support from the NYCC Governance team.	Learning gained led to a full review of the complaints policy and changes being made to ensure it is more robust and comprehensible.
Pupil Discipline	This committee convenes only when required and has not been called this year.	Not applicable.
Staff Dismissal/ Staff Dismissal Appeals	This committee convenes only when required and has not been called this year.	Not applicable.

Monitoring activity

One of the key functions of the governing board is to undertake strategic monitoring activity, the purpose of which is to triangulate information shared with governors by the senior leadership team. The governing board undertakes a wide range of monitoring activities, including:

- Monitoring visits to the school to meet with subject leaders to discuss aspects of the curriculum and where the subject sits in the School Development Plan.
- Understanding external reports and building this into monitoring.
- Pupil surveys.
- Pupil conferencing.
- Staff and parent surveys.
- Inviting staff members to governing board and committee meetings to report on key areas.

The table below gives an overview of some of the governor monitoring activity during this academic year:

Monitoring activity	Reason for monitoring activity	Impact of monitoring activity
Phonics and Early Reading	To consider how phonics is taught at the school and the progress children make towards becoming confident and capable early readers.	Gained understanding that phonics is an important area of the curriculum and is taught daily. It was recognised that the school monitors phonics assessment data (national and internal). Teachers work to identify children who would benefit from intervention sessions.
Early Years	To understand how the school is ensuring readiness for the new Early Years framework.	Reassurance obtained around plans put in place to ensure the requirements of the framework will be met, in addition to undertaking the new Baseline Assessments in Reception.
Reading and Writing	To monitor the progress of reading and writing throughout the school and to ensure impact of new strategies is monitored closely.	Introduction to the tracking methods, new displays and systems put in place to ensure consistency across the school and therefore how and when intervention is put into place. Increased governor awareness of the rationale behind decisions to alter the way reading and writing are taught and the theory/research behind this.
Pupil Premium and Looked After Children	To monitor the use of Pupil Premium funding, in-line with Applegarth's three-year Pupil Premium Strategy; and to discuss provision for looked after children.	Ensured that funding is being used in-line with our own strategy and best available evidence. Agreed achieved milestones for 2020/21 and intended impacts for 2021/22. Received assurance on the school's extensive efforts to ensure children in receipt of the Pupil Premium were able to

		access learning at home or school during lockdown periods.
Safeguarding	Initial introductory visit to review policies, records, vulnerable learners. A follow-up visit was undertaken to complete an audit of the Single Central Register.	Reassurance has been obtained around the systems, processes and policies in place, e.g for reporting of concerns or attendance issues. Training for staff has been kept up-to-date, e.g. in appropriate physical restraint and Early Help. Link governor has reviewed and audited information held, how information is stored, the frequency of safeguarding team meetings and ensured that information on the safeguarding team is clearly displayed throughout the school. The wider governing body has also been invited to attend additional safeguarding training on issues such as Early Help.
Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Initial introductory meeting with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo), to disseminate information from SEN link governor training that SENCo had attended at the start of the spring term and to gain an overview of current practice and policy	New SEN governor gained a deeper understanding of the role and is up to date with current policy and practice in school. Governors were updated with progress SENCo has made towards completing NASENCO qualification and the recent Education Endowment Foundation SEN report key recommendations.
Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE)	To gain an understanding of the new statutory guidance for PSHE & Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and implementation of the school's curriculum in this area.	Gained a detailed introduction to the Jigsaw programme implemented by the school to support the teaching of PSHE. Reviewed feedback obtained from staff, parents/carers and pupils about the efficacy of Jigsaw. Received updates from subject lead regarding the REST programme (part of Jigsaw aimed at resilience and emotional wellbeing). Discussions around the next steps - including assessments and data analysis – will focus the next visit.
Computing	To gain an understanding of the process by which the curriculum is determined, agreed and communicated for Computing.	Reviewed the subject action plan for Computing and considered how Computing is being taught across the school, including ensuring children know how to use technology safely and respectfully. Evidence obtained that clear guidance is provided for all teachers to ensure standardised planning and assessment of Computing and that the Computing staff lead monitors the standard of work produced.

Pupil voice

Listening to the views of the pupils who attend the school is an important aspect of the work of the governing board and is something governors hope to be able to do more of as we come out of the pandemic. We sought the views of a cross-section of pupils to help us to develop our vision, values and strategy. The pupils engaged were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences at the school and the enrichment activities they are able to undertake, which they felt give them many wonderful memories to take away on leaving. We also reviewed the Applegarth pupil response to the wider "Growing Up in North Yorkshire" survey, undertaken via the County Council. In the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Section 85% (74%) of pupils responded that they worry about at least one of the issues listed on 'most days'. This has been the driver for developments to the school behaviour policy and implementation of the new Jigsaw scheme of work in PSHE. There has been an even greater emphasis on wellbeing since pupils returned to school in 2020.

Engagement with parents and the community

Listening to the views of parents and the school community is also an important aspect of the work of the governing board. As part of our exercise to develop a clear vision, values and strategy for the school, we sought to engage with parents/carers and a wide cross-section of the local community, to get views on the school. This provided very positive feedback about how well the school is run and the perception of Applegarth pupils. There was some feedback to suggest that further engagement would be welcomed by particular stakeholders in the community, to build stronger links between the community and the school. We will be exploring how we can develop these links further and have ensured that our new vision incorporates a wish for our pupils to understand their place in their community and to be good citizens.

The parent/carer survey that we undertook again provided some fantastic feedback. In particular, it identified that the overwhelming strength of the school, as parents see it, is our wonderful group of staff and through our strategy we will continue to ensure that all staff are supported and developed to flourish at the school.

“We are really pleased with the school. The teachers are approachable and work so hard to make learning interesting and fun.”

“In spite of all the upheaval and uncertainty this year, my child has thrived and loves school, which is a testimony to the hard work, kindness and dedication of the staff. Thank you!”

“We think the school has done an amazing job to support our family over a difficult 18 months.”

Governor training and recruitment

The governing board takes their responsibility to stay up-to-date seriously and places high importance on this, including undergoing any necessary training. The table below shows all of the various training and development the governors and governing board has undertaken during the last academic year.

Training or CPD undertaken	Impact of the training or CPD
Complaints training	Developed the ability of committee members to deal effectively with complaints. Enabled a review of our complaints policy, leading to revisions
Introduction to Governance	Induction training for our new governors, providing an overview of key roles and responsibilities.
Safeguarding Level 1	Ensured governors have a solid understanding of their role in relation to safeguarding.
Succession planning	Identified the need for ongoing succession planning and highlighted how best to accomplish this.
Prevent	Ensured governors have a firm grasp of the Prevent programme, including identifying signs of concern and how to refer to Channel.
NGA Leading Governance programme	Applegarth's Chair and Vice-Chair took part in the National Governance Association's year-long Leading Governance programme, which developed their leadership skills and networks; and contributed to effective and sustainable governance at our school.
Early Help	Online training to improve governors' understanding of how Early Help is used in the context of supporting vulnerable pupils and their families. This was complemented by a briefing from an Early Help Manager at the County Council.

There are a number of other courses and training undertaken by governors as part of their professional roles (e.g. teaching) which help to enhance the training undertaken as a governor. Applegarth governors are also part of the Swaledale Alliance network of governors, which provides opportunity to attend network meetings a couple of times per year. We regularly attend the County Council's School Improvement Network meetings, to ensure we keep up-to-date on the latest developments in education.

Governing board priority areas for this academic year

Having gathered a comprehensive view from staff, pupils, parents/carers and community members about our school over the summer, we have been able to focus on some areas for improvement and what kind of school Applegarth should be in three years' time. This has helped to inform the development of our school vision and values, along with a three-year strategy which will help us to achieve the goals of our vision.

The vision and values can be located on our website at: <https://www.applegarth.n-yorks.sch.uk/our-school/vision-values/>

Over the next year, the key areas of the strategy that will be our focus are:

Vision 1: Our learners will be confident and aspirational individuals, who have high expectations of themselves and are courageous risk-takers, ready for the next step in their lives.

- **Objective 1:** there will be a decline in the number of negative behaviour incidents recorded in school as a result of the implementation of the updated behaviour strategy.
- **Objective 2:** pupils will report feeling less worried in the 2022/2023 Growing Up in North Yorkshire survey as a result of Jigsaw, REST, the Military Kids Club and the work of our Learning Mentor.
- **Objective 3:** pupils will develop confidence as active participants in the development of the school: school council, eco-council, house captains and pupil ambassadors.
- **Objective 4:** there will be further opportunity to speak and perform in public.

Vision 2: Pupils from all backgrounds, contexts and starting points will have achieved exemplary academic progress and excellent personal development, where talents have been quickly identified and effectively nurtured.

- **Objective 1:** early reading, phonics and reading will be outstanding across the school.
- **Objective 2:** the disadvantage gap will decrease in line with the 3-year Pupil Premium Strategy.
- **Objective 3:** progress for pupils with SEN will be above the national average.
- **Objective 4:** gifted and talented pupils will be formally identified by the SENCO, and support will be provided to teachers and families to nurture strengths both in and out of school.

Vision 3: Our school community will be able to celebrate their own unique qualities within a diverse and ever-changing community and the world around them

- **Objective 1:** leaders will have a definitive understanding of the context of the school by commissioning an in-depth analysis.
- **Objective 2:** the curriculum will be sharply focussed on educating children about the urban, historical and agricultural setting which pupils are familiar with as well as providing them with experiences of the diversity, cultures and languages that are not prevalent in their surrounding area.

- **Objective 3:** strong links will be made with a French-speaking school and schools with diverse intakes.

Vision 4: High standards will be achieved through a rich, contextually-relevant and exciting curriculum that provides memorable experiences through inspirational teaching, high-quality visits and input from experts.

- **Objective 1:** Outstanding teaching and learning will be achieved through: robust training, professional development and coaching for all staff, the implementation of evidence-based pedagogy and a continually evolving curriculum.
- **Objective 2:** leaders, including governors, regularly monitor and review the impact of the broad and balanced curriculum.
- **Objective 3:** Applegarth will be a lead school for the teaching of phonics, early reading and reading.

Vision 5: We will be proud to say that we have fulfilled the purpose of being the model school at the heart of our town and county.

- **Objective 1:** we will nurture system leaders: SLEs (Specialist Leaders of Education; LLEs (Local Leaders of Education) and NLGs (National Leaders of Governance) and plan for succession through responsive and systematic professional development.
- **Objective 2:** stakeholder and community questionnaires will highlight our positive reputation in the local area.
- **Objective 3:** involve the wider community in PTA events and school projects where possible (e.g. history projects with local residents, links with churches, visiting nursing homes, working with charities such as Food Share and using our outdoor area to support food scarcity initiatives).

The governing body will assess progress against these over the course of the year, through termly monitoring activity and assessment of school data, seeking updates from subject/Key Stage leads at our meetings and engaging further with pupils and community stakeholders. We will report back to you next year to highlight progress made against the strategy and whether there are areas which we feel require further focus.

Diane Parsons

Chair of Governors

(On Behalf of the Applegarth School Governing Body)