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**Review Findings: strengths – what the governing board does well**

**CORE AREA 1: Ensuring Clarity of Vision, Ethos and Strategic Direction**

Governors play a very significant role in setting out, monitoring and reviewing a long established vision that is shared with all members of the school community and is based on input from and consideration of a very wide range of stakeholders. The school's vision and ethos has been in place in essence for many years, but its relevance is regularly checked and reviewed for its appropriateness as the world of education revolves around the school. The vision and ethos more than meets the context of the school and it flows through and can be seen clearly in all the work of the school. This is quite exceptional and rare to see in such detail and in such an interconnected manner. Governors are able to articulate the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction with clarity and confidence.

The school and its governing body have a clear strategic operational cycle and this is supported by a very high quality and professional clerking service. The appointed clerk works closely and liaises regularly with the lead governors and headteacher to ensure outstanding operational governance.

The school has all its statutory policies in place and a number of other useful ones that provide a comprehensive cover for all areas of its work. These are very effectively managed by the clerk in terms of updates and review. The governors are well aware of their responsibilities in relation to policies and their review/approval.

There is no doubt that all those on the governing body and other connected stakeholders together with the school's operational leaders have a full understanding of their statutory responsibilities. The review revealed that there is rich evidence in both print, on-line and in what is seen in the school's governance operations to show that these responsibilities are carried out in detail and with a high level of effectiveness.

The governors are all linked to curriculum areas individually and via their meetings and committees it is clear that they ensure a highly effective and appropriate curriculum that meets the needs and context of the school's pupils. This is closely monitored and governors are skilled in asking appropriate questions that show challenge and support for operational colleagues. Governors are well aware of the school's church-ethos and this extends to faith's beyond the associated Church of England church, giving pupils the opportunity to learn about a range of faiths and cultures within and beyond the United Kingdom.

The school's Christian basis and ethos is woven carefully into all aspects of its work and this makes St. Andrew's an especially distinctive church school. This is overt in its mission and ethos. The close relationship with the church next door and its incumbent enables this ethos to be even more prominent in supporting the work of the school and what it provides for its pupils.

**CORE AREA 2: Holding the Headteacher to Account for the Educational Performance of the School and its Pupils.**

Clear and appropriate accountability is central to the work of this governing body. Governors are provided with a wealth of information on a very regular basis. It is clear that they understand what they are given and an extensive training programme is in place to develop governors' skills. This is provided by the local authority and via the school's clerking company. Governors visit the school regularly in normal times, are linked to subject areas and also to each class. Visit records show in detail the focus and activity of school monitoring visits and these highlight findings and follow up actions. Even during the Covid-19 period governors have remained in touch with classes and teachers remotely and there is good evidence for this and staff and pupils have appreciated these efforts. It is striking to see how governors know class teachers, leaders and pupils and there is a very positive relationship that exists between them.

Governors are provided with relevant data by school leaders and have the skills to understand this supported by the training programme that is in place. They support a drive for the maintenance of high standards and improvements where these are required. There is annual training and support for governors in understanding the school's IDSR. The school has an effective and distinctive distributed leadership model and all the leaders working with this model have a close working and accountability relationship with their linked governors. These relationships are close, supportive and challenging, and so reflect very high levels of being held to account for standards and other aspects of the work of the school.

Governance records demonstrate that they are involved in, reported to and monitor the school's performance management systems. These processes have a robustness that is linked to rewarding success in terms of strong pupil outcomes and commitment to overall school improvement across all areas of its work.

The school has a 'powerhouse' core committee. This group is central to the quality of governance and is the 'telephone exchange' where all aspects of governance are able to interconnect so that all governors have the opportunity to know what is going on in other areas and committees of the governing body.

**CORE AREA 3: Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is spent well.**

Finances in the school are in an excellent position. There are highly effective financial management systems in place. The board accesses financial benchmarking data and this is also accessible as required via the school website. The records of meetings demonstrate that governors work closely with the head and other leaders to ensure an effective and appropriate staffing structure. Looking at the school at work, it is clear that teaching staff are carefully deployed and teaching support staff are equally carefully allocated to ensure the best possible support for pupils. The linking of governors to individual classes means that they can independently monitor on a class by class basis the deployment and use of staffing and are then able to report this back through the various feedback systems, including governing body meetings. The committee structure, including the 'powerhouse' committee, enables governors to have an excellent overview of finances to ensure excellent value for money in terms of how the overall budget is spent to deliver high standards of education.

Governors understand the process and requirements of Schools Financial Values Standards and are kept informed and feedback on this process. Reports are provided on Pupil Premium funding, Sports funding and Covid Catch-up funding. These are provided to governors and are also displayed on the school website. These reports show the allocation of funds and then there are follow-up reports identifying the impact of allocations. These are detailed and show the effectiveness of strategies that are then reviewed for subsequent years. Governors are attuned to learning and outcome gaps and ensure that resources are allocated and then reviewed to ensure that gaps are narrowed or are as small as possible.

Governors are also involved in decisions on capital spending and have been especially involved in the development of capital building projects, providing ideas and guiding the finalisation or choice of projects so that final projects have the support of all stakeholders in the school. As a consequence, there are a number of innovative building developments that have provided enhanced and very useful learning spaces for the pupils. On touring the building these projects have linked elements of the building together better or they have enhanced the use of existing spaces in a more effective way, such as the reshaping of rooms or innovative use of spaces, some to support the needs of SEND pupils.

Not only are the buildings the focus of governors attention, they are also involved in the design and use of outdoor learning spaces and again have been instrumental in decisions on how spaces outside are developed and used to best effect. The building and site have very little if no vandalism or abuse. This is because pupils value their school highly and the integrated way in which the school works with its wider community means that community stakeholders also value the school greatly. One particular innovation is working with the local public house, close to the school, which provides parking facilities for major school events. This is not just helpful, but enhances safety of these events as vehicles are parked close to but are not causing problems on a tight school site.

In conclusion, it is clear that governors more than fulfil their core responsibility of ensuring that the school's finances and funds are spent wisely and effectively to support the education of pupils.

#### **CORE AREA 4: Effective Governance Practice**

This is outstanding and highly effective overall. This is achieved by governors giving freely of their time to work in their role and support the school. It is quite remarkable how much time these volunteers find and devote to their role as governors. This time is also used in a highly effective and efficient manner. It is also of note to see that meetings are organised at a variety of times to enable maximum participation and also ensure an effective work-life balance for governors as well as the school's operational staff and leaders. For example, there are few if any 'twilight' meetings. This means that operational governance takes place at sensible times, when people have the energy to be most effective. It has to be noted that having meetings during the day seems not to create any problems overall, even for those governors with work commitments.

The board keeps its size, structure, terms of reference and committee arrangements under constant review, supported by the headteacher and the clerk. This cycle of review ensures that governance is highly effective in supporting and challenging the work of the school and covering all the core functions of governance. If anything, the board is quite large, but the team that exists can cover all the areas of work that is required for this governing body. It cannot be said that there is a peripheral team of governors who do less than others, but there is still a core, leading team of governors to lead the work of the governing body and to ensure that all governors are fully engaged in their respective roles.

The governing body has conducted a skills audit and monitors the range of skills across its members to ensure that all areas are effectively covered. The current team comes from a wide range of backgrounds and this enables individual governors to monitor the work of the school bringing perspectives from other educational environments as well as a wide range of other career areas.

Training for the governors is central to the work of this governing body. The programme is carefully organised and there is a high level of participation. The clerk holds and provides a clear record of training and her company provides much of the training that takes place. The impact of this training is reviewed in identifying future training needs and funds are allocated to ensure that training can be effectively funded. In normal times the governing body has at least three planned training events in school covering a range of themes, including IDSR updates, curriculum workshops, working alongside pupils and planning the way forward for the school and governing body. There is also an annual conference in Scarborough together with the whole of the school staff. This is organised so that a large area of training points are covered and this also helps to build relationships between the board and the school's other leaders. It also demonstrates the school's full commitment to governor training and effective relationships.

Clerking is provided by a private company (IPC). This service is exemplary in supporting governors and governance in the school. The clerk is very well trained and provides an outstanding and highly efficient service. The organisation of meetings, agenda, papers and minutes are all provided in a very timely manner and provide a very clear record of the work of the governing body. The clerk has an excellent knowledge of statutory protocols and legal matters related to governance and provides outstanding support in these areas when required. The clerk has regular contact with the chair and other governors and she also has regular meetings with the headteacher to ensure highly efficient operational effectiveness.

Leadership of the governing body is excellent. A chair has been in post for a relatively short time, but provides effective leadership and she is supported by an excellent vice-chair who works well with her. These leaders work closely with the headteacher and clerk to ensure highly efficient governance operations. The chair leads her team well valuing everyone's contribution and has confidence that everyone fulfils their specific roles and responsibilities. It is clear from the support and training programme that governors are well supported. There is clear attention to ensure that succession planning is in place so that governors grow in skills and experience over

time and so are able to take on more senior roles in time. The connections between individual governors and senior leaders also helps to develop their skills.

There is a highly organised and effective mechanism for hearing from and informing all stakeholders about the work of the school and the governing body. There are pupil associate members of the governing body, who contribute to meetings and feedback to the pupil body. This system is highly valued by the pupils, who are incredibly proud to be 'governors' of the school. These pupils talk articulately about their work on the governing body and what they have achieved. The relationship between the pupil governors and the main governors is excellent. The governing body has close links with parents and the wider community and keeps in constant contact. People know who to contact and do contact them on a regular basis. There are close links with the local church and the incumbent is an active member of the governing body. The governors survey parents and the wider community as required and seek their views on all major school activities and developments. This binds all the stakeholders closely together in a mission of mutual support that is truly remarkable to see in operation.

This school is the only maintained primary school in the Hull local authority. This is quite unusual, but it is content with its status as a maintained school and it is certainly delivering to provide a high quality of education, care and support for all its pupils. Given the success of the school, a number of staff have moved on to promoted posts and have taken the 'St. Andrew's Model' with them to good effect. The school is deeply involved in initial teacher education, working with a number of higher education providers and universities. This has enabled the school to recruit a good number of its trainees. The headteacher also works with a number of these organisations as well in providing their training offer to trainees teachers.

Statutory areas such as safeguarding and SEND have the prominence and coverage that they demand and require because of statutory requirements. There are designated governors, who carry out their roles with a high degree of effectiveness. Safeguarding systems in the school are effective and compliant in relation to governance/

The school also has a large number and breadth of links with schools and organisations elsewhere (locally, regionally, nationally and internationally) and these connections provide mutual support in a variety of ways benefiting pupils and other key stakeholders. These links show the school to be outward facing, sharing its expertise with others, whilst at the same time benefiting from ideas from elsewhere to ensure best practice.

There is no question that the governing body of this school is having a very positive impact on outcomes for pupils and all members of the governing body that were met were able to articulate this clearly and draw on specific evidence to prove the assertion.

**Review Findings: areas for development**

**CORE AREA 1: Ensuring Clarity of Vision, Ethos and Strategic Direction**

There are no specific areas of development from this area. However, the school should continue as it does to ensure that its established vision and ethos continues to meet the needs of the school in the future. It is remarkable how prominent all of this is in the day to day work of the school. Any visitor taken on a tour can see

	<p>this clearly in everything that is seen. The website clearly sets out the vision, ethos and strategic direction well and this replicates in all pages of the website where these elements need to be flagged. (See Recommendation 1)</p> <p><b>CORE AREA 2: Holding the Headteacher to Account for the Educational Performance of the School and its Pupils.</b></p> <p>The work in this area is so extensive that there is no question that the headteacher is held to account effectively. Governors access to and work in the school both physically and remotely enables them to form an independent view of the work of the school and their meeting documentation shows that these independent views are then triangulated against the reports and data provided by the school's operational leaders.</p> <p>However, there is a potential contention that the delegated structure and operation of the board through its various groups and committees means that many of the accountability systems and mechanisms take place in these elements of the governing body's work. So, in the minutes of the main board meetings, challenge and questioning is not as evident as might be expected. (See Recommendation 2)</p> <p><b>CORE AREA 3: Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is spent well.</b></p> <p>There are no areas for development for this Core Area. Financial oversight by the governing body is exemplary and serves as outstanding practice that could be shared with other schools and governing bodies. It would be excellent for such outstanding practice to be shared more widely. (See Recommendation 3)</p> <p><b>CORE AREA 4: Effective Governance Practice</b></p> <p>The quality of practice in this area is exemplary. The Chair is relatively new to the role and is performing her role very well, but she may benefit from further training and seeing other outstanding chairs at work in other schools. The school could explore further how the chair and vice-chair might work even more closely together. This is not a specific criticism of the leadership of the governing body, but a suggestion of how this could be made even better. (See Recommendations 4 and 5)</p> <p>The point covered in Core Area 2 is equally relevant here in terms of ensuring that accountability mechanisms are overt in main governing body meetings and paperwork, given all the work that goes on extensively elsewhere in various groups and committees.</p>
<p><b>Conclusions and key areas for action</b></p>	<p>Governance in this school is outstanding overall. All areas of the school's work in relation to governance show exemplary practice and a desire to demonstrate the highest standards. The governors are keen to maintain these high standards, but are not complacent in wishing to improve further their work so that the quality of education provided to the pupils is as good as it can be and so that pupils are happy coming to school. Beyond the school,</p>

the governors are well connected to the wider local community and see the school as a key player in supporting and working with the widest range of community stakeholders.

Governance in the school is very strong and can be used as an example of exemplary practice. Nevertheless, however good governance is, recommendations have been made as suggestions for how this governing body's work could be made even more effective.

What is most striking about St. Andrew's is that each and every person working with or connected with the school is regarded as a member of the St. Andrew's family. The use of the term 'family' is entirely appropriate as the school has a real family atmosphere and this is absolutely overt to any visitor coming to see or work with the school. The school has a series of 'scrapbooks'. These provide a clear visual summary of key areas of work and are a delight to see. One element that stands out here is how the St. Andrew's family exists beyond the time when pupils leave for secondary school. The school stays in touch with past pupils and has records of what they have gone on to achieve in later phases of education, sport and their professional lives. This confirms that the 'family' label is not just a passing term, but is integral to the work of the school and the way that it cares for its 'family' members.

In many ways the work of this governing body is 'unique' and bespoke to the context of the school. Some might think that this uniqueness hides the 'normally recognised' ways of governance practice. However, in reality this enhances the quality of what goes on and serves as practice that others could adopt.

**Recommendation 1 (Core Area 1):** Ensure that the long standing vision and ethos of the school continues to be monitored to ensure its continuing appropriateness and suitability as the world of education and the school continues to develop and evolve.

**Recommendation 2 (Core Area 2):** Ensure that accountability mechanisms are evident to external scrutineers (eg. Ofsted/SIAMS) if challenge is not always evident, but taking place, via the main governing body meetings. Is there a way of summarising challenge points or questions from committees and groups so they are clear in the main meeting documentation?

**Recommendation 3 (Core Area 3):** Examine ways in which the governing body can share its practice more widely with other schools and boards, so others can benefit from the work taking place at St. Andrew's.

**Recommendation 4 (Core Area 4):** Provide further support and training for the Chair of Governors by looking at other exemplary practice to ensure that she can grow more into the role that she has only performed for a relatively short period of time. This is no criticism of the work of the chair, but an opportunity to perform even better in this role.

	<b>Recommendation 5 (Core Area 4):</b> There is a close working relationship between the chair and the vice-chair and this provides good succession planning. However, has the school considered a co-chair arrangement that will draw on the skills and expertise of the Chair and Vice-Chair working even more closely together to support what is a larger than usual governing body.
<b>Date for progress and impact review</b>	<b>January 2022</b>