

Falcon Junior School

Annual governance statement – January 2024

An annual governance statement is not required for maintained schools but is good practice¹. The purpose of the statement is to explain how our governing board has fulfilled its responsibilities, particularly in relation to its core functions.

This is our school's third governance statement and covers the 2023 calendar year.

After several years of upheaval and disruption due to building works and Covid, 2023 has been a more typical year at Falcon.

We started 2023 with children recently returned to our amazing renovated main school building and following a positive Ofsted inspection in November 2022 and a Good judgement in all areas.

We have summarised below key governance initiatives at Falcon over the last year, many ongoing.

Strategy

In May 2023 governors agreed five longer-term, strategic priorities² in response to the following question: *What can we do or create at Falcon to best serve local children over the long term?*

The agreed priorities are:

1. Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion
2. Becoming a centre of excellence for nurture
3. Working collaboratively with local schools
4. Improving our governance
5. Community engagement

We have identified shorter-term objectives under each of these priorities that will inform school improvement and development plans. We will review and update our strategy each year.

School improvement and development plan (SIDP)

Governors approved our School Improvement and Development Plan in May 2023. The plan sets out key areas for school improvement over the financial year to March 2024 and informs decisions on the school budget.

Selected current priorities and investment include:

- Continuing to embed Talk for Writing³ and Talk for Reading⁴ as a whole school approach to raise the standard of writing in English and across the curriculum.

¹ GOV.UK (2014) [The School Governance Regulations 2013](#)

² FJS strategic priorities and objectives 2023-28: <https://www.falcon.norfolk.sch.uk/web/governors/>

³ Talk for Writing: <https://www.talk4writing.com/>

⁴ Talk for Reading: <https://www.talk4writing.com/talk-for-reading/>

- Developing our curriculum and teaching focused on children 'knowing more and remembering more'.
- Developing our outdoor areas to ensure there is lots to keep children occupied and engaged and to improve behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Review and amend the school rewards system of credits and stars to ensure it is manageable and provides lots of opportunities for children to earn credits across the school.
- Ensure our positive behaviour policy is applied consistently to maintain high standards of behaviour acknowledging that some children will have their own behaviour plans to meet their individual needs.
- Parents having the tools at home to support their children's mental health and wellbeing needs.
- Staff development and sharing expertise based on peer observation.

Progress against this plan is regularly reported to governors by our headteacher.

Outdoor play and learning (OPAL)

Having returned to our main school building in September 2022 we found that behaviour at breaktimes was not as good as behaviour in classrooms. There were simply not enough quality play opportunities for children.

Guided by the well-researched OPAL⁵ approach, we have invested in and developed the outside areas to ensure that play is prioritised and is a key feature of life at Falcon. This has been supported by generous donations of equipment from local people and companies.

Children now have many different activities and resources to enhance play at breaktimes and can now be found digging in our large sandpit, rolling around old tyres, banging drums, and playing on our outdoor stage.

We have recently appointed a part-time Play Co-ordinator to further develop play opportunities.

Specialist Hub of Inclusive Practice

Building on our inclusive ethos and strategic priority for nurture we were excited to have been accepted by Norfolk County Council as the home of a Specialist Hub for Inclusive Practice (SHIP).

This will see the former caretaker's bungalow repurposed as a teaching and learning space for up to eight children who need additional support to access the mainstream curriculum. We hope to welcome our first pupils in September 2024.

Governance

Following our annual review of our committee structure and governance arrangements we moved away from a committee structure, adopting a 'circle model of governance' with the whole governing board meeting about every five school weeks (eight meetings per year).

⁵ OPAL: <https://outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk/>

Most governors have additional individual roles and responsibilities such as for safeguarding, finance, inclusion, and other areas of compliance. These individual roles and responsibilities are set out in separate role descriptions based on Norfolk Governor Services templates.

At the time of writing (December 2023), our board has vacancies for parent governors and co-opted governors and we welcome expressions of interest – please enquire at the school office.

Link governors

Link governors are assigned to each of the core and foundation subjects of the national curriculum.

Link governors are responsible for developing an understanding of their curriculum area and meeting termly with the relevant curriculum leader (teacher) to stay up to date on how action plans are progressing, on developments and to offer governor support.

Governance documents

We have several key governance documents that set how we do business, all available on our website (<https://www.falcon.norfolk.sch.uk/web/governors/>).

These include:

- Our strategic priorities and objectives (2023-28)
- Our instrument of government
- Governance protocol and terms of reference for our full governing board
- Governor roles and committee membership
- Governor role description (NGA model)
- Governor code of conduct (NGA model)

The attendance record of governors for the last year is also available on our website.

Assessment of effectiveness and impact of governance arrangements

As well as receiving reports at governing board meetings, governors regularly visit school to meeting with school leaders, staff and children. As we embed our new circle model of governance, our continued focus is for governors with dedicated roles to fulfil these, and for link governors to enhance their understanding of their curriculum areas and develop relationships with curriculum leaders.

The school welcomes feedback from parents and children and undertakes regular surveys. In a survey of parents in July 2023 (113 responses):

- 97% agreed that their child was happy at Falcon
- 97% reported that their child feels safe at school
- 96% reported that their child does well at school
- 90% agreed that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved
- 93% of parents would recommend Falcon to another parent

Vision, mission and values

Following consultation with staff, parents and children, in May 2021, governors approved an updated vision, mission and new shared values for the school.

Our vision is:

Happy, safe and fulfilling lives for all.

Our mission is:

At Falcon Junior School, we provide a safe, encouraging and engaging learning environment that enables all children to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes to make the most of their lives, now and in the future.

We achieve this through excellent teaching, a nurturing ethos that builds relationships skills, and a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion that ensures fair treatment and opportunity for all.

Our shared Falcon values are:

Aspiration, Kindness, Resilience, Positivity, Creativity and Respect

Safeguarding

Our safeguarding information is held using the CPOMs online system which has proved robust and easy to use, enabling staff to identify and address possible concerns at an earlier stage.

We have five trained safeguarding leads who meet regularly to ensure safeguarding at Falcon remains effective and a top priority. This includes termly meetings with our named safeguarding governor and our chair of governors. Governors receive regular reports on safeguarding including compliance checklists and audits, and a list of improvement actions that is updated regularly.

Nurture and wellbeing

Wellbeing remains a priority at Falcon and governors have approved funding to comprehensively support pupil and staff wellbeing in our school improvement plan. Our nurture team provides personalised support to children who are finding aspects of school or their wider lives difficult.

Alex McAnulty

Chair of Governors

Edward Savage

Headteacher