



Date of Visit: 12.05.17

Name of Assessor: Janice Raczowska

Governor Mark Feedback Form

Longdendale High School Tameside

Recommendation: Governor Mark awarded

The Governing Board has the following strengths:

Some elements of the governing board's support and challenge represent best practice:

- This is a highly skilled, reflective governing board where several governors are very data aware and experienced in how a school functions because of their previous or current roles in governance at a range of schools, in business or education leadership. The governing board's relentless drive for effective governance, strategic leadership and ensuring positive outcomes for all students is clear; discussion with the governing board and meeting minutes evidence how each governor understands their core function and individual role in holding the school to account through commitment, appropriate support, robust challenge and debate at every meeting.
- Full governing board and Curriculum and Standards committee minutes often highlight where the governing board questions leaders' progress towards ensuring high quality teaching and learning in all subjects and show how governors routinely track performance management through regular school visits. For example, detailed governors' visit reports to discuss the status of the Science, Modern Foreign Language and Technology departments in the 2015-2016 school year evidence how staffing, curriculum, quality of teaching and results are probed then observations fed back to the full governing board. The recent Ofsted report of November 2015 states, "Governors set high expectations for staff and they are ambitious for the further development of the school. ...They have a comprehensive understanding of the quality of teaching and have held staff back from pay increases when they have failed to meet their targets."

Other strengths include:

- Meeting minutes confirm how the governing board works systematically together as an effective team with a shared purpose. The current Governor Handbook clearly sets out the high standard of governance and commitment expected of each governor and includes information about committee remits, future meeting dates and areas of focus to be targeted this year. An experienced clerk skilfully records meetings to show how the governing board question leaders and takes responsibility for agreed actions before the next meeting. Communication to the governing board is detailed and frequent regarding subject department developments, staffing and training, student year group progress and attendance which helps them track and be aware of forthcoming issues for action.

- Agreeing to support a vulnerable school through involvement as a founder member of the A+ Trust and robustly monitoring to ensure no detriment to Longdendale High School shows how the governing board is outward facing, willing to take risks and keen to drive school improvement within the local community. The governing board's close monitoring of staffing and performance management to ensure positive student outcomes enabled governors to agree to share leadership support and links with other schools because they knew that the staff at their own school had the capacity and skills to take up new roles and challenges.
- In order to be effective in its decision making and drive for school improvement, the governing board promotes triangulation of pupil data information with reports from school leaders, governors' well-planned visits and external reports; for example, reciprocal links in the A+Trust have enabled departmental reviews by staff from other schools to be requested. The governing board was fully involved in the school's applications for the Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Quality Award in July 2016 and Inclusion Quality Mark in February 2017; both awards are complimentary of the school's provision, leadership, and quality of information and input of the governing board in those areas.
- The governing board actively seeks the views of staff, parents and students to enhance provision and there is good evidence of how they strive to be accessible and answerable to those groups. Minutes of the Inclusion committee in February 2016 note how students Anti- Bullying Ambassadors were invited to present an overview of their work. Similarly, at the full governing board meeting in December 2016, a teacher leading work on staff well-being was invited to share progress on the initiative which complemented support for students already in place. At the same meeting, Student Union representatives gave feedback and shared their ideas about new strategies to improve attendance. In addition, the governing board is always available to speak to families at the front desk when they welcome parents to open evenings.
- The governing board benefits from a strong and very experienced chair who strategically leads meetings can provide leadership and school improvement training and who others comment is an excellent mentor to all governors.

The Governing Board should consider the following areas for further improvement:

- Build on the governing board's strong partnership and communication with parents by ensuring all aspects of the website are updated including the prospectus, exam data and the transition booklet to which prospective new families of Y7 students will want to view.
- The governing board agrees that whilst the headteacher's termly reports are very informative and valuable for their governance role, information could be more succinct and follow an agreed feedback on standard items. It may help to consider a style that focuses on the most important questions the board will want to ask and discuss, given current improvement priorities. The style of report should help the governing board to discharge its responsibilities in holding school leaders to account and work as a tool of accountability.
- As the school moves towards the creation of a Multi Academy Trust, the chair of governors agrees that a Visioning Event would be an effective tool to bring together school leaders and the full governing board as they strategically determine their outline structure, governance roles, responsibilities and proposed outcomes of the Trust.

The Governing board demonstrated that it has an impact on:

School Improvement

The Ofsted inspection of September 2013 judged that although there was some good and outstanding teaching, there was still much which required improvement, particularly in lessons and meeting the needs of students of different abilities. Internal monitoring by senior leaders also presented staff development as a priority issue to the governing board.

- The governing board asked senior leaders to devise a plan of action and through the Resource committee agreed to fund staff training, resources and create additional assistant headteacher

roles to lead key areas. A link governor with school improvement and advisor experience was assigned to monitor the progress of this priority in the school improvement plan.

- Monitoring of how the quality of teaching was improving was robust; termly reports from the headteacher, student progress data scrutiny feedback reports from the curriculum and standards committee and reports from a schedule of governing board visits to key departments, provided the full governing board with a range of information and confirmation of the pace of improvements in teaching.
- More robust lesson observations were introduced to enhance teaching alongside a whole school focus on effective marking and feedback to improve students' learning and progress. Additional training opportunities for curriculum leaders and action plans for those teachers judged to be requiring improvement in their teaching were organised and regularly monitored by the senior leadership team and curriculum and standards committee.
- The governing board received termly updates and a wide range of information about the improvements in teaching and learning at their full governing board meetings; feedback about the data impact, the effect of enhanced continuous professional development and the school improvement plan were standing items on the meeting agenda.
- The governing board also carried out scheduled visits to view new questioning techniques, lesson structures and initiatives to improve behaviour for learning; having members of the governing board with current and former educational experience in work scrutiny and lesson observation resulted in more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of this focus. A governor visit report of January 2015 notes how an agreed focus on student behaviour and engagement in lessons and progress data in the Modern Foreign Language department were honestly reviewed following staff absence difficulties and a dip in KS4 outcomes. The full governing board minutes of September 2016 evidence how a governor visit schedule to monitor school priorities continues to be agreed at the start of each school year. At the request of the governing board, relevant data, reports and time to view students' work is included in the visits.
- In May 2012, the percentage of teaching judged to be good or better was 54%. By September 2016, this had increased to 79% with 37% as outstanding. The inspection of 2013 had judged all areas as requiring improvement but at the next inspection of 2015, the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and outcomes for pupils were good, leadership and management were graded as outstanding and the school received an overall good judgment for school effectiveness.
- Outcomes for students have also improved with the percentage of students gaining 5 A* - C rising from 50% in 2011 to 67% in 2015, and 60% in English and mathematics in 2016 according to the new national measures. The Inclusion Award gained in February 2016 confirms that, "Every adult in the school shares responsibility to identify and remove barriers to learning for all pupils, through early identification of need and outstanding teaching and learning."
- Discussion with the governing board confirms they recognise how strong and effective leadership together with more consistency in policy and practice positively impacts on students' outcomes. Shared accountability for raising standards through an agreed plan and robust monitoring by the governing board and senior leaders has resulted in school improvement over time.
- The governing board fully supported the development of staff as Professional Advocates of effective practice across the school; staff skills in a range of areas including questioning, progress for vulnerable students and differentiation are identified and offered as a support to other staff.
- In the 2017 spring term headteacher's report, the governing board continues to receive detailed quality assurance feedback about teaching and learning in each department, the current staff team and training and curriculum developments. Similarly, an overall summary of each year group informs the governing board of initiatives which have had a positive impact and areas for further improvement; references to attendance rates for each year group also shows how the school has introduced a variety of support strategies to reduce any barriers to learning.

Pupil welfare

Historical data showed that disadvantaged pupils and those with specific educational needs and disabilities did not achieve as well as similar groups nationally; the achievement gap between groups

in school was wide and recognised as an area for action in the RAISEonline and Ofsted inspection of September 2013

- In order to improve the quality of provision for vulnerable pupils the governing board through the Resource committee allocated funding for training and resources and reviewed the staffing structure to create an assistant headteacher as SEND coordinator.
- An experienced link governor was appointed to monitor the progress of the priority within the improvement plan and the Curriculum and Standards committee and Inclusion committee monitored the progress of disadvantaged students with specific needs. Feedback to the governing board came through the headteacher's termly reports and from planned governor visits to key departments and scrutiny of areas for action.
- The ASPIRE Centre was established in the school to offer a range of learning, pastoral, behaviour and emotional support to any student who showed barriers to learning; the Inclusion team is based here. An LA visit in May 2015 commented that "The quality of input of adults working in the ASPIRE Centre is outstanding – they are highly skilled and doing valuable work." The Inclusion award in 2016 also confirmed the effectiveness of the provision. A member of staff was funded to train as a counsellor, key workers were allocated to students who were designated Young Carers and a range of bespoke support packages and links with external agencies were put in place.
- Since 2013, different cohorts of these designated groups have raised issues including poor attendance, mental health and poor attitudes to learning; there is secure evidence in meeting minutes and discussions with the governing board that prompt and rigorous action has been taken to aim to improve outcomes for students each year. Raising the attainment and progress of different cohorts of disadvantaged students and those with disabilities is slowly improving over time, but remains a priority focus in the current school improvement plan, in the minutes of the Inclusion, Curriculum and Standards committees and with the full governing board.
- In 2012, 23% of disadvantaged students gained 5 GCSE A*-C and in 2015 this increased to 42%. In 2016 there was a mixed picture with fewer disadvantaged students gaining grade C or better in English and mathematics GCSE, and improved results in grade C or better in all the English Baccalaureate qualifications, particularly mathematics. Minutes of the full governing board meeting in November 2015 evidence how visits to the mathematics department focused on the progress made by disadvantaged students in that subject. The February 2016 minutes of the Inclusion committee and subsequent meeting minutes confirm how the governing board support, monitor and challenge the impact of a range of strategies and resources to support students' needs; details of targeted intervention, enhanced marking, regular work scrutiny and tracking pupil premium students' attendance at revision sessions was discussed. The number of students placed in alternative provision because of improved school provision and a secure inclusion policy has been reduced from 17 in 2012/2013 to one student in 2016. Fixed term exclusions reduced from 117 students in 2012/2013 to 54 in 2014/2015 and 47 in 2015/2016.
- The governing board is pragmatic about the challenges in supporting disadvantaged students and those with specific educational needs and recognises the importance of strong leadership to implement change and enhance provision; meeting minutes and evidence of governors' visits to monitor policy and practice confirm the board's continuous drive to ensure school leaders put in place effective strategies to improve outcomes for these students.
- Although closing the achievement gap between groups remains a key area for action in the school improvement plan, their action plan, meeting minutes and discussion with governors demonstrated that the governing board is robust in tracking achievement and astutely monitors all initiatives to improve student outcomes.

Partnerships and community engagement

Leaders considered whether to become part of an educational A+ Trust at the time of the national agenda for schools to provide school to school support as local authorities diminish their supportive role. The Education Trust brings the school together with a local college and six schools in the Tameside area with the aim to work together to raise attainment, aspiration and achievement in the

area. A local school in the Trust was also identified by the Local Authority as vulnerable and needed an experienced headteacher for leadership.

- In 2013, the governing board agreed that the school become a founder member of A+ Trust with the chair and headteacher playing key roles within its structure. In 2016 the headteacher became chair of the Trust and was made executive headteacher in a linked vulnerable school. The situation was fully debated by the full governing board and the chair regularly met with the executive headteacher and head of the partner school to review the impact of the arrangement in both schools. In September 2016, the arrangements were made permanent and a new leadership team of substantive headteacher and deputy were agreed at Longdendale High School with some shared posts between the two schools.
- The governing board requested termly reports about the development and impact of the Trust on school improvement. Targets for each school were agreed and monitored through an action plan. The executive headteacher, deputies and other senior and experienced leaders provided a planned programme of support to the vulnerable school.
- Meeting minutes show how the governing board regularly challenged senior leaders about the impact of the Trust's work on staff and students; feedback reports from staff were requested at committee meetings and the chair provided updates at full governing board meetings.
- The A+ Trust's development and initiatives were agreed because of the governing board's detailed knowledge of the school and that there was increased staff leadership capacity and shared vision for ongoing school improvement.
- The Ofsted inspection of November 2015 notes, "The school's collaboration with other schools in the A+ Trust has been immensely beneficial across the board; as a result, Longdendale High School is helping to have a positive impact on improving education in the wider community." Similarly, in the 2016 inspection of the vulnerable school, inspectors recognised the extensive and positive input of Longdendale High staff and governing board and judged they were accelerating school improvement and outcomes for students.
- Meeting minutes at the full governing board meeting in April 2016 evidence how the development of the Trust and subsequent discussions about extending the partnerships with schools more formally as a Multi Academy Trust have been strategically well managed and monitored by the governing board. Skilled and experienced governors clearly show how they continue to be fully involved and committed to future partnerships and support for other schools and as noted in the minutes of April 2016, clear that this is without the detriment to students at Longdendale High School.

Further comments on the assessment:

The governing board has a strong evidence base of its involvement and strategic impact in the school and work of the A+ Trust. Discussion and minutes of meetings also shows how governors are planning in terms of succession planning to have the capacity for further growth in a Multi Academy Trust.