

Barley Lane School

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Head-teacher's report to governors: meeting date 03.02.16 1700

Context for report

The most important contextual element shaping this report is the ongoing work to make governance and leadership more reliably robust and challenging post the review undertaken in the Autumn.

A framework has been emerging and hardening as a result of the review and the discussion and action it generated.

The chair has made another planned but unannounced visit and spent the day meeting with staff and students; this included critical conversations with the school bursar about the single central record and accessing anonymised child protection records with the safeguarding support officer. She also went through the head-teacher's report to the newly formed safeguarding, behaviour, learning and teaching committee to empower her to scrutinise its minutes and challenge committee members about their work at full governing body.

Her visit also included softer but no less important insights into the nature and quality of the school's work that included: sitting in on a school assembly and meeting; observing the daily morning meeting between the operational lead and safeguarding officer addressing absences and consequent safeguarding risks and their management; being present when the school's senior designated officer for safeguarding shared with the support officer the current risks and steps being taken to make them safe; having lunch with students and staff; walking the school corridors.

Her report of her visit has or will be shared with governors.

The report to the SBLT committee was a new format generated by discussion begun prior to the review, informed by it and addressed again at our last FGBM and then modified further through informal exchanges by email with the chair of the SBLT-com chair DF.

The expressed wish of the chair and committee was the document would privilege the following: the Ofsted framework for inspection; Ofsted descriptors of good practice; school improvement activity and impact; emerging challenges and risks to school improvement and our response; it would include diverse and rich evidence to support any judgments and prompt scrutiny and debate.

The committee would then report to FGBM and allow the head-teacher's report and supporting evidence to FGBM to have a lighter more accessible touch and this credible because of the work of the SBLT committee. This wish for a more accessible report a direct outcome of the review of governance but only in the context of and underwritten by reliable rigour and detail at committee level.

The full report to governors would be shaped by the Ofsted frame-work and reflect the scrutiny work and input of the SBLT committee; in that sense it should be wholly in step with the minutes of that meeting and seek to address the key and most important elements of the committee's work for example and always "safeguarding". The report to SBLT-com is provided as an appendix to this report.

The report then that follows must reflect the priorities and structure governors have set out and the review prompted including the headteacher encouraging questioning and accountability.

Leadership and management

The three key improvement actions to share are: 1. governance has become a key leadership improvement activity post the review; 2. the safe operational leadership of the school by emerging senior staff relatively new to their roles; 3. healthy accountability and pressure on all teachers to be leaders commensurate with their experience and pay.

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1. Governance is tangibly changing and already wholly different as described in the “context” section with governors now embedded in leadership and improvement activity and this evidenced for example by much greater visibility in school and a collective focus on how good we are at the important things: safeguarding; behaviour; learning and teaching.

Governors can consider the new reporting to the SBLT-com, the minutes from that meeting and the visit report from the chair of governors as evidence of activity and progress in this area. Governors should challenge the Headteacher and chair of the committee about reported changes and their impact and what next? For example did lay committee members feel better informed and better able to challenge the headteacher and staff governors and associate governors about their work in school as a result of the new format for reporting and sharing evidence? Are governor visits purposeful and accessing and scrutinising the right things?

2. Our new assistant head-teachers and promoted leaders in the primary unit are all being exposed to operational leadership and measures of school stability and the critical positive climate for learning argue they are succeeding where previously delegation has created risks to good order and discipline.

Governors can consider the evidence provided for the SBLT-com that supports a judgment that the school is operating safely and that indicators of behaviour describe a stable school with a positive climate for learning? A short version/summary is provided (behaviour indicators Autumn term) and feedback from staff and children about levels of confidence and how safe they feel respectively plus senior staff on levels of challenge. Governors can challenge the committee chair and Headteacher about why behaviour indicators support the notion that the school climate is safe and purposeful.

3. The teaching team was subject to light touch scrutiny by senior staff (formal moderated observation happens in the Spring) and the school’s educational psychology service and frailties in sound classroom management were revealed but the team corporately responded positively and embraced changes to their performance management to bring a collective focus to core best classroom practice in SEMH (social emotional mental health). There was also scrutiny of planning and assessment in the Autumn term and peer presentations and sharing amongst the team.

Governors can consider the summary of activity to consolidate and improve the quality of teaching and the revised teacher performance management priorities. Governors can pursue the headteacher, staff governor SR (who leads on QoT) and chair of the committee about the usefulness and pertinence of PM goals and that scrutiny of basic fitness for purpose evidenced planning and assessment sound?

Learning and teaching and assessment

As described in the previous section there were two strands of activity.

1. The teaching team was subject to scrutiny by senior staff and the school’s educational psychology service and frailties in sound classroom management were revealed The team corporately responded positively and embraced changes to their performance management to bring a collective focus to core best classroom practice.

Governors can consider the summary of activity to consolidate and improve the quality of teaching and the revised teacher performance management priorities. Governors can pursue the headteacher, staff governor SR (who leads on QoT) and chair of the committee about the usefulness and pertinence of PM goals.

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2. There was also scrutiny of planning and assessment in the Autumn term and peer presentations and sharing amongst the team at prescribed twilight improvement meetings.

Governors should seek reassurance from QoT lead and staff governor SR that the scrutiny of planning and assessment evidenced their competence and ask to see examples of planning and assessment?

Pupil development welfare and safety

There are two key themes in this section: **1.** maintaining the safety of the children and young people in school and promoting a positive climate for their learning and wellbeing; **2.** Being alive to the multiple and diverse safeguarding risks to our complex and frequently vulnerable and risky students beyond school.

1. The SBLT-com has scrutinised in some detail behaviour and safety indicators with a particular focus on two significant risks: firstly **1i.** incidences of holding children and secondly **1ii.** the potentially serious safeguarding risks around absence and this in the wider context of concerns across Devon about “children missing in education”.

1i. Holding children is high risk and potentially highly contentious and is consequently and necessarily recorded in detail and checked at that time, weekly and half-termly and termly and a behaviour and safety report produced every half-term and an accumulative termly report shared with the SBLT committee. Reasoning, duration, levels of force, who is held, who holds and trends scrutinised and positive patterns and reductions sought through reflection and developing our understanding and practice.

It is the role of the committee to make certain their scrutiny of the data and staff governors satisfies them our practice was reasoned and reasonable and that there were no injuries or complaints/allegations and if there were they were transparently and scrupulously addressed. There were no injuries or complaints in the reporting period of the autumn term and reasoning and practice sound.

Governors must seek strong reassurance from the both the minutes and by the SBLT committee members that serious incidents in school have been managed safely and ethically and that guidance and practice fit for purpose for example how to respond to knives was raised at committee and pertinent guidance subsequently shared with the chair and will be shared at FGBM. Accessing the shortened version of the behaviour and safety review document sensible also even with scrutiny at committee level.

1ii. Absence from school in our setting does not just damage learning but in many and we must assume in all cases has or may have safeguarding elements. The SBLT-com spent considerable time scrutinising what are positive trends over time but there were and are frailties for example KS4 attendance is measurably in decline over the two half-terms of the autumn? However AHT DJ will evidence positive trends week by week as personalised learning packages for KS4 students wobble and are then supported and rebuilt; in the most recent “wobble” DJ has responded and attendance risen steadily from 50% in week one through 60% to 75% in weeks two and three respectively.

All governors must be aware that: every individual absence is checked every morning and that can and does lead sometimes to welfare checks at home by the police; any child dipping below 90% in any week is subject to scrutiny and if absence cannot be safely explained for example legitimate illness there is an intervention; that might be engaging with the educational welfare service or social care and in one recent case working with many other professionals to secure a specialist placement for an habitual absconder from home and school; trends are checked half-termly and termly.

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Governors must be satisfied absences are under reliable daily and accumulative scrutiny and subject to appropriate interventions and that the SBLT-com has looked reliably deeply at this significant welfare/safeguarding risk? Governors visiting school as the CoG did should seek to observe the daily ritual of absence checking and risk sharing described in her report and ask to access the annotated and filed weekly records of those dipping below 90%.

2. There has been discussion over time about how best and most usefully to demonstrate to governors that the multiple and diverse and often very sharp safeguarding risks are being made safe in a reliable and robust and proactive way; something beyond the sharing of how many referrals and meetings attended and invites and so on; something more human...

At committee we shared a number of documents: an anonymised extract from the headteacher's safeguarding diary; a chronology and brief description of safeguarding updates on the school's dedicated safeguarding email account; most useful a safeguarding audit using Ofsted prompts for inspectors and that is shared again with all governors. SBL-com Chair DF found it very useful and "rich" in evidence.

Because of the extent, breadth and depth of safeguarding risks work has continued and been ongoing that did not make it to my report to the SBLT-com and I will therefore be sharing first with FGB (how safe are children feeling?); that said the chair of SBLT-com and the CoG and safeguarding deputy SR have all read and agreed the updated and amended Babcock model CP policy set for formal adoption at our meeting on the 03.02.15.

Throughout the Autumn term in addition to CP training across the team (it was good to have governor MD join us) in child protection delivered by Babcock annually and ongoing refresher training for staff at the higher level three (MMc this term) the team has done work on child sexual exploitation (CSE) and radicalisation and explored together where there are risky contexts and vulnerable students. It is worth sharing too that SR attended a child protection training the trainer course to ensure we have in-house capacity to address any gaps but remain committed to the power of an outside voice (Babcock/DCC) and doing so every year.

With CSE and radicalisation emerging powerful risks staff have also accessed police on-line awareness training and a DCC/Babcock Power-point presentation sent to schools in December however the sessions where we focussed on risk assessing CSE and radicalisation in our specialist setting and for our complex and vulnerable children and young people most tangibly helpful it remains true that our and their best protection lies in the daily sharing of risks and both what is tangible and intuitive and this prompted and tackled every day at our morning briefing. SR's training made clear every discussion is a chance to learn more and deepen and broaden our understanding and awareness of safeguarding risks.

The recent work to specifically assess risk in CSE and radicalisation along with our documenting of all risks is anonymised and shared in the document "Autumn anon safeguarding diary summary".

Governors must privilege all evidence (we have very recent feedback from the children and young people that did not make it to SBLT-com that will be shared with FGB) of safeguarding and challenge staff/governors to develop and explain all safeguarding activity. Governors please note the statutory safeguarding audit was completed and is shared as an appendix to this report. Whilst it remains true as Ofsted set out "Staff model appropriate behaviour exceptionally well and deal with disruptive behaviour very calmly. As a result, pupils make good progress in telling right from wrong and managing their own behaviour." it is time to appoint a champion for personal development because we have the talent and capacity in the current teaching team to do so.

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Pupil outcomes

The critical matter of keeping the children and young people safe addressed in the section above dominated our discussions at committee and more developed sharing about leavers' destinations going back over three years.

1. The risks and actions and evidence shared in the pupil development, welfare and safety pertinent here. If governors consider there are currently 44 children who have been recorded in school as facing a safeguarding risk of some nature and there are over 500 entries in my safeguarding diary in a little over a year then the extent of risk and the significance of evidencing to governors the children and young people have been and are being kept safe is clear.

Governors must privilege all evidence of safeguarding and challenge staff governors to develop and explain all safeguarding activity.

2. Pupil destinations over time and the narrative of their lives was valued by the committee and noted by the chair for its humanity and worth and it is both poignant and affirming...

What happens to the young people as individuals not percentage GCSE scores or NEET measures is the self-evidently most important outcome and governors might consider pushing the team to develop more formally its existing support activities for former students?

Conclusion

- We have agreed to authentically embed governance in leadership and make school improvement-scaffolded by the Ofsted framework- our model. We have made governor visits essential and more frequent and fulsome. We have created dedicated committees suitably peopled to make scrutiny more powerful and reliable and changed how we report to and share with governors.
- We are seeking to broaden leadership capacity in a risky setting where protecting and promoting the positive climate for learning is critical but always at risk because of our student body's complexity and our frailties as people and professionals.
- We are determined to consolidate what is good in teaching as a platform for incrementally more outstanding practice.
- Above all other things we must work hard to keep the children and young people safe and there is evidence we are achieving progress in all these things.

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Summary of supporting documents*	Ofsted framework	comment
1. headteacher's report to SBLT-com	• All	attached
2. Minutes of SBLT-com meeting	• All	Sent by clerk to governors KF
3. CoG school visit report	• All	Sent by clerk to governors KF
4. Behaviour indicators (short version) summary	• Development, welfare, safety	attached
5. Staff feedback on levels of confidence	• Leadership and management	attached
6. Senior staff feedback on levels of challenge	• Leadership and management	attached
7. Summary of activity in quality of teaching	• Learning, teaching and assessment	attached
8. Revised teacher performance management goals	• Learning, teaching and assessment	attached
9. Revised and updated child protection policy 15-16	• Development, welfare, safety	Sent by clerk to governors KF
10. How safe are the children and young people feeling?	• Development, welfare, safety	attached
11. Summary of CP activity in the Autumn term (meeting invites, attendance, referrals)	• Development, welfare, safety	attached
12. Internal audit of safeguarding using Ofsted guidance for inspectors	• Development, welfare, safety	attached
13. Anonymised safeguarding diary entries	• Development, welfare, safety • Pupil outcomes	Shared in hard copy at meeting
14. Babcock safeguarding audit return	• Development, welfare, safety	Attached
15. Anonymised examples of weekly and half-termly scrutiny of absence	• Development, welfare, safety	Shared in hard copy at meeting
16. Guidance of searching and confiscation	• Development, welfare, safety	attached
17. Student destinations over time	• Pupil outcomes • Development welfare and safety	attached
18. Analysis of activity to support attendance through personalised learning packages	• Learning, teaching and assessment • Development, welfare, safety	attached

*Although adding to amount of written material governors can make a judgment about what to access and in what detail but judge it important to be transparent and encourage scrutiny