**Annual Report on Governance 2021/2022**

**The Context**

The unprecedented impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has continued to present huge challenges to all schools. As governors we are acutely aware of the pressures on staff to respond to ever changing scenarios and even though we are supposedly through the worst of it, the residual effects of the pandemic are still being felt.

Throughout the year Leaders have been required to react to a high level of staff and child absence as having been kept apart for two years, the level of our immunity from catching other illnesses has been depleted. Alongside this, many children came back to school having ‘forgotten’ how to socialise with each other, were nervous around increasing levels of people and were not in a position of being ready to learn.

The emphasis on pastoral care and settling the children back into the school environment was the focus for a full term and constant reassurance resulted in the children regaining some kind of ‘normal’ and learning could resume once more. Leaders and all staff invested a lot of time in ensuring that children felt safe, were well cared for and that their needs were met.

**Board Membership**

The Governing Board Membership has seen some changes during 2021-22 with new Governors getting to grips with their induction and learning how to be a Governor.

We have welcomed three new Governors to our Board, Mrs Jenny Mason, Mrs Joanne Eaton and Ms Parisa Nowshirvani who are all eager to learn. Even though Mrs Eaton and Ms Nowshirvani are staff members, the role of governance is very different to their day-to-day job and they are seeing school life from a different angle. Mrs Mason joins us from the private sector and brings with her a wealth of experience from her day job as a Commercial Manager, but also having had a background in Education and Training, she is well equipped to be able to provide the support and challenge that is required of a Governor.

We also said a fond farewell to one of our longstanding Governor’s Mrs Lisa Sellers, who has served as a Governor at Wellgate for 11 years and has made a significant contribution to the Board over that time.

Our core of experienced colleagues continues to support all aspects of our work and this has allowed us to activate our succession plan for leadership. We strive to attract new Governors with leadership potential to ensure that Wellgate can rely on strong governance, for now and in the future.

**Core Functions**

We continue to fulfil the three core functions of governance ie.

1. Ensure the school’s clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
2. Hold the Head Teacher to account for the educational performance of the school.
3. Oversee the school’s financial performance.

Governors have welcomed being able to be back in school to carry out their Link Governor roles which allows staff the opportunity to demonstrate the progress that children are making and enables Governors to delve deeper into subject areas linked to the School Improvement Plan. Link Governors report back to the full Board so that all Governors are kept informed in all areas.

**Our Link Governors are:**

* Mrs Sandra James – KS1/KS2, Reading and Writing, Curriculum, Safeguarding and Governor Induction
* Mrs Karen Buttery – Maths and Website
* Mrs Christine Barlow – continuing Professional Development
* Mr Aidan Begley – Stakeholders
* Mrs Andrea Laws – PHSE and RSE
* Ms Parisa Nowshirvani - Stakeholders
* Mrs Joanne Eaton – Art, Stakeholders and Friends of Wellgate
* Mrs Liza Walker-Hay – EYFS and Stakeholders
* Mrs Jenny Mason – Science
* Mrs Carol Stringer – SEND/LAC, Pupil Premium, Sports Premium and Safeguarding
* Mr Jason Eaton (Associate Governor) – Health & Safety

**Vision & Strategic Direction**

Recent developments have further confirmed our strong belief that a successful education in ‘learning for life’ must be grounded in far more than test performance. The Covid-19 crisis highlighted the essence of our vision, bringing into focus those vital priorities which, whilst difficult to measure, are nonetheless essential to a full and rounded education.

The ‘new’ focus on the need to foster positive mental health and qualities such as personal resilience, independence, confidence, collaborative attitudes, empathy and social responsibility has long been central to our vision for Wellgate and underpins every aspect of the school’s curriculum.

The evaluation of our interim one-year Strategic Plan, which saw a deviation from the three-Year Strategic Plan due to Covid 19, has been completed and we now have a new three year Strategic Plan which is aligned with the Self Evaluation Form and the School Improvement Plan. The Plan is monitored three times during the year by the Strategic Plan Group to ensure that our core functions, vision and values and key priorities are being upheld.

**Educational Performance**

Our School Improvement Strategy Group has continued to meet to monitor developments and the Head Teacher is to be commended for providing us with detailed information on which to base our judgements.

EYFS and KS1 have seen significant improvement in the delivery and outcomes of the Phonics programme adopted by school just prior to the country being locked down. Since school came back into full session, the children have gone from strength to strength and the investment of time and working with the English Hub is now paying dividends.

The delivery of the wider curriculum is now up and running with short-, medium- and long-term plans in place in all subject areas to ensure that learning is well sequenced and children know more and remember more. Staff have worked extremely hard and continue to ensure that all children can successfully access the curriculum and continuous observations and assessment inform the next steps for each child.

A strong inclusive ethos at Wellgate means that numbers of admissions of children with special educational needs continues to rise. This can present challenges and all credit should go to Staff who strive continually to meet needs and find ways of making it possible for every child to make progress in their learning.

Wellgate continues to invest in Continuing Professional Development for staff to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access quality, research based and accredited qualifications.

Wellgate staff are also to be commended for their highly valued school-based contribution to the development of their colleagues through the sharing of best practice.

This year has seen Mrs Woodcock become a Maths Specialist, helping deliver Maths Mastery to other schools and Mrs Egginton has achieved the status of Local Leader of Education, supporting other schools in a leadership capacity. Well done to everyone for your continued commitment to ensure the best education for the children of Wellgate.

**Pupil Performance**

Our responsibility for holding the school to account is ongoing. However, it has not been possible to gather the assessment data routinely used for this purpose, making it necessary to find other ways of judging performance. The previous progress data on which judgements could be based was from 2019 and this was skewed due to the disruption of the pandemic. Now that regular assessment of attainment and/or progress is once more being formally measured, Governors will be expected to return to the role of monitoring performance data, questioning outcomes and holding Teachers to account.

Pupil and Staff Wellbeing and Mental Health has been central to our discussions and will be an ongoing priority for the coming year. We are confident that these are deeply embedded in the curriculum at Wellgate and we consider them to be central to the provision of a successful learning environment.

Well-being surveys have been conducted over the year and practice has been adjusted in line with the minor action points arising from responses.

Oversight of the school’s response to the needs of vulnerable pupils and their families has continued. Safeguarding Governors have been kept informed of close contacts with some families and our Parent Support Adviser has undertaken regular home visits where appropriate. In some cases, collaboration with external agencies has been an important part of the school’s duty to keep pupils safe.

Attendance continues to be a priority as we are aware that some children (and Parents) have struggled in getting back to ‘normal’, but we will constantly strive to ensure that children are in school and ready to learn to ensure that they can reach their full potential.

**Financial Oversight**

The Finance Committee has met in line with the usual monitoring dates.

The impending increase in energy costs, staff salaries and raw materials presents a challenge to the budget forecasting process, but the Finance Committee is provided with monthly data from the Trust through our Business Manager and constant scrutiny is applied.

This will be a significant part of the financial monitoring next year and vigilance will be necessary to ensure that there is no negative financial impact on resources and teaching and learning.

The 3-year Budget Forecast has been agreed and is constantly monitored. Benchmarking has been used to compare financial performance with other settings, promoting discussion of any anomalies and allowing us to make informed decisions around future expenditure.

Care has been taken to improve the evaluation and the effectiveness of Pupil Premium Spending and the monitoring of the Sports Premium Grant is now afforded the same scrutiny.

**Stakeholder Engagement**

Increasing the engagement of Parents and Carers remains important. However, we still struggle to find ways of embracing the local community and welcoming into school life. It is hoped that our newly appointed Governors will provide some further impetus to improve on this situation now that restrictions on having people come into school have been lifted.

**Governor Training**

Our annual Governor Skills Audit in the Autumn Term will determine training priorities for this year and enable us to make any organisational adjustments needed to build capacity in our team.

Our ‘in-house’ governor development sessions for this year were dedicated to **‘Constitution of Governance’** *(Committees, Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct)*, **‘PHSEE and Incredible Me’** and **‘The Wider Curriculum’.** All were well attended and served to enhance governors’ knowledge and skills.

Some colleagues have also attended external training to update their knowledge and skills in specific areas. A list of courses attended this year can be found below:

**Wellgate Governor Training – September 2021 t0 July 2022**

**Various Governors have attended training on the following subject areas:**

Financial Planning for Governors

Engaging with School's Self Evaluation - Barnsley Risk Assessment

Promoting Positive Outcomes for LACs - Fulfilling the Statutory Duties for LACs

Ofsted's Education Inspection Handbooks

Safer Recruitment

Ofsted's Education Inspection Handbooks have changed September 2021

Safeguarding Training

Handling Parental Complaints

SEND Strategy

How do we govern the school curriculum?

What is a Deep Dive and how does this support the evaluation of your school's Quality of Education?

The Early Career Teacher Framework

The SIP: finding the simplicity beyond the complexity

Being an Effective Governor for English (Phonics and Reading)

Inclusion & Behaviour

Being an effective Link Governor for English

Governors for Schools Conference

* Making use of data management information systems
* Effective on-boarding of new governors
* What is good governance in 2021?
* Hot topics in governance
* Supporting your alumni's professioal development through school governance
* Engaging Parent Governors
* Multi- Academy Trusts: a case for collaboration of School Trusts
* Headteacher Recruitment
* Diversifying Governing Boards
* Remote governance and your Board
* Panel discussion: the future of school governance
* Campaign launch webinar: All Pupils, Every Ambition

Induction for New Governors

Governor Forum - Closing the Gap

Prevent and Radicalisation

Effective Headteacher appraisal

On-line Safety for Governing Bodies

Attendance in Schools: Effective Governance Oversight

Welcome to Governance, Part 1

Welcome to Governance, Part 2

The Governors' Responsibility for Safeguarding

The Schools White Paper 2022: what does it mean for Governance (with Better Governor)

Central to our strategy is our aim to provide ‘outstanding’ governance at Wellgate. Following a detailed evaluation of our current practice, the new Action Plan for the forthcoming academic year will be implemented.

**Trust Membership**

This year has seen Wellgate continue to benefit from its status as a member of the ‘Every Child Matters Academy Trust’.

Central to the Trust’s vision is collaborative practice and this is a strong driver of school improvement. The sharing of expertise between the schools in the Trust has strengthened considerably over the year and staff are regularly accessing development opportunities through contact with highly skilled practitioners from other settings. Subject Leaders across the Trust have met to share ideas, enriching their own practice and enabling colleagues to benefit from theirs, ensuring that the curriculum is dynamic and engaging for pupils.

The Trust also fulfils a ‘quality assurance’ role for all its schools and conducts ‘Peer Reviews’. This takes the form of a mini ‘inspection’ process, with Head Teachers from across the Trust visiting the school with a specific focus and reporting back to staff and governors on their findings. Feedback from this year’s Peer Review was extremely positive.

**Thank you, Team Wellgate!**

Finally, we must express our heartfelt thanks to all those at Wellgate who continue to selflessly dedicate themselves to serving the needs of our children. The staff’s amazing energy, resilience, enthusiasm, hard work and commitment, led by Mrs Egginton, continues to demonstrate a sense of pride in belonging to such a strong, supportive team all working to the common goal – to ensure that the children of Wellgate thrive and prosper and become responsible citizens of tomorrow. The mutual support and shared responsibility characteristic of our team is always much in evidence and the quality of care offered to our pupils is extraordinary.

Ever changing circumstances have presented enormous challenges to school leaders and continue to do so. We wish to acknowledge the debt of gratitude we owe them for their unceasing work to ensure that Wellgate is a welcoming, happy and safe place for the children to excel.

Our thanks must also go to Mr Slater and his team of cleaners who work tirelessly to ensure that the premises are clean and well prepared to accept staff and children every day.

We feel privileged to work with a Head Teacher who welcomes governor oversight and who shares readily the wealth of information needed for us to properly fulfil our responsibilities. Her continued commitment to the school and our children is deeply appreciated.

**Carol Stringer**

**Chair of Governors**

**September 2022**