

## **CAA GOVERNANCE IMPACT STATEMENT 2020-21**

### **The Impact of the Work of the Trustees at Cumbria Academy for Autism (CAA)**

The Trustees of CAA have a wide range of responsibilities. These responsibilities include ensuring that children are safe at all times, that they are learning effectively and making appropriate progress, that the school is financially efficient and that strategic planning for both the immediate and future is well thought-out.

This has become particularly important over these last two academic years, in light of the global pandemic, as the school adapts education in response to this. This period has been a real challenge, not only as a school in its early growth phase, but also with a cohort of vulnerable young people who have typically had a difficult journey through education previously and struggle with learning at home. These young people thrive on routine and certainty, so the disruption to life arising from the pandemic has had a profound impact on our students. The focus moving forward will be on supporting our young people to recover any lost academic progress whilst additionally supporting their physical and mental health in returning to life post-lockdown.

Trustees carry out their duties by constantly referring to CAA's mission "Creating Life Changing Opportunities" which filters directly into our ethos and core values of "AUTISM"; *Ambition, Understanding, Tenacity, Inspiration, Support and Morality*.

These help to shape the Academy Improvement Plan which in turn allow all stakeholders, including Trustees, to work towards and challenge the long-term goals. The most effective ways we have assessed these are through asking teachers and senior leaders how they are working to achieve those goals, investigating how effective the teachers, support staff and senior leaders are being in their work (by looking at class assessment data, talking to children and staff, visiting the school, observing lessons, reading through and checking student work, and making sure that senior leaders are held to account at frequent and regular meetings), and challenging the senior leaders to explore even better ways to achieve the school's goals.

Throughout the pandemic, where visits and face to face meetings have been unable to take place, we have used the internet as a medium of communication. All Trustees' meetings have taken place remotely, as have monitoring visits. The hard work of improving the school on a day-to-day basis is undertaken by the senior leadership team, the teachers and by all of the support staff, but the Trustees have also played a valuable role in ensuring that the impact of any strategies implemented are assessed, that progress takes place and, where it doesn't, challenge leaders to implement remedial strategies.

In addition to their strategic role of oversight and challenge, Trustees have specific responsibilities for Safeguarding, SEND, Well-being, Finance, H&S, and Teaching and Learning. Within each of these remits Link Governors have made at least one or two visits in person or virtually within the academic year and have submitted monitoring reports on their areas. This would have usually been two-three visits but given the circumstances this academic year, this has not been possible. However, reports have been completed independently and they have been submitted, discussed and revisited within Trustee meetings.

The following summary lists those areas which the governors have been focusing on in 2020-2021, where they have had an impact and, briefly, what that impact has been.

## **STRATEGIC VISION**

- Governors have provided support for the Head and SLT as they have pursued strategies to address all aspects of the school's performance.
- Responsive strategic support has been in place to support emergency decisions throughout the COVID crisis (particularly around school closures and reopening plans).
- Termly monitoring of the school's progress in line with the academy development plan (AIP), challenging leaders on those areas where progress has not been in line with expectations.
- Full governance review with the support of the National Leaders of Governance, to produce a plan for further developing the governing body, along with regular reviews and
- The finance reports are quality assured by the link-governor and full governing body ensure that there is a surplus which is spent on improving the quality of education.
- Supported the application and recruitment process for new members of the staff team.
- Supported with DfE monitoring visits and a full ESFA SRMA inspection.
- The governing body has welcomed four new appointments, with plans to appoint an additional Finance Governor, 2 Parent Governors and a Staff Governor in the new academic year.
- Strategic meeting to review CAA's vision and plans for development.
- Governance meeting to progress of governing board and understand the requirements
- Bespoke training sessions in academy finance, roles and responsibilities of Trustees along with internal training in data analysis and external training through on site and virtual partners.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

- There has not been any external moderation for assessments this year due to Covid-19. Lesson observations and tracking of student data has also been impacted.
- SEND link and T&L link trustees effectively questioning the impact of the curriculum and interventions on our cohort of SEN, PP and vulnerable children.
- There has been a constructive and continuous dialogue between the SLT and the Trustees helping to support increased pace and effectiveness of academy improvement strategies.
- Risk assessments throughout the lockdown period sought the Chair's approval and were discussed and approved at all Trust meetings.
- Plans for vulnerable children to access home learning were discussed and safeguarding procedures were continuously reviewed during school closure periods. The detailed safeguarding checks and monitoring by the team were recognised by the Trust for their effectiveness.

## **POLICIES, FINANCIAL EFFECTIVENESS & RESOURCES (PROBITY)**

- Policies required by law and by CAA are in place as planned.
- Full clean audit report for first year of operation.
- Trust support during RO's internal audit with full ongoing commitment from board to implement actions and recommendations.

- An effective budget forecast has been agreed, in line with future spending plans and reviewed against comparable provisions for benchmarking purposes. Plans for spending the money have been impacted during the pandemic, with plans for therapy procurement delayed. This has resulted in an additional surplus to the forecast budget which the Trust plan to utilise to bring therapy plans back on track and provide much needed additional staffing support to ensure high levels of behavioural support are in place moving forward, freeing-up essential management time for the SLT.
- The school has proposed the addition of a new calming safe space in the primary area along with a dedicated well-being room for staff.
- Support with the ongoing investment projects in the school building, namely, maglocks and specialist outdoor provision.

## **FUTURE PLANS**

The trustees want to embed the work which was started in the last academic year but has been impacted by the pandemic. Our main area of focus will be on the continued development of therapy provision, curriculum, student progress and quality of education, in all areas of academic learning and life skills, with a view towards the rapid recovery of lost learning and skills due to the disruption to education. A further key priority will be staff and student well-being, which has been impacted during the pandemic. The board will also consider the strategic growth and identify potential solutions for Post-16 provision due to the physical building capacity challenges within the school.

We will also look to further expand our board through active recruitment new trustees which will strengthen our areas of professional expertise. With the recent growth in specialist financial skills of the board, we will aim to undertake more detailed benchmarking reviews to ensure resources are allocated effectively and that the school continues to demonstrate value for money in all areas. We will also undertake parent trustee elections with a view towards further board expansion. We will continue to support and question the targeted outcomes for 2021-2022, carry out our trustee monitoring visits (virtually or in person) which are linked to our specific responsibilities and ensure that we are working within the framework for good/outstanding in all areas.