



# ME - Our journey to great:

With the capacity to stay there

Blueprint for our self  
improving system

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# Foreword: Our journey to great with the capacity to stay there

## **Our own self improving system**

At Priory, we want a system in which all children and young people achieve. We believe we can have a great school that delivers quality and equality for all our students. This will involve imagination, courage and collective action, with capacity building at its heart – leadership capacity, pedagogical capacity and the capacity for creativity and action.

This journey to great, and our ability to stay there, relies upon the values and behaviours of us, the staff, to propel continuing improvement. Our focus now is to 'unleashing greatness' within Priory itself – working collaboratively to improve the quality both of staff entering the profession and existing staff, cultivating peer learning within school and between schools, encouraging innovation to discover future leading practices and ultimately ownership and accountability by ourselves of outcomes and the quality of education at Priory.

Staff at Priory must therefore be willing to work to our value set. We are **committed**, we are **positive**, we **evolve**. The 3 pillars of Priory.

This self-improving system is by definition strongly school-led by us, but there is an important difference between a self-improving system and a school-led system. It is of course possible that a school-led system is not an improving one. It is also possible that a school-led system is self-serving rather than self-improving. The government therefore must be legitimately responsible for determining the standards and regulatory frameworks for accountability purposes, with our self-improving system having secure controls that act as a guard to self-interest.

Education will always be a political priority because of the amount of public money expended on it and because it is the key investment in the nation's future prosperity and wellbeing. We recognise there have been significant changes in education, yet for our journey to great to succeed, we must anticipate further change at a time when the education sector is change-fatigued. However, the key difference between current reform programmes and our journey to great will be a focus on us, the staff at Priory, taking control and accepting accountability in terms of leadership of change. The role of the extended leadership team will be to remove obstacles and create the conditions that will allow our self-improving system to emerge and be sustained.

It is now time for us at Priory to step forward and grasp this challenge. We must determine what principles will enable us to move steadily and determinedly on our journey to great and once there, ensure we have the capacity to stay there.

# Principles that underpin our journey to great

**We believe the following principles are fundamental to unleashing greatness in our school:**

**Quality and equality:** A good education for all is central. We believe achievement can be realised at scale for all children and young people. We reject determinism either by social background or by perceived intelligence.

**Accountability:** The highest form of accountability is the individual's professional accountability for the quality of his or her own work and to the pupils who we support. In our self-improving system, we believe that teachers and school leaders must be agents of their own accountability. The role of the state is to determine the accountability measures in the interests of the parents and the wider community, incentivising policies and behaviours that contribute to a high-quality education for all. The role of our governing body in holding us to account is central to our self-improving system.

**Evidence:** We believe there is a need for a strong system for analysing evidence so that it can be informed by professional expertise to improve the quality of practice and outcomes for our pupils. Both policy and practice should be evidence-informed.

**Evolve:** Our education system must prepare young people for life in a global, digitised community whilst continuing to equip them with core skills and an understanding of the best that has been thought and said. So education must both improve and innovate to stay relevant – we must both do things better and do things differently. A whole generation of children and young people are growing up using mobile devices and social media in an information age – their expectations will grow quickly. Pedagogical development is therefore both inevitable and necessary, but it will rightly build on the solid foundations that we already have in place.

**Collaboration and partnership:** There is a strong correlation between collaborative cultures and system success. We believe in continuous improvement through principled strategic partnerships: as government steps back, Priory will need to operate in such partnerships if we are to build capacity and address system-wide challenges such as succession planning. School systems improve when the quality of teaching improves – partnerships offer the best way to ensure the spread of professional expertise and evidence between schools. We believe it is necessary to consciously build professional capital and trust among teachers and create the conditions for teachers to work together to improve practice within and across schools.

**Common good:** We believe that education is for the common good. A good education creates the social conditions that allow young people, both as individuals and in groups, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily. A good education system builds character and resilience in all young people. We accept that sometimes the imperative for the common good might override our own self improving system – government has a role to play in ensuring that the system serves all equally well.

# Element One: Teacher professionalism

Teaching is seen as a highly skilled profession that is constantly being refined, challenged and developed to improve outcomes for students.

At Priory we will unleash greatness in the classroom by undertaking the following:

- Recognise that developing the quality of teachers, TA's and support staff is one of the most important jobs in the school and make it the starting point that professional learning could be better. Identify a talented school leader and give them the resources to lead on initial teacher education and professional learning. Cultivate peer-led learning – excite teachers about teaching, planning and evaluating their teaching together, observing and learning from each other and sharing what works within or across groups of schools – and recognise that external expertise will be necessary to avoid complacency.
- Work with teachers to develop assessment practice – have one or more of the strongest teachers train to be a chartered assessor and give them status in school.
- Take the lead in developing and testing approaches to closing the gap so that every teacher is engaged in and committed to constant evaluation of evidence and practice is honed and improved on the basis of evidence and growing professional understanding.
- Join a teaching school alliance or other partnership. Expect to give as much as you get from the partnership.
- Develop a formal relationship with a higher education institution and encourage teachers to undertake research and use a range of credible evidence to inform their practice.
- Ensure there is sufficient investment in professional learning for all staff, and that developing professionalism is a key strategic priority.
- Review our pay policy so that pay-related progression focuses on student outcomes, the progress students make and uncouple pay from lesson observations so that teachers are genuinely free to innovate, adopt best practice, test new practice and learn together.

## Element Two: Curriculum, assessment and qualifications

A broad nationally defined core curriculum framework in both primary and secondary exists. The framework is determined by an independent commission for curriculum review, which analyses the framework every five years – school leaders, governors, teachers, parents, industry, and politicians are represented on the commission. Governments get one chance to make changes working with the profession within any one political cycle.

The school curriculum is widely understood to be everything that a young person learns in school. The core curriculum is only one part of a school's curriculum. Schools can determine their own curriculum, which has brought creativity, dynamism and relevance into curriculum development. The curriculum in English schools is broad and deep embracing knowledge, skills and qualities.

We will unleash greatness in Priory by undertaking the following:

- Develop a bold curricular vision and pedagogical model that will suit the school context – not a pragmatic or instrumentalist response to qualification reform and accountability measures but rather a curriculum which builds character and resilience, inspires and enables young people to achieve and be successful, rounded people.
- Consider the use of technologies both within the curriculum and within Priory. Develop and test models of teaching and learning, enabled and accelerated by increasingly pervasive digital tools and resources.
- Build a culture of curriculum design and development across the school – enable extended leadership to work with each other and across schools and groups of schools to develop subject curricula.
- Build an assessment strategy around a growth mindset and positive psychology – challenge any and all perceptions about innate ability or low expectations.
- Talk to staff and students and invite them to discuss with each other about the world students will enter – help teachers to think about what students will need to be successful in the 21st century, and then how that might impact on what they do in their classrooms.

## Element Three: Funding and governance

We will unleash great governance and secure the future by undertaking to:

- Foster a climate whereby the governance of the school is kept under review. Consider an external review of governance with the aim of working in a more skilled, focused and effective way; being aware of the freedoms to work in different ways; ensuring that there is clarity of vision for and that the governing body is confident that it has a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities and the right number of skilled and committed governors. Have a written document that sets out how the governing body will work with senior leaders, stating the roles and responsibilities of each.
- Review the governing board's constitution, ensure there is a clearly defined process to appoint and remove governors with a protocol for deciding renewals to terms of office. Actively recruit people with the right skills.
- Take a hard look at the school's financial position. Model the finances over a three to five year period – consider whether the organisation is sustainable in its current form and what action needs to be taken if it is not. Develop a shadow financial model that calculates and demonstrates a minimum sufficiency to inform strategic decision making. Form or join a formal partnership. Stay in control of the school's destiny.
- Provide leadership to the governing board. Build the right relationship, enabling the governing body to support the strategic direction for the school and to offer the right challenge and support.

## Element Four: Accountability

Accountability is the obligation of an individual and organisation to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them, and to disclose the results in a transparent manner. The highest form of accountability is the individual's professional accountability for the quality of his or her own work and to the people who the profession serves. In our self-improving system, we believe that all staff at Priory are agents of their own accountability.

We will unleash greatness by building accountability in Priory:

- Take ownership of accountability. In addition to the government's accountability measures, define performance measures that demonstrate whether the school is achieving its *own* vision and aims. Build capacity to use and interrogate data to create a rich picture. Focus on continuous improvement and doing things in a better way.
- Experiment with open data methodologies to make our data genuinely useful to parents and other community members.
- Develop teachers so that they are agents of their own accountability, committed to professional learning – improving their pedagogical skills, accessing and using best evidence, innovating, evaluating and improving learning. Aspire to having teachers initiate conversations about what needs to improve rather than middle or senior leaders.
- Free teachers from all unnecessary fear, uncertainty and doubt about inspection and/or myths about what they believe inspectors want to see – build their confidence to focus on developing professional knowledge and skill rather than a narrow compliance culture. Build a culture of learned resourcefulness, optimism and hopefulness.
- Develop governors' understanding of accountability measures – build their capacity as agents of accountability so that they are able to challenge you and tell the story of the school's performance and areas for improvement confidently.
- If peer review is not yet sufficiently robust, then explicitly develop it or consider buying in or accessing a credible independent external adviser who can challenge you and the governing body on areas for development.
- Develop intelligent measures of performance for each of the school's strategic priorities and hold leaders to account for these.
- Ensure that external data is scrutinised and that there is a secure understanding of how Priory is benchmarked.

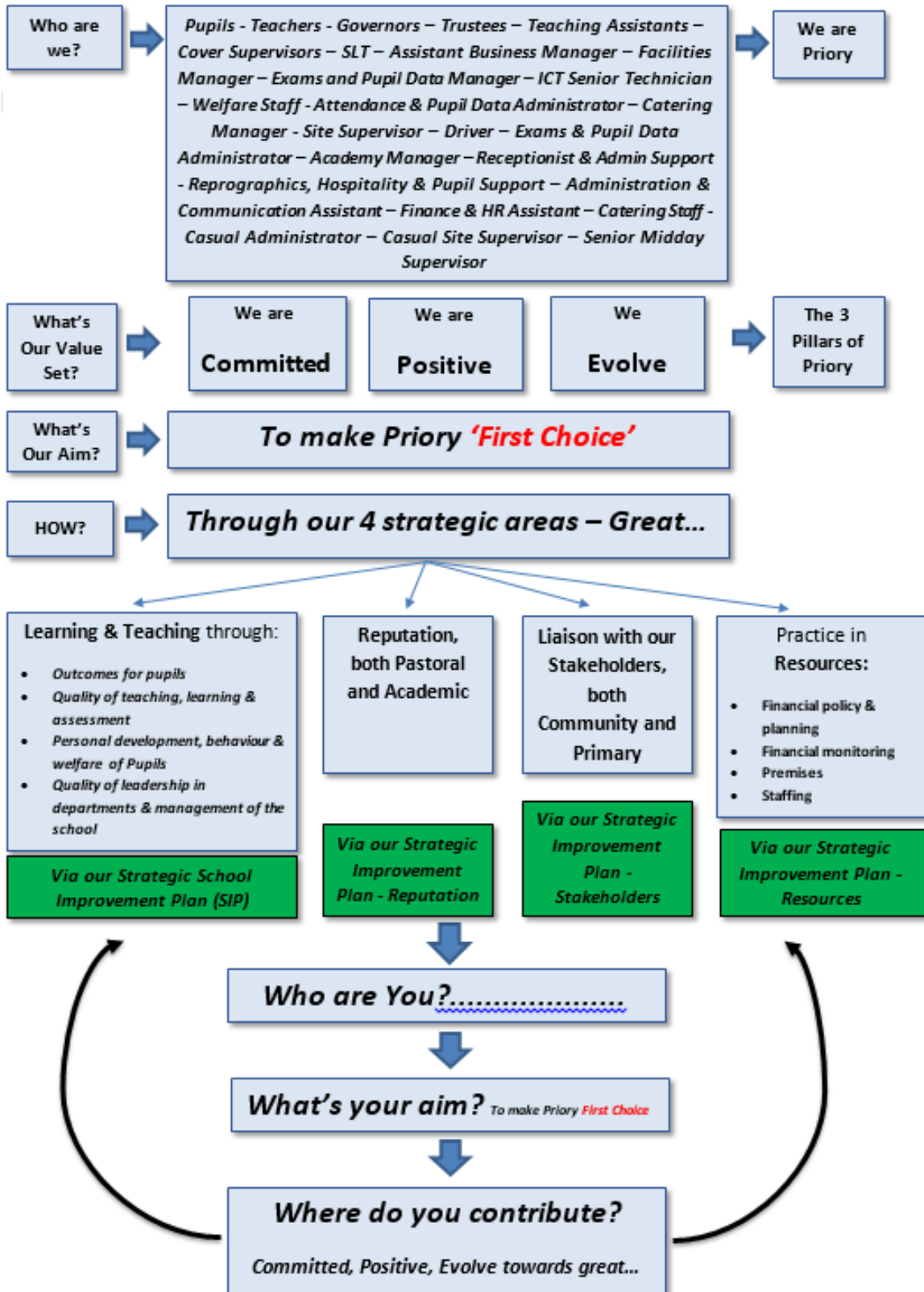


## Element Five: Scrutiny, intervention and support

- Build system leadership capacity. Working with other schools in our area to agree and implement strategic approaches for addressing systemic challenges, such as succession planning, subject networks and school-to-school support.
- Join or initiate a teaching school alliance or other partnership.
- Ensure the success of emerging school-led structures, like the Teaching Schools Council and Headteacher boards by engaging actively with them.

## Element Six: Strategic planning

Turning these principles into reality starts with our collective vision and our '*strategic plan on a page*'.



## **Whole school self-evaluation and whole school improvement planning**

Constant evaluation of evidence and practice in our strategic areas is then key to our improvement and growing professional understanding. For the strategic areas of:

- Reputation, both Pastoral and Academic
- Liaison with our Stakeholders
- Practice in resources

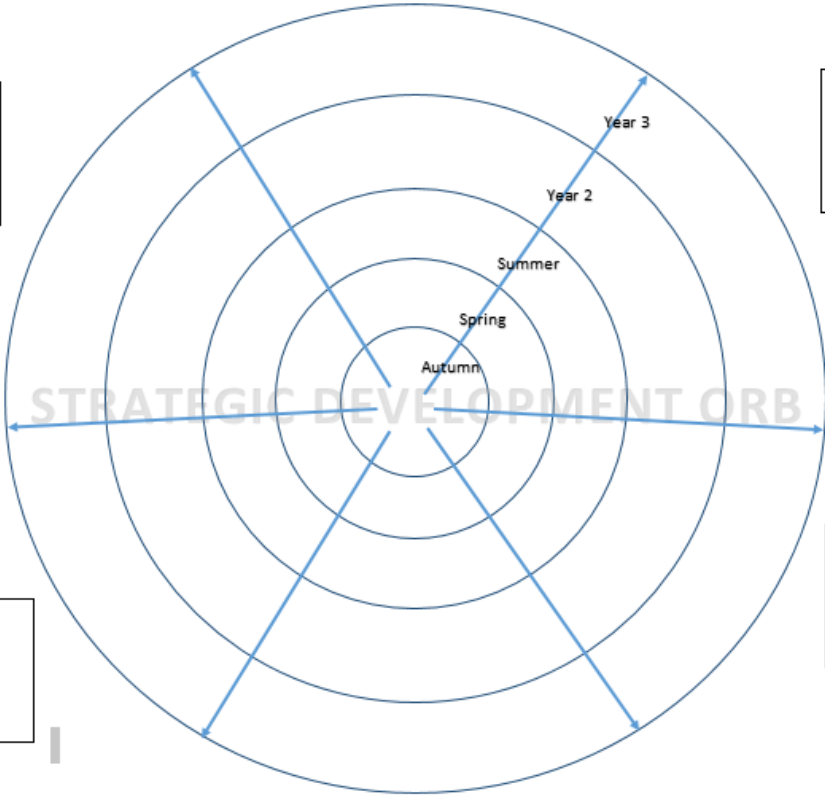
we evaluate (via a SWOT analysis) and have strategic improvement plans for each area:



Action Point:  
How will we address this?

Action Point:  
How will we address this?

Action Point:  
How will we address this?



Action Point:  
How will we address this?

Action Point:  
How will we address this?

Action Point:  
How will we address this?

**Strand:** Reputation/Liaison/Resources  
**Year:** 2015 - 2016

Action point:	What CPD is necessary to support this?	What costs are related to this?
1		CPD: Curriculum necessities and consumables: Development:
2		CPD: Curriculum necessities and consumables: Development:
3		CPD: Curriculum necessities and consumables: Development:
4		CPD: Curriculum necessities and consumables: Development:
5		CPD: Curriculum necessities and consumables: Development:
6		CPD: Curriculum necessities and consumables: Development:

However, in line with the Common Inspection Framework (CIF), for our strategic area of Learning and Teaching, our core purpose, the format is slightly different. We make four key judgements on the following areas, in the following order which result in a whole school self-evaluation (w-SSE) and subsequent whole school improvement plan (w-SIP) for each:

1. Quality of teaching, learning and assessment
2. Personal development, behaviour and welfare
3. Outcomes for pupils.
4. Effectiveness of leadership and management - we also evaluate in here the effectiveness of our arrangements for safeguarding pupils. This is done via our separate safeguarding SSE and SIP which also incorporates behaviour.

### **Whole school self-evaluation (w-SSE)**

We use the following four-point scale to make all judgements in these areas:

- grade 1: outstanding
- grade 2: good
- grade 3: requires improvement
- grade 4: inadequate.

### **Judging our overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of education at Priory**

We use all our evidence to evaluate what it is like to be a pupil at Priory. Evidence comes from a variety of sources, but in the main will be obtained via our extended leadership team through department self-evaluations (DSE's) and department improvement plans (DIP's). In these, we consider whether the standard of education in each department is good or whether it exceeds good and is outstanding. If it is not good, then we will consider whether it requires improvement (RI) or is inadequate. Should it be deemed necessary for a department to be judged as RI, then the department will go through a '**RI programme of inspection**' in order to bring about rapid improvement, the details of which are contained within the '*RI programme of inspection*' document.

In making our judgements about Priory's **overall** effectiveness, we again consider whether the standard of education is good or whether it exceeds good and is outstanding. If it is not good, then we will consider whether it requires improvement or is inadequate.

In judging our overall effectiveness, we first take account of our key judgements in:

1. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment
2. Personal development, behaviour and welfare
3. Outcomes for pupils.

We then make the key judgement on the effectiveness of leadership and management which includes a judgement about our effectiveness in our arrangements for safeguarding pupils.

Before making the final judgement on our overall effectiveness, we also evaluate:

- The effectiveness and impact of the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.
- This is done via our separate SMSC SSE and SIP.
- The extent to which the education provided by the school meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school including:
  - disabled pupils
  - Pupils who have special educational needs.
  
- This is done via our separate Special educational needs (SEN) SSE and SIP.

We then make our overall effectiveness grade based on the following:

**Outstanding (1)**

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding.  
All other key judgements are likely to be outstanding. In exceptional circumstances one of the key judgements may be good, as long as there is convincing evidence that the school is improving this area rapidly and securely towards outstanding.  
The school's thoughtful and wide-ranging promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their physical well-being enables pupils to thrive.  
Safeguarding is effective.

**Good (2)**

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is at least good.  
All other key judgements are likely to be good or outstanding. In exceptional circumstances one of the key judgement areas may require improvement, as long as there is convincing evidence that the school is improving it rapidly and securely towards good.  
Deliberate and effective action is taken to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their physical well-being.  
Safeguarding is effective.

**Requires improvement (3)**

Other than in exceptional circumstances, it is likely that, where the school is judged to require improvement in any of the key judgements, the school's overall effectiveness will require improvement.  
There are weaknesses in the overall promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.  
Safeguarding is effective.

**Inadequate (4)**

The judgement on the overall effectiveness is likely to be inadequate where any one of the key judgements is inadequate and/or safeguarding is ineffective and/or there are serious weaknesses in the overall promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.



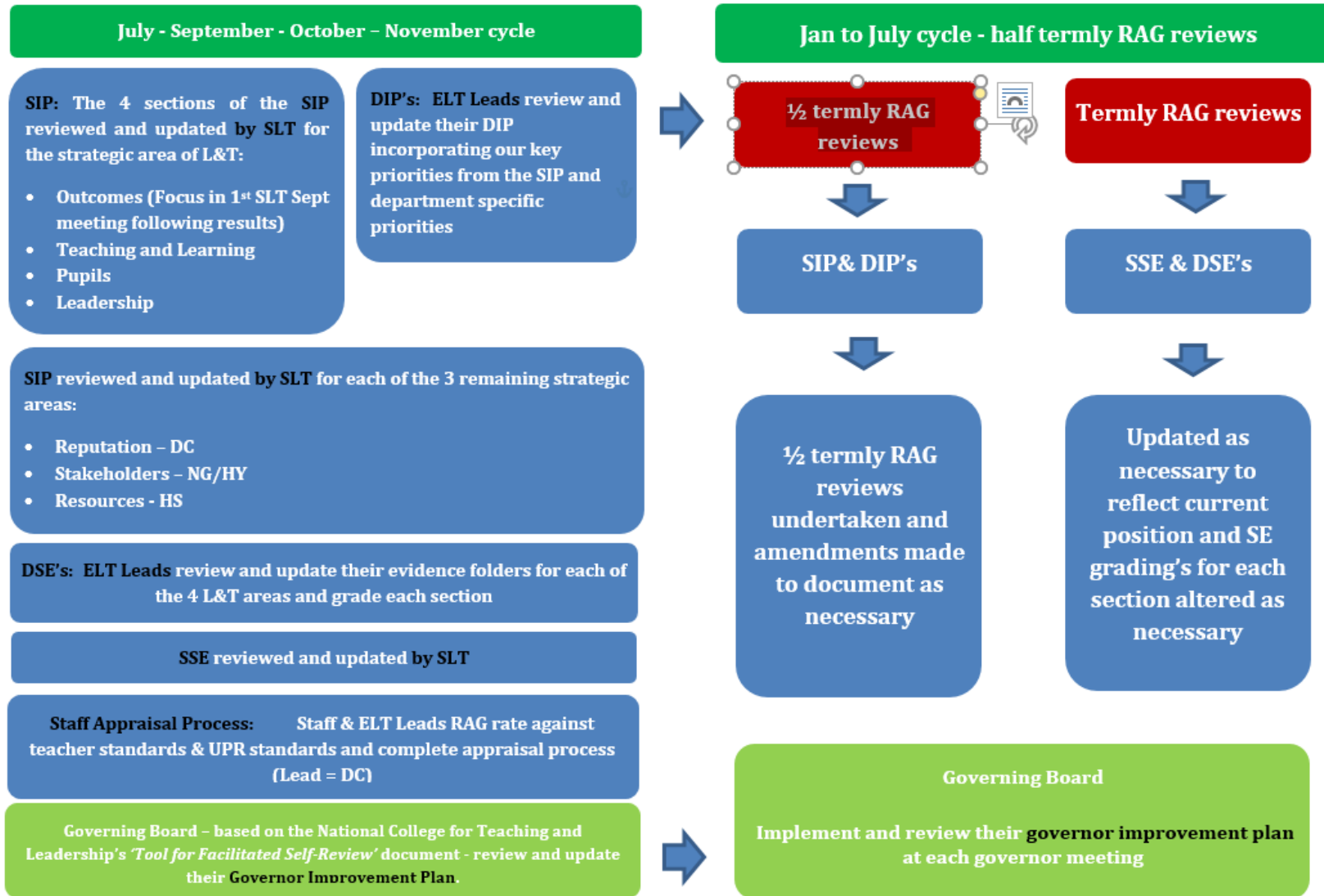
## **Whole school improvement planning**

Once our whole school self evaluation is complete (*PPA Whole School Self Evaluation document*), the areas for development identified within it become our objectives in our whole school improvement plan.

The whole school improvement plan is then completed (*PPA Whole School Improvement Plan document*).

## **RAG status definition**

The monitoring of all aspects of Penwortham Priory Academy's improvement planning is undertaken at timely intervals via our *'timeline of whole school self-evaluation and timeline of whole school improvement planning'*:



This monitoring also depends heavily on accurate RAG status at these timely intervals. An inappropriate RAG status can and will lead to issue avoidance and project failure. RAG status must not be used to hide problems, but used as a way of seeking support and guidance. Our RAG status definition and associated actions are in relation to the SIP are:

STATUS	DEFINITION – at the point of review...	ACTION
<b>GREEN</b>	The action/objective has been achieved	A decision is made as to whether the action remains ongoing and whether further monitoring is required. The timeline for this monitoring is established.
<b>BLUE</b>	The action/objective is on target to succeed by the specified date  The timeline/cost/objectives are within plan	None
<b>AMBER</b>	The action/objective has a problem but action is being taken to resolve this OR a potential problem has been identified and no action may be taken at this time but it is being carefully monitored  The timeline/cost/objectives may be at risk	Raise awareness to SLT and Governor’s Subcommittee. The SMT lead will determine if an exception report is necessary.
<b>RED</b>	The action/objective requires immediate action/intervention to achieve objectives  The timeline/cost/objectives are at risk	Raise awareness to SLT and complete an exception report to explain. Indicate whether approval for budget, time or scope changes are necessary.

Governor's RAG status definition and associated actions in relation to their IP are:

STATUS	DEFINITION - at the point of review...	ACTION
GREEN	Fully Compliant to the statement	Monitoring remains ongoing to ensure status is maintained and sustained. The timeline for this monitoring is established.
AMBER	Partially Compliant to the statement  The action/objective has a problem but action is being taken to resolve this OR a potential problem has been identified and no action may be taken at this time but it is being carefully monitored	Raise awareness to SLT.  Discuss with SLT whether further actions are required to improve in this aspect. Indicate whether approval for budget, time or scope changes are necessary.
RED	Non-Compliant to the statement	Raise awareness to SLT and complete an exception report to explain. Discuss with SLT what actions are required to improve in this aspect. Indicate whether approval for budget, time or scope changes are necessary.

## **Priory's Governing Board – how we operate**

To ensure effective accountability of these processes, we recognise effective governing boards are prepared and equipped to take their responsibilities seriously.

As such, we continuously aim to improve the effectiveness of our school governance. Underpinning this is an expectation that governing boards and school leaders will jointly develop effective working practices which are mutually supportive and respectful of each other's roles and responsibilities.

To facilitate this process, we follow the key guiding principles outlined in the ASCL, the Local Government Association, the National Association of Head Teachers and the National Governor's Association joint guidance paper *'What governing boards should expect from school leaders and what school leaders should expect from governing boards'*.

This guidance specifically outlines what governing boards and school leaders must have:

### **Governing boards must have:**

- the right people round the table
- an understanding of their role and responsibilities
- a good chair
- professional clerking
- good relationships based on trust
- a knowledge of the school – the data, the staff, the children, the parents, and the community
- a commitment to asking challenging questions
- the confidence to have courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people

### **School leaders in return must have:**

- an understanding of governance, including acknowledging the role of the school's accountable body
- a willingness to provide information in the most appropriate way in order that the governing board can carry out its role
- a willingness to be challenged
- reasonable time to devote to ensuring professional relationships are established with governors and trustees
- the skills and understanding to develop effective working relationships with the governing board

Then addresses four key areas on how best to operate:

1. The respective roles of governance and management
2. Developing and supporting the governing board
3. Effective ways of working and
4. Understanding the school and engaging with stakeholders

At Priory, our Governing board aims to operate in these ways.

## **1. The respective roles of governance and management**

Governance is strategic and management is operational. This distinction between governance and management needs to be clearly understood by all, so that governors and trustees are not asked to, and do not try to, involve themselves in day to day management. Governors and trustees are there to govern, not to carry out other work within a school on a pro-bono basis.

School leaders must not be micro-managed. The governing board should concentrate on matters related to strategy and school improvement, delegating to school leaders those tasks which are operational (for example, drafting policies, making judgments about teaching quality, and recruiting and deploying staff below senior leadership level).

The governing board, in partnership with the school leadership, should determine and articulate a clear vision as to where they want the school to be in three to five years' time – *our 'Journey to Great'* document. This should lead to the identification of the key strategic priorities that will drive the agenda of governing board meetings. The headteacher will be responsible for ensuring the strategy is delivered.

## **2. Developing and supporting the governing board**

### **Skills audit:**

All governing boards should carry out a skills audit of governors and trustees to identify skills gaps and development needs, and how these can be filled through recruitment and training of governors. NGA has a skills audit and matrix for schools to use.

### **Recruitment:**

When seeking to fill vacancies on the governing board, the role and level of commitment and responsibility should be outlined along with any particular skills that the governing board is seeking. Such vacancies should be advertised as widely as possible locally and a transparent process for recruitment and selection, including interviewing prospective candidates, should be adopted.

### **Induction:**

There should be a clear expectation for all new governors and trustees (including staff governors and trustees) to undertake both school-based and professional induction training.

### **Continuous professional development (CPD):**

Governors and trustees must be willing to participate in ongoing relevant training, both internal and external. Governors and trustees need to continuously seek to update their knowledge, including through identifying good practice in other schools and meeting governors and trustees from other schools. This can also encourage collaboration between schools or groups of schools to improve outcomes for children.

### **Reviews of performance:**

A governing board should regularly evaluate its own impact, and also implement a process for reviewing the contribution of individual governors and trustees and identifying any development needs. To facilitate this process, the governing board at Priory has a '*Governance Improvement Plan*', which incorporates the National College for Teaching and Leadership's '*Tool for Facilitated Self-Review*' document. This review tool draws on the Ofsted School Inspection Handbook and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Education Governance and Leadership's '*20 key questions every governing board should ask itself*'. This '*Governance Improvement Plan*' is implemented and

reviewed over the course of the academic year as per our *'timeline of whole school self-evaluation and timeline of whole school improvement planning'*.

### **Succession planning:**

It is good practice to develop recruitment and development plans to replace board members over time and for no one to serve for more than two four-year terms in one school.

### **Seven principles of public life:**

Governors and senior leaders must carry out their roles in accordance with the seven principles of public life as set out by Lord Nolan: to act selflessly, with integrity, objectively and be accountable, open and honest and demonstrate leadership skills.

## **3. Effective ways of working**

### **Clerking:**

The clerk to the governing board must be properly qualified and remunerated, and capable of servicing and advising the governing board with independence. They should be employed to carry out this role with a separate job description and a specific contract, with sufficient time to manage the business of the governing board, and with CPD to ensure that their skills and knowledge remain up to date.

[www.ascl.org.uk](http://www.ascl.org.uk)

[www.nga.org.uk](http://www.nga.org.uk)

[www.naht.org.uk](http://www.naht.org.uk)

### **Chairing:**

The headteacher and the chair of the governing board should communicate regularly at mutually convenient times, while understanding that the chair is unable to take decisions on behalf of the governing board (except in very limited situations). The chair should seek external support when necessary and be encouraged and prepared to join the National College for Teaching and Leadership's development programme for chairs of governing boards. It is considered good practice for a chair to serve no more than six years in the role on one governing board (under normal circumstances).

### **Code of conduct:**

We recommend that each governing board adopts a code of conduct setting out the expectations placed on governors and trustees and signed by all governors and trustees. This code should set out any expectations on confidentiality of sensitive or personal information and include a commitment to the seven principles of public life. NGA has a model code for schools to adapt. Governors and trustees should do their best to avoid conflicts of interest, and must declare any which exist. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, it is not considered good practice to govern on more than two boards.

### **Size and composition:**

Within a broad regulatory framework, governing boards are free to determine their own size and composition. In considering changes to their structure, governing boards need to consider how effective they are currently and whether the priorities they have determined for the school require additional skills/ experience on the board.

**Meetings:**

It is the joint responsibility of school leaders and the governing board to ensure that meetings are well planned, at appropriate intervals, with manageable agendas that are appropriate to the remit and driven by school improvement priorities. Papers must be provided seven days in advance of meetings. The headteacher is present or is represented at full governing board meetings. Governing boards must have regard to the work-life balance of school leaders when arranging meeting times, and school leaders should have regard to governors and trustees' work and other commitments.

**Delegation:**

The role of the governing board is often to ensure that areas for which they are responsible are being delivered effectively, rather than delivering it themselves. Governing boards have considerable freedom to delegate work to committees or to the headteacher and need to ensure that they make effective use of this. Governing boards should be mindful of the need to retain a strategic focus and delegate where appropriate to the headteacher e.g. staff recruitment (governors should not be part of interview panels except for senior leadership posts), policy development.

**Policies:**

Governing boards should only decide the principles guiding school policies and should delegate drafting of the remainder of policies and all procedures to school leaders. Governing boards must ensure school leaders have the expertise or access to the relevant external expertise to carry out these responsibilities.

**Appraisal of the headteacher:**

The governing body of a maintained school is required to carry out the performance appraisal of the headteacher and must appoint an external adviser to support it in doing so. Although not mandatory, it is also good practice for academies to have in place headteacher appraisal processes. The headteacher's objectives should be closely related to the agreed strategic priorities. A discussion on development needs must be part of the appraisal process.

**Duty of care:**

The governing board must remember that it has a duty of care to the headteacher, including ensuring that the head has a reasonable work-life balance. The governing board's role is to build a productive, respectful and supportive relationship with the headteacher while using appropriate challenge to hold them to account for their own and the school's or group of schools' performance.

**4. Understanding the school and engaging with stakeholders**

The governing board monitors the work of the school and it is vital that it receives the information required to carry out that role promptly; the governing board is primarily reliant on school leaders to provide this, but should also seek external advice and verification where possible.

**School self-evaluation:**

Governing boards must be involved in all stages of the strategic planning cycle, the review of the previous year and the setting of the priorities for the coming year to reflect the challenges and opportunities that the school or group of schools faces. It can be very useful for a governing board and senior leaders to hold an annual joint strategic planning session so that the vision, ethos and strategy for the coming three to five year period are developed together.



**Attainment data:**

The RAISEonline summary report of the previous year's attainment should be discussed by governors and trustees alongside the school's own current data, and access to the full RAISEonline report should be given to at least one governor. All governors and trustees should look at their schools Fischer Family Trust (FFT) Governor Dashboard, as well as the Ofsted data dashboard. NGA provides briefings for governors and trustees on understanding RAISEonline and the FFT Governor Dashboard.

**Current information:**

Senior leaders should provide the information necessary to monitor progress against annual development priorities, targets and budgets: this will include information on the progress of groups of students, quality of teaching, staff performance and financial information.

**Surveying pupils, staff and parents:**

The governing board has to understand the needs of these three groups, and must make every effort to obtain their views. This can be done in a number of ways including parent and student councils, written surveys or focus groups.

**Visiting the school:**

Visits during the school day provide important opportunities for governors and trustees to better understand the school and the learning environment and to undertake their monitoring role. Visits should always have a focus which should be linked to the strategic priorities, and governors need to be clear about their role (i.e. they are not inspectors). School leaders should welcome governors and trustees to visit schools. Visits should be arranged in accordance with an agreed protocol which is communicated in advance to governors and trustees and school staff involved in visits. All parties need to be sensitive to the pressures of the school calendar, and governors and trustees' other commitments. At Priory, we have a '[Curriculum link governor](#)' document which outlines the rationale for link governors, minimum expectations and other ways governors can involve themselves in the life of the school:

## Curriculum Link Governor

### Rationale

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A link governor is a governor appointed by the governing body to act as the link or liaison between the governing body and a specific subject, curriculum area or aspect of the work of the school.

During the inspection process, inspectors will ask to meet one or two governors to informally discuss their knowledge of the school and involvement in securing its improvement.

Having Curriculum Link Governors will aid this process. Governors will be able to describe how their role enables them to monitor the work of the school more directly.

For example, Governors might mention that the role allows them to:

- Get into school to see how things are going
- Look at the department's data
- Discuss with teachers, heads of department and SLT leads how well they feel learning and teaching is going
- Hold discussions with pupils
- Report back to the governing body on their findings

The development of a good working relationship based on mutual trust with all staff is essential if the link governor is to be effective in this role, with link governors understanding that their role is as a source of support to the school and a source of information, where necessary, for the governing body.

### Minimum Expectations

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To meet termly with the TLR leader & SMT lead in order to:

- Get into the department to see how things are going
- Be aware of the subject curriculum and how it is being implemented
- Contribute to the monitoring (RAG) of the Department Improvement Plan (DIP)
- Review information from assessment statistics in order to contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of standards

### Other Involvement

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- Jointly observe, by agreement with teaching and other staff, lessons or other activities in order to gain an understanding of teaching and learning strategies
- Invite to Wednesday evening collaborative planning sessions
- Invite to department meetings
- Communication/liaison with the SLT lead as necessary
- Invite to attend any other department related activities - trips, visits, intervention activities, primary liaison work etc.

**Feedback from Ofsted:**

Recognising that Ofsted inspections take place at very short notice, governors and trustees should make every effort to be available at the school for these. As many governors and trustees as possible should take part in discussions with Ofsted inspectors. School leaders will support governors and trustees' requests that these sessions are held at the beginning or end of the working day to enable governors and trustees to attend. As many governors as possible should attend the feedback sessions at the end of an inspection.

**Reporting to the community:**

The governing board must ensure it reports to interested parties and the wider community. This can be done in large part through the school's website, but other forms of communication should be considered. Governors should consider producing an annual report for parents.

## Postscript

We said in our foreword that we want a system in which all children and young people achieve. We set out a series of principles that underpin our blueprint and the elements required in order to achieve this.

The central premise of our blueprint is that deep and sustained reform of Priory's education system will not come from outside: it depends on us – all of us - the many, not just the few.

Our journey to great will involve a mindset – our system must not be composed of a series of givens. Rather we must be active, passionate, ethical and driven by our collective dedication and effort. We need to break any mindset that chain us to accept certain beliefs or ways of doing things.