

# **Linwood School Governing Board Annual Governance Report 2024/25**

## **Introduction**

This Annual Governance Report outlines the work and impact of Linwood School's Governing Board during the 2024/25 academic year. It highlights how governors have supported and challenged school leadership to ensure high standards of education and care for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The board is firmly committed to safeguarding and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure every student is safe, valued and supported and that the voices of students and families are heard.

The board ensures compliance with all statutory duties and oversees robust risk management, maintaining a safe and supportive environment for all students.

The report demonstrates our commitment to effective oversight, strategic leadership and collaboration with the wider school community as Linwood continues to grow and develop.

## **Strategic Leadership and Vision**

The Governing Board fully supports Linwood's commitment to providing outstanding education tailored to the needs of students with SEND. We value the school's personalised learning approach and strong values, which foster a respectful and inclusive community. The board recognises the dedication of staff who work tirelessly to create a positive environment where every student can grow, develop independence and achieve their best. This shared vision underpins our ongoing partnership with the school leaders to secure excellent outcomes for all students.

The Board also provides strategic challenge and support to ensure the school continues to grow effectively and sustainably in response to local SEND sufficiency pressures. The outcome of the most recent OFSTED inspection - rated Outstanding - offers a timely opportunity to commend the SMLT and all staff at Linwood for their unwavering focus, dedication and contributions. The Governing Board is proud that our oversight, preparation and direct engagement with Inspectors contributed meaningfully to that success.

Over the past year, governors have worked diligently and with care to provide clear strategic direction and thoughtful challenge. We:

- Monitored progress against the School Development and Improvement Plan (SDIP) and key performance indicators through detailed reports from the Executive Headteacher (EHT) and regular visits to all campuses

- Reflected on our own effectiveness through our annual self-evaluation, which highlighted strengths in strategic oversight, inclusivity and knowing when to seek external expertise
- Expanded named governor roles to strengthen oversight in key areas such as student wellbeing and behaviour, careers and transitions and safeguarding and students with medical needs
- Approved and implemented a Chair and Vice Chair succession plan, ensuring continued stability and smooth leadership handover

## **Holding Leadership to Account**

The Full Governing Board (FGB) met five times last year, with strong attendance and engagement. Sub-committees met termly to carry out focused work.

Governors conducted multiple link monitoring visits across their areas of responsibility, meeting staff, reviewing progress and seeing how strategic plans are put into practice. Following updates to the link governor roles recently, governors now provide focused oversight in key areas such as safeguarding and medical needs, student wellbeing and behaviour and careers and transitions. These visits, combined with learning walks in English, PE and Maths, provided valuable insight into teaching quality and student engagement. The experiences informed board discussions and helped identify strengths and areas for development.

Committee highlights:

- Learning & Achievement Committee (LAC) reviewed curriculum development and student outcomes, supported targeted interventions and scrutinised teaching strategies. Members received presentations from subject leaders and monitored progress of Pupil Premium students, using assessment data to ensure all students achieve their potential.
- Personnel & Wellbeing Committee (PWB) oversaw staffing matters including recruitment, induction and performance management. The committee supported staff wellbeing by reviewing relevant policies and initiatives. Members contributed to the Executive Headteacher's appraisal alongside other governors, monitored staff development and training and reviewed absence and retention to support workforce stability.
- Finance & Asset Management Committee (FAM) provided financial scrutiny by approving the annual budget, monitoring spending and reviewing benchmarking data. It also oversaw premises, IT, health and safety and cyber security. Governors advocated for fair SEND funding from BCP Children's Services. Financial decisions were aligned with school priorities to ensure value for money.

From September 2025, FAM and PWB will merge to streamline governance; LAC will continue its vital work independently.

Governors maintain a strong focus on safeguarding, with the designated Safeguarding Governor meeting termly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and HR Manager. We regularly review the Single Central Record and receive reports on

safeguarding audits and student online safety initiatives. All governors complete up-to-date safeguarding training in line with school staff.

We also ensure statutory policy review is thorough, questioning and inputting on policies to confirm they are effective and aligned with the school's vision.

### **Board Development and Effectiveness**

Our committed team of 12 volunteer governors brings a wide range of professional and lived experience. We give our time and expertise to support the school's continued success, not only through meetings but also by taking part in recruitment panels, exam invigilation and link visits.

Training for governors covers a range of key areas including Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), child protection, and responsibilities relating to Children in Care. Governors also attend regional networking events such as the Southwest Alliance of Leaders in Special Schools (SWALSS) Governors' meetings and annual conferences to stay informed and share best practice.

Training continues to be a priority, with governors attending sessions from NGA, the National College and SWALSS. Our May 2025 self-assessment confirmed we are a skilled and supportive board with effective structures for challenge and advice. Development areas include deeper understanding of the clerk's role and finance training.

We also recognise the vital role of our clerk in supporting effective governance, ensuring legal compliance and facilitating smooth board operations.

We welcomed a new parent governor and a co-opted governor, with one co-opted governor vacancy remaining. Parent governors continue to lead family engagement initiatives including regular coffee mornings. They also offer wellness walks for parents and carers and maintain contact with other well-regarded local support groups to extend the network of care and connection within the school community.

### **Conclusion**

Governance at Linwood has played a meaningful role in supporting curriculum quality, student wellbeing and outcomes across all campuses. As the school continues to grow, we remain focused on providing clear strategic oversight to ensure expansion is well managed and sustainable.

We are committed to offering constructive challenge and purposeful support, always with high expectations. It is a privilege to work alongside such a dedicated and caring school community.

**Sue Lay**  
**Chair of Governors**

September 2025