

Linwood School Governing Board Annual Governance Report 2025/26

Introduction

This Annual Governance Report outlines the work and impact of Linwood School's Governing Board during the 2025/26 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. The board values 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 provides strategic challenge and support to ensure the school continues to grow effectively and sustainably in response to local SEND sufficiency pressures. Over the past year, governors have worked diligently and with care to provide clear strategic direction and thoughtful challenge. This has included:

- Monitoring 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
- Working collaboratively with school leaders, BCP Council and other stakeholders to support governance oversight and strategic development of the new Riverwood campus, helping to ensure expansion plans remained aligned with the school's vision and the needs of local children and young people with SEND.
- Monitoring the impact of school growth on staffing, resources, student experience and organisational capacity, ensuring expansion remained sustainable and aligned with the school's values.

- Considering feedback from students, families and staff to help inform strategic discussions and decision-making.
- Reflecting on board effectiveness through annual self-evaluation, which highlighted strengths in strategic oversight, inclusivity and effective use of external expertise.
- Introducing and completing the Governing Board Development Plan and Governor Feedback Summary, ensuring structured reflection on board effectiveness and targeted improvement actions. All actions arising have been completed or embedded within governance practice.

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. These visits, combined with learning walks, provided valuable insight into teaching quality and student engagement. The experiences informed board discussions and helped identify strengths and areas for development.

Governors also attended the Open Day at the new Post-16 Skills Centre, providing an opportunity to see the provision first-hand, engage with staff and students and gain a deeper understanding of how the new facility supports preparation for adulthood and future employment opportunities.

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.
- Finance & Resources Committee (FAR) oversaw the budget and staffing matters, including recruitment, induction and performance management. The committee supported staff wellbeing through the review of relevant policies and initiatives. Members contributed to the Executive Headteacher's appraisal, monitored staff development and training, and reviewed absence and retention data to support workforce stability. The committee also provided financial scrutiny through approval of the annual budget, monitoring expenditure and reviewing benchmarking data. It oversaw premises, IT, health and safety, and cyber security. Governors continued to advocate for fair SEND funding from BCP Children's Services. Throughout the year, financial decisions were aligned with school priorities to ensure value for money.

Governors maintain a strong focus on safeguarding, with the designated Safeguarding Governor meeting termly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and HR Manager. The board regularly reviews the Single Central Record and receives reports on safeguarding audits and student online safety initiatives. All governors complete up-to-date safeguarding training in line with school staff.

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

The Governing Board fulfilled its statutory responsibilities in relation to a formal complaint during the year, ensuring that the school's complaints procedure was followed fairly, impartially and in accordance with policy.

Board Development and Effectiveness

Our committed team of 12 volunteer governors brings a wide range of professional and lived experience. Governors give their time and expertise to support the school's continued success, not only through meetings but also by taking part in recruitment panels, complaint panels 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 the NGA, the National College and SWALSS. Our May 2026 self-assessment confirmed that the board is skilled and supportive, with effective structures for challenge and advice.

The board welcomed a new staff governor, a new parent governor and a new co-opted governor, with one parent 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, the board remains focused on providing clear strategic oversight to ensure expansion is well managed and sustainable.

The board is 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 2026