

The Gates Primary School

Governing Board Annual Impact Statement 2025–2026

A message from the Chair of Governors

Good governance helps shape the future direction of the school, ask the difficult questions, hold leaders to account for the decisions they make and ensure that every child at The Gates has the opportunity to succeed.

This year has been particularly significant. As a governing board we haven't just monitored the school's progress; we've also looked carefully at how we govern ourselves. We were proud to be chosen by Bolton Council as one of the first schools to take part in its pilot External Review of Governance. Independent feedback confirmed many of the board's strengths whilst also challenging us to become even better. We welcomed that challenge, and many of the recommendations have already been acted upon. We were proud to receive an overall evaluation that the Governing Board at The Gates is '**Strong**'. That it demonstrates 'a high level of challenge and support. Governors care deeply for both the school and the community it serves. Governors fulfil their statutory duties and any comments within this review are aimed to simply improve already strong practice.'

The school itself continues to go from strength to strength. That is down to the commitment of the Headteacher, senior leaders, staff, pupils and families. As governors, our job is to support that success while never becoming complacent. We believe the best governing boards are always learning, always asking questions and always looking for ways to improve.

Setting the strategic direction

One of our biggest pieces of work this year was helping shape the longer-term direction of the school.

Working alongside school leaders, staff and other stakeholders, we reviewed the school's Vision and Values. Schools evolve over time, and we felt it was important that our vision reflected the inclusive, ambitious and caring school that The Gates has become rather than simply preserving words written many years ago.

Governors also continued to monitor progress against the School Development Plan throughout the year. Rather than simply receiving updates, we challenged leaders to explain what was working, where progress had slowed and what would change as a result. This helped keep discussions focused on improving outcomes for children rather than simply completing actions.

The introduction of the new national inspection framework also meant governors spent considerable time understanding how expectations are changing. We worked with school

leaders to ensure planning, self-evaluation and governance remained aligned with these developments.

Holding leaders to account for educational standards

Governors continued to place teaching, learning and pupil outcomes at the centre of our work.

Throughout the year we heard directly from subject leaders, scrutinised pupil performance information and discussed how the curriculum continues to develop. Particular attention was given to writing, mathematics, adaptive teaching, oracy, personal development and ensuring that every child, regardless of their starting point, is able to achieve their potential.

Importantly, we didn't rely solely on data.

Every governor carried out Class Link visits during the year. These visits gave us the opportunity to spend time in classrooms, speak with staff and pupils and see the school's work first hand. The reports from these visits helped governors understand the reality behind the data and gave us confidence that the school's values are evident in everyday practice.

Governors also challenged leaders on how different groups of pupils were performing, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and those with English as an Additional Language. We expected evidence that strategies were making a measurable difference and continued to monitor this throughout the year.

Championing inclusion, safeguarding and wellbeing

If there is one theme that has defined governance at The Gates this year, it is inclusion.

Governors have consistently challenged school leaders to demonstrate that every child is known, valued and supported.

We monitored safeguarding arrangements, attendance, behaviour, SEND provision and pupil wellbeing throughout the year. Governors questioned trends, reviewed the impact of interventions and sought assurance that vulnerable children were receiving the support they needed.

We were particularly encouraged by the school's continued work around trauma-informed practice and restorative approaches to behaviour. These approaches recognise that children cannot always learn effectively until they feel safe, understood and ready to engage. Governors fully supported this direction and monitored its impact as it developed.

The External Review of Governance highlighted governors' understanding of inclusion as one of the board's strengths, noting our commitment to ensuring that SEND is never seen as a

barrier to success. We are proud that this reflects both the culture of the school and the priorities of the Governing Board.

We also recognise that successful schools depend on successful staff. Governors therefore continued to monitor staff wellbeing, ensuring that leaders were taking sensible steps to reduce unnecessary workload while maintaining high expectations.

Looking after the school's long-term future

One of our most important responsibilities is making sure the school remains financially secure whilst continuing to invest in pupils.

Throughout the year governors scrutinised spending plans, challenged budget assumptions and looked carefully at the school's longer-term financial position. We discussed future pupil numbers, staffing structures, investment in technology and the changing financial pressures facing schools.

Where investment was proposed, governors expected leaders to explain not only the cost, but also the educational benefit for children. Decisions around ICT, staffing and future planning were all considered in this way.

We were pleased that careful financial management has enabled the school to continue investing in teaching, learning and the wider curriculum whilst maintaining a stable financial position.

Continuing to improve as a Governing Board

Good governance means continually improving ourselves as well as the school.

The External Review of Governance provided valuable independent feedback on how we operate. We were pleased that reviewers recognised strong strategic challenge, effective financial oversight and governors' understanding of the school's context. Just as importantly, they identified areas where we could become even more effective. Rather than seeing these as criticisms, we saw them as opportunities to improve.

During the year we:

- welcomed and inducted two new governors;
- supported the recruitment of new members of staff;
- completed a programme of governor training covering safeguarding, finance, curriculum and governance;
- continued our programme of governor monitoring visits;

- developed an action plan following the External Review of Governance;
- reviewed and refreshed the school's Vision and Values.

These activities have strengthened the Board and leave us well placed for the years ahead.

Looking ahead

The coming year will bring new opportunities and new challenges.

Our focus will be on embedding the school's refreshed Vision and Values, continuing to strengthen governance following the External Review, and supporting school leaders as they continue to improve outcomes for every child.

We will continue to ask challenging questions, support where appropriate and ensure that decisions remain firmly centred on what is best for pupils.

The Gates is a school with high aspirations, strong leadership and a genuinely inclusive culture. As governors, we are proud to play a part in that journey and look forward to working alongside staff, pupils and families to build on everything that has been achieved this year.