

## Governors Annual Report 2023-2024

This year has been our first as a full member of the Coastal Academies Trust.

The academisation process has meant that the roles and responsibilities of the Governors have changed slightly. We are now referred to as the 'School Board' rather than 'Governing Body'. We still have responsibilities for monitoring educational performance and school policies, monitoring staffing and implementing statutory regulations on safeguarding. The finance Governor works with the CAT Finance Committee to recommend the annual budget and meets regularly with the Bursar to monitor expenditure. The relationship between the CAT Trust Board and the School Board is explained in more detail in the Scheme of Delegation, which can be found in the 'Governing Body' section of the website.

We have been very happy to have the support and shared sense of purpose given by the CAT. There is a good deal of cross-school co-operation and the CAT has also supported RHA with visits, advice and coaching. That shared sense of vision and ethos also affords real scrutiny but at the same time the shelter of belonging to a wider group of schools. The leadership of the Trust have had monthly meetings with the SLT and the Chair of the School Board to examine the progress the school is making with learning and teaching, and this close involvement and scrutiny can only have a positive impact for the students' educational experience.

2023-4 saw some personnel changes in the Board. Our previous Chair resigned at the end of last year to chair the CAT Finance Committee, so the Vice Chair took over in September. A new Vice Chair also took up her post in September 2023 with a brief to focus on learning and teaching and SEND. At the same time, we gained a new co-opted Governor (the Deputy Head of St Lawrence College). Mid-year we were joined by a new Parent Governor and Staff Governor and at the end of the year another co-opted Governor joined us. Our new members bring with them extremely valuable education, business and management experience and we are very lucky to have such a combination of expertise in our number. We thank all our members past and present for their dedication to the school and determination to continue to ensure that the students attending Royal Harbour Academy get the top-quality education they deserve.

We meet 6 times a year as a body, and we use a 'monitoring schedule' that helps us to see what the school's priorities are at different stages of the year so that we can be asking the appropriate questions of the leadership. We have aligned our responsibilities as a Board to the three key requirements of a School Board:

- 1) Vision, ethos and direction
- 2) Educational Performance and Staff Management
- 3) Financial Performance

Within those overall headings the Governors take responsibility for aspects of those requirements like safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, careers, website compliance, curriculum, SEND, Pupil Premium and others. Most Governors take responsibility for 2 or more areas, and all are part of what we have called a 'curriculum group' whose purpose is to conduct visits and learning walks around the school to see how effectively the curriculum is organised and to discuss the curriculum intent with senior and middle leaders.

In terms of visits and monitoring, the school board has overseen a variety of areas. Curriculum visits have focused on how far the 2 sites are aligning in terms of curriculum intent and teaching approaches. We feel that it is important for the school to be seen as one unit spread over two sites rather than two different 'schools'. There is a great deal of work being put into curriculum intent and delivery, and we have noted much more consistency with approaches to learning. Accompanied by a senior leader we have seen cold / hot writing tasks, 'think hard' approaches, scaffolding, live marking and 'cold calling'. In all cases the students can explain what these techniques are. We have also seen how teachers are scaffolding for all abilities and how SEND students are supported. Visits have focused upon questioning and challenge in lessons and have helped to see how staff are being supported if under-performance is taking place. The Middle Years Performance review took place successfully and we have discussed the use of enquiry questions and statements to develop independent learning and deep thinking.

The school board have been kept abreast of the data analysis undertaken by senior leaders and are aware of the extent of the school's progress. The chair has visited Dane Court Grammar School to see the results of the curriculum development journey undertaken by this CAT school, and both the Head of Dane Court and his Deputy meet with RHA and CAT leaders and the Chair of the Board to discuss the next steps in the School's journey. We have also looked at assessment in KS3 and will be monitoring how consistently assessment criteria are applied within the school's Middle Years Programme.

Safeguarding visits take place 6 times a year. In these meetings the lead Governor meets with the school's DSL and looks at the data, discussing trends. Analysis of the data is still a work in progress, but there can be no doubting the rigour with which concerns are logged and actioned. The chair also visited all the other CAT schools as part of a wider safeguarding review, and the practice at RHA was found to be wholly compliant with statutory frameworks and very diligent. Seeing how the other schools operate also affords an opportunity to reflect on how we can improve provision, however, and there have been initiatives that have been taken up consequently, such as a student-friendly safeguarding statement for the website and new software for maintaining the Single Central Record (which records all checks on staff and their statutory training). The RHA visits have also afforded the Safeguarding Governor to speak to a variety of members of staff involved with vulnerable students and see the work that is being done to enhance wellbeing and resilience. There are wellbeing rooms and SEND 'hubs' on both sites that offer support and safe spaces. All the students spoken to as part of the visits have attested to the fact that they feel cared for and well supported by the school. The students are extremely loyal to the school, and they are not a specially selected group! Finally, it is worth noting that safeguarding is not operating in isolation. There are fortnightly meetings with a variety of staff that triangulate information relating to attendance, progress, behaviour and safeguarding for each year group. This ensures coherence and consistency and is a clear example of how important it is that the pastoral and academic sides of a school do not work in isolation.

Online safety is another area for the safeguarding governor to examine. The school purchased new filtering software in compliance with the changes set out in 'Keeping

Children Safe in Education' 2023. The CAT schools are allowed considerable autonomy, so different filtering software is used by 2 of the other schools, RHA uses the same brand as Hartsdown and Dane Court. The IT lead has attended a School Board meeting to talk about the contingencies in place for a cyber-attack, and it was an opportunity to ask for an evaluation of the software purchased.

Careers provision at the Royal Harbour is led by an Assistant Head and this year ably supported by another teacher. As a member of the School Board for Careers it is an easy role to support such a visionary, inclusive programme planned and delivered for the young people at The Royal Harbour Academy.

Young people have access to high quality independent Careers Guidance, also a one-to-one interview with an employer. Work Experience, Apprenticeship Q & A session all kinds of practical experiences designed to support students over their years at the school. The programme is designed by the Careers' Leader and can be found

<https://www.rha.kent.sch.uk/about-us/careers/>

This academic year work involved supporting a Year 10 event at Discovery Park with Cummins, with guidance from employees and the opportunity for students to see the kind of roles, skills required and apprenticeship opportunities available to them. This was an inspirational day which hopefully, now the format is tried and tested, will happen next academic year too. Students also had access to a wide range of education and Training Providers Yrs 7 - 13 T Levels and Apprenticeships. East Kent College was well represented with opportunity for students to look at their extensive local vocational offer. This happened during a whole school Careers Exhibition Fair in March when all employers remarked on the highest standard of interaction with such 'engaged young people at The Royal Harbour Academy'.

This year being a member of the School Board has involved sourcing Employers, partners and apprenticeship providers. It has also involved training to improve knowledge including 'Cyber Security', 'Safeguarding', 'GDPR' and via an employer 'Artificial Intelligence'. It has been a highlight of meetings to hear from specialist staff about subjects such as 'Teaching & Learning consistent practise across both sites', 'SEN provision', 'Scaffolding and Modelling' and the 'Middle Years Programme' to name a few. It is a true privilege to be part of the School Board Team and to wholeheartedly support the values and vision of such an extraordinary school. *(picture Sixth Formers prepare for to share Key Stage 5 with younger years)*



The new staff governor is going to be focussing on safeguarding and wellbeing, looking to ensure a safe and supportive environment for both students and staff. He will engage in initiatives to improve attendance and behaviour, recognising their critical impact upon learning outcomes.

Finally, visits have been undertaken to check website compliance and analyse the school's use of Pupil Premium funding. The governor with this responsibility has put forward suggestions for a more measurable evaluation of outcomes. This is a work in progress in association with an Assistant Head and the SENCO. Given the percentage of students who qualify for the pupil premium this is an important area for the Board to continue to scrutinise. Our Finance Governor also has regular meetings with the Bursar and there is a finance report every meeting. One of the members of the School Board has also reported on measures to improve attendance. She confirmed that a variety of measures have been put in place and are being re-evaluated to see how effective they have been. Attendance to public examinations was much improved this year.

We continue to wish it to go on record that it is a real pleasure and a privilege to serve on the School Board of the Royal Harbour Academy. There can be no doubt how hard the leadership and staff work, and there is a real sense of community across all areas of school life. Attendance at whole school events such as Open Day, Prize Evening, School Plays, New Entrants' Evenings and Year 8 Graduations see the whole community come together so successfully. It is a source of real pride that we have been over-subscribed for Year 7 2024-5. We have recorded our thanks with end of year cards again, we wish we could do more. No-one at this school is remotely complacent about the need to keep moving forward, and this is also true of the School Board. For 2024-2025 we are hoping to increase the frequency of visits to the school, especially to focus on areas that were not visited this year – for

example: behaviour, whole school wellbeing, 6<sup>th</sup> form and more focus on SEND. We have also timetabled 5 curriculum visits for the year.

**Training has been undertaken by the School Board in the following areas 2023-2024:**

Key function of governance – Holding to Account (3 Governors, 2 sessions)

Pupil Premium

Female Genital Mutilation

Safeguarding (Strategic and Level 2)

The Prevent Duty

SEND

GDPR

The role of Governance in a Maintained School

Head Teacher Performance Management (2 Governors)

School Finance

Data for Secondary Governors (2 Governors)

County-Wide briefing

Clerks' Briefings

Whole Board – the Thrive approach

**Our priorities for 2024-2025**

- To support the school's drive for improvement in Learning and Teaching by scrutinising the quality assurance programme. This should be done with visits, book looks, discussions with middle leaders and SLT, and follow ups from CAT reviews.
- To examine the school's practice with supporting vulnerable students through visits, responses to data drops and analysis of progression.
- To ensure that student and parent voiced are improved and actioned and that the website is a helpful reference for all stakeholders.
- To support the school's drive to enhance student employability and academic aspiration.