

Governors Annual Report 2024 – 2025

This year the Governors have worked with the School's leadership and the Coastal Academies Trust to support the continued progress and success of the Royal Harbour Academy. This was our second full year as a member of the CAT and we have continued to see the benefits of belonging to a co-operative and supportive network of schools locally.

Coastal Academies Trust

The CAT leadership has continued to host a focus group for the School, with the Head and Deputy of Dane Court Grammar and the Chair of Governors attending. We have met each half term with a different focus each time, often with SLT presenting alongside a learning walk. This has helped to clarify the school's drive to improve standards across the board in teaching and learning and it has underlined the close and effective partnership between the school and those who are tasked with monitoring its educational performance, vision and direction. The Chair of governors is currently the Safeguarding Trustee for the CAT which involves visiting all 6 schools and working with their Safeguarding leads. This has enabled a much closer working relationship with the other schools, which is of benefit to RHA. It is also an opportunity to evaluate RHA provision alongside the other secondary schools in the CAT.

Membership

In terms of personnel, the Chair and Vice Chair have now been in post for 2 years. Our co-opted Governor from St Lawrence College left at Christmas as he was taking up a promotion to become the Head of Sir Roger Manwoods School in Sandwich. We really benefitted from his participation on visits and wisdom in meetings and wish him every success in his new post. The close association between RHA and St Lawrence College continues, however, and we were delighted to welcome back to the School Board their Bursar who meets regularly with our Business Manager and oversees the risk register and health and safety issues. We were joined at the end of the year by an ex-member of staff who wishes to continue his association with the school even though he works elsewhere. We are lucky to have a strong and committed team with a wealth of experience and understanding of the school. Underlining this commitment to both RHA and the community it serves, 5 of the School Board are now governors at Newington Primary School, including taking on the roles of Chair and Vice Chair. This has already proved to be a very effective collaboration as the two schools are working closely on attendance and transitions, as well as sharing expectations regarding the teaching of the core subjects.

Safeguarding and Attendance

Safeguarding visits have taken place in each half term. The Chair meets with the DSL and his team and we have looked at the range of challenges faced by the students. Meetings have involved analysis of how the school uses resources to maximise the safeguarding responsibilities, conversations with students, all staff and some external agencies the school works with. The 'Thrive' approach has been examined in the ACES unit, and outcomes are very carefully recorded when students leave. The safeguarding team are extremely busy and under considerable pressure, but visits have shown them to be continually ahead of the curve in relation to threats and challenges, especially within the local context. The DSL works

closely with the other safeguarding leads from the CAT, and especially with the DSL of Hartsdown Academy. Together they have produced a uniform safeguarding induction programme and have worked on coalescing safeguarding policies across the CAT. There is now a 'student-friendly' safeguarding policy on the school website which is a direct consequence of seeing good practice from other schools as part of work for the CAT. Monitoring of online safety will be a priority for the next year.

Closely related to safeguarding is the issue of attendance and all of the board are regularly updated with latest statistics and actions the school is pursuing to reduce persistent absence. The chair has met with the Deputy Head to see what the school is doing to ensure students attend and has seen the rigour which is applied to tracking and dealing with attendance issues. There has also been a CAT review of all schools and good ideas can be exchanged. RHA is also working with feeder primaries to identify likely attendance issues with new starters so that work can be done before September of Year 7. The school acknowledges this as one of their biggest problems, as obviously students cannot learn effectively if they are missing from school on a regular basis.

SEND

The Vice Chair has been responsible for monitoring SEND, the Sixth Form and student voice. In terms of visits and monitoring of SEND provision, her visits have noted the effective tracking of progress and implementation of strategies supporting students with specific and individual needs by using 'Team around the Child' approach. She has also looked for the consistent use of purple folders and the quality of the information therein to aid the use of adaptive strategies. In learning walks with the SENCO they have monitored the use of interventions and maintaining consistent high quality teaching to challenge and engage students with SEN. It has been important to observe staff in action using their training to ascertain and implement new universal adaptive teaching strategies which should ensure Quality First teaching and learning to create an inclusive curriculum and to ensure students, as much as possible, have the confidence and desire to attend school.

Sixth Form

Governors have also monitored the Sixth Form, working with the Assistant Head who leads the Sixth Form. In order to ensure consistent and high quality provision he has asked to be timetabled to teach all PPS. He has also asked to have some of the lessons roomed at the Lower Site so that Year 7s see the sixth form students as part of their school. The aim is for Year 7 students to feel that RHA will definitely offer to provide a 7 year curriculum. 15 students took a one year pathway of maths and English resits, employability skill building and personal development. Pathway students go back to start Year 12 again. This strategy obviously supports individual students to continue with their education. The Governor has seen a full programme of interviewing and information giving to Year 11 students and visits have underlined how the IBCP in conjunction with MYP provided the purpose and ethos of the school and its commitment to a 7 year broad and deep curriculum which encourages conceptual thinking and therefore provides opportunities for all.

Student Voice

The monitoring of student voice has been rewarding. When visited by the Vice Chair Year 12 Students voiced a feeling that they are in a community which they had enjoyed since they joined in Year 7. They loved the care and individual support that the school had given them and would continue to be given. They feel that they wanted the more grown up feel of the sixth form yet it would still be there with care and support that had always been given. They were attracted to and saw the benefits of an extended school day to support their learning. They feel their teachers were approachable and willing to listen. The students felt that the school was interested their personal development as well as their core education.

RHA Radio is very popular and the students who run it are enthusiastic in how it is developing their presentational and communication skills.

The Lower School student voice is well developed. Any student can attend lunchtime meetings. The students are very aware of school and local issues and are keen to be heard concerning issues and ideas. The visits have confirmed that the school is keen to engage with and listen to the views of all stakeholders, including staff surveys and a weekly question asked of parents via the AHT who is responsible for community engagement. The school plans to develop a more active student leadership team in the next academic year, and this can be a focus for future visits.

Pupil Premium

The Governor with this responsibility met with the inclusion team to discuss the Pupil Premium strategy. The school has reviewed its policy and strategy, and implemented specific interventions mapping against pupil premium.

Quality First Teaching for all is at the heart of providing opportunity for all and this has come across strongly both at governor meetings and monitoring visits. Greater analysis for non-SEN students is a focus for the next academic year, with a new reading intervention which will also be introduced. Next year the Governor will be discussing the progress of this , as well as finding out more about the impact of the Thrive intervention and the tracking of progress for pupils that find it difficult to attend.

Staff Governor

The Staff Governor reports that this has been a rewarding and positive year. He has taken part in many curriculum visits, which have provided a fantastic insight into the high-quality learning taking place in lessons across the school. It has been wonderful to see students so engaged and to observe how challenge is being effectively embedded to support all learners in reaching their full potential. Looking ahead to the new academic year, he is eager to continue his support for the school, with a particular focus on the ongoing development of our curriculum, strategies for attendance and behaviour, and ensuring our website remains compliant and informative for our community.

Careers

Supporting students to make informed decisions about their future is a vital responsibility of the Royal Harbour Academy. Governance plays a key strategic role in this process, ensuring alignment with Statutory responsibility, the Careers Leader's vision and the School Improvement Plan.

While academic outcomes remain the top priority, they must be complemented by a cohesive and sustained effort to equip all RHA students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to make appropriate and ambitious progression choices.

Given the socio-economic demographics of the area, it is essential that efforts are intensified to ensure RHA students have access to the same breadth of opportunities as their peers elsewhere in the country. This requires a proactive, inclusive, and well-resourced approach to careers education, information, advice, and guidance (CEIAG).

The Careers Programme is designed to provide students with continuous and meaningful exposure to the world of work throughout their time at the Royal Harbour Academy – just a few examples of the programme include:

- **Careers Exhibition Fair for All Year Groups:** Each year group participates meeting employers offering table-top activities and insights into various career paths and industries.
- **Curriculum-Integrated Career Education:** Every subject incorporates lessons that highlight employment opportunities within that field, as well as general employability skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving.
- **Interview Day:** An Interview Day takes place in December, during which employers from a range of sectors visit the school. Every student takes part in a one-to-one mock interview, providing valuable experience and feedback to help them prepare for future real-world interviews.

- **Business Studies: Employer Engagement at the Heart of Business Studies**

At the start of each unit, Business Studies students are led by the Head of Department into a dynamic learning experience that begins with an employer visit, workshop, or guest talk. This approach provides students with a broad understanding of the sector and topic, offering real-world context and a valuable reference point throughout their students. This not only enriches the curriculum but also helps students develop a deeper appreciation of business concepts, career pathways, and the skills needed in today's professional environment.

Careers Programme Support

While the School Board's primary function is strategic, there are occasions when operational support is requested. This merger of strategic oversight and operational involvement is often driven by needs or resource constraints but is always fused with the Careers Leader's plan for the school and includes,

- Establishing active contacts within different commercial sectors.
- Organising and facilitating careers talks, workplace visits, and apprenticeship speaker sessions as requested by staff under the direction of the school Careers Leader.
- Termly visits and meetings with the Careers Leader to see what kind of further support is needed and a mutual checking opportunity to ensure that the school is compliant with all 'Career directives', including the additions to the Gatsby Benchmarks for September 25.
- All relevant elements of the programme that fall under the suite of activities of the Education Business Partnership Kent, have also been successfully implemented. This

includes a Careers Fair, Interview Day, 15 Days of one-to-one professional Careers Guidance, Work Experience for Yr 12. This is all alongside the many other partnership organisations the Careers Leader engages for the Royal Harbour students to experience a high impact Careers programme.

- Plans next year are to individually improve students' experiences in the Careers Programme—especially with a focus on Special Educational Needs (SEN)

A second School Board member (a highly experienced SEN specialist) will bring her knowledge and expertise to this important work.

Curriculum visits

All members of the School Board are invited to participate in learning walks to monitor how effectively the curriculum has been developed and is deployed across both sites. Led by the Deputy Head, we have become familiar with all of the strategies deployed in the classrooms to raise achievement. As this was our second year of curriculum visits, we have been able to reflect upon a much greater consistency of approach, especially in relation to feedback and the format of the 'learning journey' across different subject areas. A focus this year has been on extending challenge and having uniformly high expectations. It is remarkable how the students are completely comfortable with visitors in lessons, as are the teaching and support staff. It is always a real pleasure to witness great relationships between the students and the adults in the classrooms. Maintaining consistency across two sites is challenging, but the timetables have been written this year to afford more cross-site collaboration between departments. It is clear that SLT are committed to a clear and consistent line of management and leadership with middle leaders to ensure teaching and learning strategies are implemented. Teachers who are struggling with any such strategy are identified and supported. The rolling out of the use of the Enquiry Statement in MYP Unit Planners, to be the core of each medium-term plan is clearly being implemented and understood by the students. The senior leader heading up this strategy is monitoring its use as its consistent application will naturally create challenge and deeper thinking.

In conclusion

As a school board we aim to support the school through monitoring and scrutiny. The more we visit the school, the more effectively we can achieve this, however members are volunteers and many also work full time. While we can celebrate the successes outlined below, we also need to be constantly examining how effectively we are performing our duties and for this year we are intending to focus our visits more centrally to ensure that everyone can play a part.

We wish to go on record to say that it is a pleasure and a privilege to serve as the School Board of the Royal Harbour Academy. The school community comes together in a really positive manner on events like Open Day, Awards Evenings, the recent celebration of the 10th Anniversary, End of Year graduations etc, but this spirit is also evident on ordinary days too. Once again the school was over-subscribed for the start of this academic year and it is gratifying to see RHA being the school of choice for so many students and parents. We recorded our thanks with cards for everyone who works at RHA in the summer and we look forward to another successful year in 25-26.

Training has been undertaken by the school Board in the following areas 2024-2025:

The Prevent duty
Safeguarding
A.I.
Complaints
Cyber Security
Safer Recruitment
FGM
GDPR
Sexual harassment in the workplace
Honour-based abuse
Be prepared for OFSTED
Online safety for support staff
Online safety for Governors
Countywide briefings
Equality, diversity and Inclusion
Strategic safeguarding
Data for Secondary Governors

Our priorities for 2025-2026

- **To support the school's analysis and reflection on the direction of progress across the last 3 years. Visits will focus on identification of trends of success or failure to achieve, paying particular attention to the school's work in closing achievement gaps.**
- **To monitor the school's progress at tackling attendance issues and supporting disadvantaged students.**
- **To support the school's drive to involve stakeholders**