



**Annual Governance Statement for the Governing Board of
Riverside School, London Borough of Bromley
July 2017**

As a Governing Board we believe it is important that any families or partners who wish to know more about what we do are able to find this out. Many of the activities we carry out as a Board are ongoing and detailed in previous documents. If you would like to find out about the general work of the Governing Board, including what **we do and don't do**, please visit our website and click on <http://www.riversideschool.org.uk/page/?pid=176&action=saved>

The aim of this statement is to update you on our governor priorities this year and outline our priorities for next year. We'd also like to share with you some of the changes that have been put in place by the Senior Leadership Team this year, which I hope you agree, will continue to enhance your child's education and school experience.

If, at any time you have any comments on anything we do, we'd love to hear from you - in any way that suits you.

<p><i>"Clarity of vision"</i></p> <p><i>"Educational Performance"</i></p> <p><i>"Holding the Headteacher to account"</i></p> <p><i>"Financial Performance"</i></p>	<p>As a summary, and in accordance with Government requirements, Riverside School's Governing Board focuses on its statutory duties and 3 main strategic functions, namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction; 2. Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils and for the performance management of the staff; 3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent. <p>Details of how we work under these 3 headings are included within the governance documents mentioned above</p>
<p>2016/17 Governance Priorities</p>	<p>The Governing Board had 4 priorities for the 2016/17 academic year. They are intrinsically linked with the 3 strategic functions outlined above.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitoring the impact of the School Development Plan <p>Each year our School Development Plan is updated to include the strategic initiatives that we think will make a difference to our pupils and lead us closer to not only our vision of <i>'inspiring breakthroughs in the way society enables children with complex needs find true fulfilment'</i>, but also support our school aim of <i>'transforming the lives of our children and the lives of their families'</i>.</p> <p>Given that Performing Arts is such an important part of our school ethos and a key learning forum for our children, we appointed a Monitoring Arts and Culture Governor. This governor has met with the Performing Arts Team on a number of occasions to support and challenge their work in that area. We have heard so many success stories of how pupils love being involved in Performing Arts and we have witnessed some great performances. We've experienced one of Chantal's Performing Arts sessions - some of us more than once - and seen how it can help our pupils not only learn but help them become more engaged in their learning overall. We'd love to hear your thoughts on how Performing Arts has</p>

“School Development Plan”

“Debating different ownership structures and working with other schools”

had an impact on your child. Please do tweet or post on @weareriverside1 or any other way that works for you.

Although our pupil population is very diverse in terms of their challenges, continuing to raise standards in communication, functional reading, writing and maths are a key focus for us and always a core part of our School Development Plan. Every term we have a Governors’ Day where we alternate between Riverside St. Pauls Cray and Riverside Beckenham; seeing the school in action. It is important that we monitor the impact of new teaching methods and the piloting of different ways of working before investing more of our school funds in these areas. We’ve seen examples of how the use of technology and initiatives such as Read Write Inc, alongside traditional communication channels such as PECS and Makaton, is helping our pupils learn to read and communicate. Through our Family Surveys we know this is a key priority.

This year one of our Governor working parties looked at how we measure success as a school. Staff have also been involved in this exercise. It is not as easy as in a mainstream school, where traditionally success is measured in terms of exam results. So, in line with one of our school values of Creativity, we have been creative in our thinking. We have developed a number of ways that we, as governors, will measure success. These tie directly into our vision as a school, the 4 pledges that underpin that vision and our School Development Plan. We will start reporting on them from next term and rely on your continued and valued feedback to help us with this please.

2. Review opportunities for changing our school ownership and how we collaborate with other schools.

As you will probably have experienced firsthand, if you have other children who go to school in Bromley, there is a push towards schools becoming Academies and being part of Multi Academy Trusts. This effectively means that the Local Authority no longer has responsibility for schools and schools operate like independent schools or trusts, reporting in to one of England’s 8 Regional Schools Commissioners. This is a national initiative and the aim of this is to improve standards for all pupils in the country and ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to attend good schools.

If you have read anything about our priorities over the years, you will know that ensuring our pupils attend an amazing school is, and has always been, a focus for us!

We are proud of the links that have been made with other schools, where we informally collaborate to share best practice and learn from each other. Riverside has initiated a Specialist Learning Partnership with approximately 12 other special schools, where monitoring the educational progress pupils make is a key focus. Through the Performing Arts we have developed valuable links with other organisations such as Rose Bruford College; Candoco; Magpie Dance; Orpheus Centre; The Brit School; as well as other local Primary and Secondary Schools.

As part of our work on understanding the different organisational structures available to us we have explored 20 different models of the way we could be organised, including becoming a Teaching School to becoming an Academy or starting our own Trust. Our Headteacher (Steve Solomons) and I have attended conferences on Multi Academy Trusts in the Special Schools Sector. We have governors on our Board who are governors in schools which are already Academies and part of Multi Academy Trusts. We have also attended a number of local forums arranged by the Local Authority. All of these activities have influenced our thinking.

At the current time we have decided that remaining as we are, and focusing on delivering our School Development Plan, is the best course of action. We will, of course, continue to explore these options and importantly the potential impact they have on raising standards and improving outcomes for our pupils.

3. Widen our Boards knowledge of best practice and school performance

In order to stay connected with the latest in Governance, we continue to be members of the National Governance Association and subscribe to their magazine and training packages. One of our governors attended their recent conference in London, only a few weeks ago. We have recently signed up to a very cost effective, on-line training package which will enable our busy governors to continue to keep up to date on the ever-changing world of Governance.

“Board Knowledge of Best Practice and School Performance”

We are proud of the diversity of knowledge, experience and skills of our governors, in terms of ensuring we are the best that we can be. We are in a privileged position in that we have 4 parent governors who provide a safety net in ensuring decisions have relevance to our pupils and changes are considered from a family perspective. We have governors who are governors at other schools; work with children in Riverside or other schools; or sit on Bromley’s Education Select Committee, which considers wider educational issues. We have members who are connected with the fields of Finance, Consulting, the Department of Education, as well as Health and Social Care. Our Headteacher, who is also part of the Board, is involved with a number of organisations and forums, which also broadens our collective knowledge of best practice within schools. Our School Business Manager is a key member of our Board and regularly updates her knowledge through training. As Chair, I attend the local Chair of Governors’ Forums and, as mentioned above, we receive regular updates from one of our Assistant Heads who is part of the Specialist Learning Partnership for Special Schools.

But ultimately, how do we know we are working in the best possible way to support and challenge our school staff? There are two ways. Firstly, 6 months ago, as part of our on-going Board review, we initiated a meeting with a National Leader of Governance. These leaders see Governance in action in a number of different schools. We were all pleased to hear her comments on the strength of our Governing Board and how well we are doing for the children in our care.

The second way is simply by looking at how well we are doing and evolving as a school in meeting the needs of our school community. We believe we are doing alright.

4. Monitor implementation of EHC Plans

By now, many of Riverside’s children will either have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan or be in the process of transferring from a Statement of Educational Needs to an EHC Plan. The deadline for the implementation of the plans is April 2018 and is the responsibility of the Local Authority, who have been leading the process. The Local Authority is on target to meet this deadline.

Although much of transfer process and Health/Care provision is out of our control, it is important to us, at Riverside, that we work towards our children getting the support and opportunities they need in order to live a fulfilled life. For example, we know from our family surveys, including our newly introduced Leavers’ and Joiners’ Surveys, that communication skills and developing independence are transformational areas for your child and you, as families.

The introduction of Personal Learning Plans, which align with and inform Education, Health and Care Plan outcomes, is one of the key ways of ensuring that we all focus on the things which are important. We continue to have productive discussions with colleagues in Education, Health and Social Care who are in a position to make holistic change happen.


One of our strengths as a school is the partnership working we have with you, our families. Thank you for getting involved and all of your feedback, enabling us as a Board to ensure that we are strategically moving in the right direction as a school. Please keep it coming!

“Monitoring Implementation of EHC Plans”

What has changed this year?

From our School Development Plan priorities in 2106/17, the school has:

- Established ourselves as a National Flagship School for Read Write Inc and extended the programme across both Riverside SPC and Riverside Beckenham;
- Extended our links with Microsoft to develop and pilot a communication app to be showcased at an upcoming Microsoft Conference on Artificial Intelligence;
- Increased access, participation and engagement through the Performing Arts for all pupil groups;
- Become one of the very few special schools in the country to offer a Postgraduate Certificate in Autism for both internal and external staff;
- Embedded our Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) and Unique Profiles (UPs) to ensure that every child has a truly personalised curriculum and that all their achievements are celebrated and shared;
- Launched our new website and social media platforms to ensure our families are kept up to date with news and events;
- Established ourselves as a lead school in the National Strategy around Engagement for Learning;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported colleagues regionally, nationally and internationally to improve outcomes for children with complex needs in a range of different areas. Worked closely with local community organisations to affect positive change for our pupils and families. 								
<p>Governance Priorities for 2017/18</p> <p><i>“17/18 School Development Plan”</i></p>	<p>Our priorities for next year can be summarised into 3 key areas:</p> <p>1. Achieving the initiatives set out in our School Development Plan is incredibly important to us. They are the route to us achieving our school vision and continuing to raise standards and improve outcomes for our wonderful children. Through our new Measures of Success, governors will get even more involved in ensuring that, as a school, we are putting in place initiatives which make a tangible difference.</p> <p>The main areas, for us as a school next year, are these:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="395 607 1485 1061"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4" data-bbox="395 607 1485 633">2017/18</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="395 633 668 1061"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly personalised communication book or devices Truly responsive environments Individual Sensory Profiles Further personalisation of the curriculum for Y10 upwards </td> <td data-bbox="668 633 940 1061"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active participation in at least 3 uniquely personalised performances Significant and sustained progress through the Performing Arts At least 6 meaningful and sustainable partnerships Artsmark Platinum School </td> <td data-bbox="940 633 1212 1061"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment Leaders Range of courses for professionals offered by Riverside School Significant gains in functional numeracy skills Significant gains in functional and creative writing skills </td> <td data-bbox="1212 633 1485 1061"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Happiness Passports Aligned curriculum framework SCERTS framework impacting positively on the lives of pupils for whom emotional regulation is a significant barrier to their learning Further development of Early Years Phase </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>2. Nationally, uncertainty around funding in schools and cuts in other services within Health and Social Care, which impact our families, is set to persist and it is important that we continue to minimise the impact as much as we can. We will continue to work with our colleagues across the sectors, and nationally, to inform them of priorities for our pupils and think creatively of ways in which we can provide our children with what they need.</p> <p>3. Continue to consider options for school ownership in light of the national academy agenda</p> <p>Additionally, the Board will continue its statutory duties and, most importantly do all that it can, challenging and supporting the Leadership Team, to ensure Riverside is an amazing school:</p> <p><i>“Transforming our children’s lives and the lives of their families”</i></p>	2017/18				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly personalised communication book or devices Truly responsive environments Individual Sensory Profiles Further personalisation of the curriculum for Y10 upwards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active participation in at least 3 uniquely personalised performances Significant and sustained progress through the Performing Arts At least 6 meaningful and sustainable partnerships Artsmark Platinum School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment Leaders Range of courses for professionals offered by Riverside School Significant gains in functional numeracy skills Significant gains in functional and creative writing skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Happiness Passports Aligned curriculum framework SCERTS framework impacting positively on the lives of pupils for whom emotional regulation is a significant barrier to their learning Further development of Early Years Phase
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<p>Thank you Riverside Staff</p> <p><i>“Amazing staff”</i></p>	<p>It is always so heartening for us to hear stories of how Riverside staff are making a difference. I’d like to finish this annual statement by staying a huge thank you to Steve Solomons and all of the staff at Riverside School, who work tirelessly and with so much passion to ensure Riverside School is The Best That It Can Be. Thank you.</p>								
<p>Contact Us</p> <p><i>“Get involved”</i></p>	<p>Should you wish to know more, share your views, are interested in becoming a Governor or helping us as a Board in any capacity, please contact Katrina O’Leary, Chair of Governors, via the School Office.</p>								
	<p>Thank you for reading!</p>								

Katrina O’Leary, Chair of Governors, July 2017