



Governance Annual Report

2023-24

Dear Families,

It is my pleasure as the Chair of Governors to share with you the Governance Annual Report for the academic year September 2023 to August 2024.

Perhaps it would be helpful to start with a reminder of the core functions of the Governing Board (GB), especially as the Department for Education revised them at the start of the academic year:

- **Strategic leadership:** the GB defines the school vision for high quality and inclusive education in line the charitable objects. It establishes and fosters the school's culture and sets and champions the overall strategy.
- **Accountability and assurance:** the GB has robust effective oversight of the operations and performance of the school, including the provision of education, student welfare, overseeing and ensuring appropriate use of funding and effective financial performance and keeping the school's estate safe and well-maintained.
- **Engagement:** the GB has strategic oversight of relationships with stakeholders. The GB involves parents, schools and communities so that decision-making is supported by meaningful engagement.

With respect to **strategic leadership**, the school seeks to provide an outstanding all round education provision with high academic achievement at its heart. The vision of the school is *'Our community is vibrant, curious, creative and inspires positive change. We dare to be wise'*. Working with senior leaders, the GB sets strategic objectives to help the school reach its goals.

With respect to **accountability and assurance**, the GB and its committees meet throughout the year to scrutinise reports from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and ask questions, particularly regarding the impact of strategic developments, e.g. embedding the school-wide focus on equality, diversity and inclusion. The GB triangulates information received at meetings with discussions held with staff and students during visits to the school to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the school.

With respect to **engagement**, the GB receives detailed reports of annual student, parent and staff surveys. Data is examined and themes identified so that the GB can be mindful of these stakeholder groups when making key decisions for the benefit of the school.

In October 2023 the GB commissioned the National Governance Association (NGA) to undertake an external review of governance. This included individual governors completing a self-evaluation online questionnaire covering board culture and practice, board structure, core functions, compliance, evaluation and impact. The consultant met with Mr Keary, some of the other governors, the Governance Professional and myself, and attended a GB meeting to observe.

The NGA consultant concluded *"This is a very effective board. It comprises hard-working and committed governors, supported by a very experienced governance professional. The board is holding leaders to account and maintains effective oversight of the school's finances. The board is very aware of the need to operate strategically and has recently undertaken a thorough review of its vision"*.

We were pleased to receive this commendation from the external reviewer but we do not rest on our laurels and continue to seek to develop in our governance to ensure we are providing the best possible support to the school. To that end, we have streamlined some of our operations and delegated some policy approvals to the Headteacher to provide greater time in meetings to focus on more strategic matters. We are increasingly aware of our environmental responsibilities and this year we created a new governor link role focused on sustainability. Development of the school's digital strategy has been a key focus this year and we recently created a new governor link role to have oversight of this.

Further reflections on the year

We are incredibly proud of the achievements of our Year 11 and Year 13 students in their GCSE and A-Level examinations. Year 13 students faced unparalleled challenges due to the pandemic and are to be particularly congratulated as they sat their GCSEs in 2022 following significant disruption to teaching and learning in the previous two years. These students demonstrated great resilience and commitment to their studies and fully deserve the wonderful outcomes. 90.7% of A-Level exams sat were awarded A*-B grades; a truly phenomenal set of results that has enabled the vast majority of students to reach their destination of choice.

Year 11 students also coped incredibly well with the disruptions to their learning and we are thrilled that 94.1% of GCSE exams sat were awarded 9-7 grades.

The School remained one of the leading state schools in the country on the 9-7 measure at GCSE and also the A*-B measure at A Level. We fully recognise that these results would not be possible without the outstanding teaching and learning that happens at the School, day in and day out. Our thanks go to all the staff who regularly go the extra mile to engender a love of learning in the students, as well as imparting their expert subject knowledge.

As you will know, this School is not all about academic results, important though they are, but about our vision to provide the very best all-round education for our students, focused on our values of 'Community', 'Love of Learning' and 'Character'. You will know that extra-curricular activities here are flourishing and at the same time students are involved in volunteering and charity work, creating a happy and inclusive environment.

The GB very much appreciates the role and contribution to the School community made by both the Parent Staff Association and the Tiffin Girls' Music Society, and their financial contributions have enhanced the School environment and had a direct impact on the students' positive learning experience. Our particular thanks are extended to all those who have supported the PSA fundraising events this year as, together with a grant from the Support Tiffin Girls' School Company (STGSC), sufficient funds have been raised to pay for the much needed refurbishment of the changing rooms used by students and those who use our sports facilities evenings and weekends.

We remain ever grateful for all the donations from parents to the STGSC throughout the year. As well as the grant mentioned above, the STGSC have funded classroom resources across a wide range of departments in support of teaching and learning.

We were sorry to say goodbye to one of our longest serving volunteers in July. Caroline Calascione sat on the GB from 2006 to 2019 and has been a Member of the Academy Trust for the last five years. She saw the school through the fire of 2003, chaired the Pay and Personnel Committee for a number of years and designed the current school logo. Thank you, Caroline, for all that you have contributed to the school community.

We said thank you and farewell to Hamish Stewart, one of our appointed governors who chaired the Finance and Contracts Committee and in turn welcomed Zak Farooqi to the GB in September following a recruitment process led by the members of the academy trust. Zak is a TTGS parent and a chartered accountant who comes with a wealth of experience in finance and audit.

We held a parent governor election and are grateful that seven parents put themselves forward for this important role. Following a ballot of parents, Matt Toolan was re-elected for a second term of office and has succeeded Hamish as Chair of the Finance and Contracts Committee.

We also welcomed Nisha Rabheru, a TTGS parent and an HR professional, who was co-opted to the GB in September to extend our capacity of governors with expertise in human resources, as well as Mr Meryon who was elected by the staff body.

As many of you may already be aware, the school has been running on one boiler for some time with the other two having reached the end of their usable life. This presents a significant risk to the school community and we are disappointed to have been unsuccessful in bidding for government funding on a number of occasions. Securing funds to replace the boiler system remains a key priority for the GB.

How has the Governing Board helped the School achieve its vision?

Each year the School Development Plan (SDP) sets out how the School plans to deliver its vision. The SDP is developed by Mr Keary and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), then reviewed and approved by the GB. It includes, amongst other information, key outcomes and the actions required to deliver. Each GB meeting has strategic foci and agenda items that are linked to specific outcomes in the SDP. This ensures that the governors remain focused on strategic matters that directly impact the education provided for your child.

During 2023-24:

- We held ten GB meetings, as well as three Finance and Contracts Committees, three Pay and Personnel Committees, two Admissions Committee and two Audit and Risk Committee meetings.
- We received reports from Mr Keary and SLT covering a variety of areas related to school development, including student progress, attendance, safeguarding, health and safety, premises and infrastructure, risk management, data protection, equality, diversity and inclusion, sustainability and digital strategy.
- We received presentations from Heads of Department about the curriculum for their subject area and a presentation from the Careers Lead on the careers provision at the school.
- We monitored the 2023-24 financial performance against the budget and both reviewed and approved the School's budget for 2024-25 and the medium term financial plan to 2027.
- We established a working party of governors and SLT to research alternative solutions to boiler replacement in terms of environmental sustainability and finance.
- We received reports on the school's outreach activities, including hosting an eco-conference for 16 primary schools, a medics conference for eight secondary schools, a dragon's den for nine primary schools and over 100 pupils from two local primary schools for sports games led by our Year 10 Sports Leaders.
- Individual governors received training on a variety of topics; including safeguarding, the role of the parent governor and school food. Governors also attended NGA online events including a network for SEND governors and a strategic conference on widening access hosted by the Grammar School Heads Association.
- We reviewed and approved a significant number of policies, many of which are statutory. These included safeguarding, attendance, health and safety, careers and work experience.
- We conducted our annual governor skills audit and questionnaire. These documents are used to identify any gaps we need to fill in order to improve our effectiveness and to obtain feedback from individual governors.
- As per our Governor Visits Policy, we visited the School during the school day and received presentations from and engaged in dialogue with staff and students covering a range of topics. Each visit is tailored to specific SDP objectives and included student learning, student welfare, premises and infrastructure, and a discussion on the new digital strategy and draft SDP for 2024-25.
- Governors with individual responsibilities for Health and Safety, Safeguarding, Careers, Data Protection, Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, and Sixth Form Bursary had meetings with the responsible SLT members and reported the results of their visits to the GB.
- We have assigned individual Governors to have oversight of equality, diversity and inclusion, and sustainability (including provision of school food); both conducted visits and reported back to the GB.
- Governors have attended a number of school events, including music concerts, drama productions, parent focus evenings and coffee mornings, celebration events and the school birthday assembly.
- We received a report following the parent survey last term and were delighted to see that the overriding response was extremely positive about the School, its leadership and the all-round education provision.

Looking forward to 2024-25

We will:

- Continue to support Mr Keary in the implementation of the School's vision statement and ongoing values – focusing on 'Community', 'Love of Learning' and 'Character'
- Continue to monitor student wellbeing, student progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance, curriculum provision, safeguarding, health and safety, staff workload and financial performance
- Continue to focus on encouraging girls from disadvantaged (under-served) backgrounds and/or those who are local to sit our admissions test and also to apply to our Sixth Form
- Monitor the impact of the School's sustainability strategy

- Monitor implementation of the School's digital strategy, including a focus on cyber security
- Maintain a sharp focus on financial performance against the School's budget
- Work with the SLT to agree a strategy for boiler replacement

A full list of the governors, their responsibilities and the governor role description can be found on the school website [here](#). The GB welcomes feedback and suggestions from parents regarding governance and strategic planning. The GB can be contacted via governance@tiffingirls.org

Thank you for your continued support of the school and I look forward to meeting you at one of the parent focus evenings or other events during the year. Do please come and say hello.



Sarah Beeching
Chair of Governors