**Homerton Early Years Centre**

**Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on Thursday 8th February 2018 at 7.00pm at**

**Homerton Early Years Centre**

**Present**

Rinchen Ato (from 8.15pm), Kate Daenke, Roger Lilley, Julia Margretts, Alex Pearson, Mitali Peckham,

Ross Sargent and Shelly Thake

Clerk: Gwyneth Barton

Also in attendance: Phil Garnham (item 1 only)

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|  |  | **Action** |
| **1.** | **Training Session: The Ofsted Inspection Framework and Ofsted Expectations of Governors** |  |
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|  | This session was led by Phil Garnham, Area Senior Education Adviser – South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City at Cambridgeshire County Council. Introducing himself, Phil explained that he was also a lead inspector for Ofsted, although not attending the meeting in this capacity. |  |
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|  | Inspection Framework |  |
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|  | Governors noted that: |  |
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|  | * The key document used by Ofsted inspectors was the School Inspection Handbook, of which there was an abridged version for Section 8 [one-day] inspections for good or outstanding schools. The Handbook is updated frequently, most recently in January 2018. It was important to keep up to date with the most recent edition and the terminology used. A new edition was planned for September 2019, which was expected increasingly to focus Ofsted’s emphasis on compliance, safeguarding and whether nationally expected outcomes were being met. |  |
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|  | * The Handbook detailed the criteria used by inspectors to make their judgements, including the criteria for being ‘outstanding’. |  |
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|  | * Schools judged as ‘outstanding’, such as Homerton, were no longer subject to the regular three-year cycle of inspection. These schools would not receive another inspection unless specifically triggered by changed circumstances, complaints to Ofsted or safeguarding concerns. |  |
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|  | In pairs, Governors were invited to consider the criteria used by inspectors to evaluate the effectiveness of a school’s governance arrangements [pages 44-45 of the School Inspection Handbook] and to identify what evidence could be provided that Homerton was meeting these criteria. The notes of this discussion are attached as Appendix 1 to the minutes. |  |
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|  | Evidence |  |
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|  | Phil explained that prior to making a visit, inspectors would review a range of documents relating to a school, including those available on the school’s website. Once notice of an inspection had been given, schools were also able to upload documents to Ofsted’s internal website and to give inspectors access to secure areas of their own systems. Following their document review, inspectors would develop key lines of inquiry to pursue during their visit to the school. |  |
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|  | Phil circulated pages 66-69 of the School Inspection Handbook, which detailed how inspectors would assess provision for 2 year olds and the grade descriptors for the effectiveness of early years provision. He emphasised that all of the descriptors under ‘outstanding’ had to be met for a setting to be assessed as ‘outstanding’. He also highlighted key words in the text, for example ‘almost all children …are making substantial and sustained progress in relation to their starting points’. He suggested that the Governing Body could use these descriptors and language to form its own self-evaluation checklist. The key thing was for schools to be able to provide evidence. |  |
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|  | Governors noted that documents such as the Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF) and Centre Development Plan (CDP) were not statutory requirements and did not have to be published on the website. However, preparation of these documents supported schools’ development, planning and self-awareness and documents such as the CDP could be made public if not considered sensitive. |  |
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|  | Phil challenged Governors to work through an example, evidencing how they knew that teaching was of a consistently high standard at Homerton. He emphasised the important of evidence trails: how improvement areas were identified, what plans were made to implement them, how these were implemented and resourced and how their effectiveness was monitored and evaluated. Governors worked through an example of steps at Homerton taken to strengthen children’s numeracy skills. |  |
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|  | Governors’ Self-Evaluation |  |
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|  | Also key was Governors’ self-evaluation of their own effectiveness, for example by assessing through a skills audit what skills they had and where the gaps might be. Governors’ holding themselves to account and their plan for doing this could be line in the school’s improvement plan. It could be appropriate to bring in an external view, for example a consultant or local authority adviser or peer review by another school or group of governors. Effective induction of new Governors was important. |  |
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|  | Governors suggested that it might be useful to have a non-routine Governing Body meeting to focus strategically on self-evaluation. It was also suggested that the Committees could be asked to work on gathering evidence of progress against specific criteria. | **Julia/Alex** |
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|  | Safeguarding |  |
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|  | Phil circulated copies of ‘Inspecting Safeguarding in Early Years, Education and Skills Settings’, published in August 2016. JM agreed to ensure that KO as Lead Governor for Safeguarding had a copy. | **Julia/Ken** |
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|  | Governors thanked Phil Garnham for his helpful session and he left the meeting at 7.45pm. |  |
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| **2.** | **Welcome and Apologies for Absence** |  |
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|  | Apologies for absence were received from Kay Blayney, Sophie Bryce, Ken Ong, Mick Patel and Sue Smith. |  |
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| **3.** | **Declarations of Interest** |  |
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|  | There were no declarations of interest. |  |
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| **4.** | **Minutes of 5th December 2017** |  |
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|  | The confidential and open minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 5th December 2017 were approved as correct records. |  |
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| **5.** | **Matters Arising from the Minutes of 5th December 2017** |  |
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|  | Alex reported that the visit by Daniel Zeichner MP had gone well. |  |
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|  | All other matters arising were covered on the agenda. |  |
| **6.** | **Governor Recruitment** |  |
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|  | Governors were reminded that there was still a vacancy on the Governing Body for a co-opted Governor. Julia had made some approaches but these had not proved fruitful to date. It would be particularly useful to bring in someone with financial and/or income-generating experience. A number of possible candidates were discussed and it was agreed that Julia and Mitali would talk to them. | **Julia/**  **Mitali** |
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| **7.** | **Governors’ Attendance at Training Events** |  |
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|  | Governors were asked to let Gwyneth know of training events they had attended. Shelly reported that she had attended training on Head’s performance management in September 2017 and was currently trying to book on to safer recruitment training. | **Shelly** |
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| **8.** | **Headteacher’s Report** |  |
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|  | Alex briefed Governors on the following issues: |  |
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| **a)** | **Pupil numbers** – The nursery was almost full, with the exception of South, where capacity was capped by having two members of staff. This could be increased when a member of staff returned from the Children’s Centre. A survey of parents had established that 21 parents with children already in the Nest would be interested in accessing the 30-hour provision from September. There were 24 30-hour places in total. 6-8 parents with children already at Homerton had expressed interest in the 2½ day classes. |  |
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| **b)** | **Holiday club** – Holiday club for February half-term was largely full, with 20 places being offered for most sessions and 12 for a small number because of staffing levels. Mel had produced a sheet showing what was planned for the week and was also liaising with The Wacky Club at Shelford on ideas. The use of screen time had been discussed and it had been agreed that this would be used only for limited and specific purposes, for example 10 minutes whilst preparing for lunch, and would be linked to the day’s activities. |  |
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| **c)** | **Parent involvement** – Parents’ evenings had just been held and had gone well. The annual parents’ survey was underway, the results of which would be collated and reported to Governors. Upcoming events included a cake stall and a danceathon. Alex had been in contact with a lady from Bodyworks about support for the danceathon. Ross agreed also to ask one of his colleagues to help. It was noted that help from parent governors would be welcome on the day. | **Ross/**  **Parent Governors** |
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| **d)** | **Owlets fees** – Julia reported that the Resources Committee had reviewed late Owlets fees to be charged from September 2018 and was proposing that a single fee of £15.00 be charged for the two hours from 3.45pm to 5.45pm. Governors noted that this change would not be welcomed by parents who did not use the full two hours and could result in reduced take-up of late Owlets. However, it was accepted that the Centre had to staff the full session and needed to run it on a business footing; it could not be subsidised with nursery school funding. In addition, some parents using late Owlets were benefiting from reduced costs as a result of the 30 hours; and many parents would be new in September and not familiar with the previous arrangement. It was agreed unanimously |  |
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|  | To charge a single fee of £15.00 for late Owlets from 3.45pm to 5.45pm with effect from September 2018. | **Alex/Sue** |
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| **e)** | **Staff** – In general there had been less staff sickness absence this term than in the previous term. Two members of staff were on long-term sick leave and Alex was in touch with Occupational Health. It was hoped to keep all staff in their current roles until July, ensuring continuity. Three teachers would be attending the Early Years conference in March. A Maths INSET day was planned for 9th February 2018. |  |
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| **f)** | **Volunteers** – Ross asked whether Homerton was still on the lookout for volunteers, as he knew of someone who might be interested in helping out. Alex confirmed that volunteers were welcome, subject to DBS checks where necessary. Ross agreed to put his contact in touch with Alex. | **Ross** |
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| **g)** | **Centre Development Plan** – This had been reviewed by Resources Committee and a number of actions moved from red to yellow. Alex tabled a further update, noting that all actions were on track for this point in the year. The newly formatted Self-Evaluation Framework could potentially be brought to the next Governing Body meeting. As recommended at the KIT visit, a second paper had been written to supplement the CDP, documenting how its aims would be achieved. Governors welcomed the clarity provided by this paper. |  |
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|  | [Rinchen arrived at 8.15pm.] |  |
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| **h)** | **Local authority KIT visit** – The report arising from the recent local authority KIT visit had been circulated with the agenda. In addition to advice on the CDP, the adviser had also arranged help from the local authority on a simplified method of data reporting. Mid-year data reporting had also been recommended and so Alex and Mitali would be bringing a report to the next Governing Body meeting. | **Alex/Mitali** |
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| **i)** | **Leadership of the Centre** – The Governing Body had previously tasked a small group of Governors to consider the support provided to the Head of Centre, should the staffing structure no longer include a Deputy or Assistant Head. The need for effective support to the Head of Centre had also been identified at the KIT visit. |  |
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|  | Julia reported that Alex had met with staff and Governors to discuss this. It was proposed that for the remainder of this academic year, Alex would ‘buy staff out’ to work on particular tasks, for example data and the Behaviour policy, bringing in supply staff to cover for them where necessary. The Governor group had also suggested that from April or September, Mitali’s contract be extended by an extra half-day either per week or per fortnight, to work on specific tasks. |  |
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|  | The group had discussed the idea of appointing a senior teacher to support the Head but had felt that now was not an appropriate time to do this, given the continuing uncertainty about future funding for maintained nursery schools. However, Alex and the teachers had prepared and agreed a flowchart showing who would assume leadership responsibility on Alex’s absence. |  |
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|  | Governors welcomed the proposed increase to Mitali’s hours but noted that this had not been discussed at Resources Committee and asked how it would be funded. Alex reported that Sue Smith had confirmed that it was affordable both in the current and the coming year. Subject to affordability, Governors endorsed the proposed increase. | **Alex** |
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| **j)** | **Teaching School bids** – Alex reported that the Cambridge Early Years Teaching School had won two bids, one on literacy through the Cambridgeshire School Improvement Board and one on special educational needs and behaviour to be delivered jointly with the local authority. Governors noted that delivery of the bids would mean staff spending time away from the Centre. However, all professional development funding was now being channelled this way and it was essential for the Teaching School to bid in order for it to survive. |  |
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|  | The literacy bid would pay £10,000 to the nursery schools in the Teaching School over one year and would involve supporting primary schools and PVI providers with less good literacy outcomes, sharing the nursery schools’ work on activities such as story trails and helicopter stories. |  |
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|  | The special educational needs and behaviour bid would bring the Teaching School £65,000 over two years and in the first year would require 8 days for delivery and 2 days for writing up. |  |
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| **k)** | **Use of premises** – Ross asked whether there were any plans yet in place to make use of the office space at Homerton vacated by the transfer of children’s centre responsibilities to the local authority. Alex confirmed that there were not. Governors suggested that the space could be rented out commercially, for example to a CAB adviser. Alex agreed to consider this but noted that safeguarding issues would have to be taken into account as anyone using the office would have full access to the Centre. | **Alex** |
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| **l)** | **Local authority Homerton data profile report** – This had been circulated with the agenda. Governors noted that it would be considered in detail by the Curriculum Committee and would inform the Centre Development Plan for the coming year. |  |
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| **m)** | **Budget** – Alex reported that budgets continued to be challenging and were not made easier by a lack of clarity in some cases; for example, the local authority had overpaid £20,000 to Homerton and had subsequently taken this sum back. Three forthcoming visits had been scheduled by Janet Jallow, the local authority financial adviser. |  |
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|  | The end of year forecast for 2017/2018 was for a £39,420 carry forward in the nursery school. However, there was a carry forward of £54,000 from 2016/2017, so this forecast figure concealed an excess of expenditure over income of around £15,000. £30,000 had been received for the children’s centre in the current year that would not be received in 2018/19, creating a total cost pressure of £45,000 for next year. In daycare a year-end carry forward of £30,000 was anticipated and in the Nest a carry forward of £20,000, meaning a year-end carry forward of £89,000 across all activities. Overall, it appeared that the Centre’s finances would be secure for another year but in the longer term, national uncertainty over both the lump sums paid to maintained nursery schools and the higher hourly rate of £4.79 posed significant risk. |  |
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|  | The local authority had introduced a new budgeting system, Orovia, which was expected to make things simpler once established. Budget reports should be easier to read and it would also be possible to model ‘what if’ scenarios. |  |
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| **n)** | **Oversubscription criteria for admissions** – Julia reported that the Resources Committee had considered these in depth and had recommended no changes for the coming year. |  |
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|  | This proposal was endorsed unanimously by the Governing Body. | **Alex/Sue** |
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| **9.** | **Key Issues from Curriculum Committee** |  |
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|  | The minutes of the meeting of the Curriculum Committee held on 15th January 2018 were received. Mitali highlighted the following points: |  |
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|  | * The Committee would be giving further consideration to the process for bringing new children into the nursery, following questions from Governors as to whether this could be sped up. |  |
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|  | * The Committee had discussed parent communication and Kate had written some text for the newsletter inviting people to become class representatives. She explained that she and other parents of children in her daughter’s class had formed a Whatsapp group, which they used to keep in touch and to arrange informal social events. Groups focussing on individual classes could seem more relevant to parents than activities proposed by parent Governors for all parents in the Centre. It was recognised that Whatsapp might not be appropriate in all cases and that some parents/classes might prefer to use e-mail. It was suggested that teachers might encourage parents to become class representatives and/or to set up groups, since if each class had a group, staff at the Centre could also use the groups as a means of keeping in touch. However, Mitali expressed a preference for such arrangements not to be too prescriptive or overly formal. |  |
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|  | * Kay would be carrying out a literacy visit and the Literacy Policy would be reviewed following this visit. The Maths Policy would also be reviewed in the late spring or early summer term. | **Kay/Alex** |
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| **10.** | **Update on the Children’s Centre** |  |
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|  | The minutes of the meetings of the Children’s Centre Joint Committee held on 29th November 2017 and 16th January 2018 were received. Governors noted that a further update on Children’s Centre issues was contained in the Resources Committee minutes considered under Minute 13 below. Julia reported that: |  |
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|  | * The Liberal Democrats were challenging the County Council’s budget for 2018/19 in a final attempt to reverse the decisions taken on the future of the children’s centres. |  |
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|  | * The County Council’s Premises team had been at Homerton sorting out equipment, but did not seem to wish to take anything back. |  |
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|  | * Once the South Cambridge Children’s Centre had officially closed, Homerton would need to review its continuing links with Fawcett. |  |
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|  | * Messy Plan would run until the end of the current year and efforts were being made to continue to run it next year. |  |
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|  | * It had previously been agreed that Homerton would receive some money to reflect the management time spent on children’s centre issues. The Joint Committee minutes now said that this would be paid only if there were funds remaining in the budget. Julia would raise this with Anne Kent. | **Julia** |
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| **11.** | **Key Issues from the Teaching School** |  |
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|  | Teaching School bids had been covered under Minute 8 j) above. |  |
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|  | Julia reported that recruitment to Initial Teacher Training was proving difficult, with only 2 applications received this year. Nationally UCAS had reported a 30% reduction in the number of teaching applications received. |  |
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| **12.** | **Safeguarding** – no issues to report. |  |
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| **13.** | **Key Issues from Resources Committee** |  |
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|  | The minutes of the Resources Committee held on 23rd January 2018 were received. |  |
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|  | Proposals for the appointment of a new Head of Centre had been circulated with the agenda. These included the publication of an internal advert on 23rd February 2018 and interviews in time for the final decision to be made at the next Governing Body meeting on 22nd March 2018. Shelly noted that she could take part in interviews on 20th but not 21st March 2018. Julia would be checking whether the local authority wanted to be involved in the interviews: they were entitled to take part if they wished, given that Homerton was a maintained nursery school. | **Julia** |
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| **14.** | **Any Other Urgent Matters** – none. |  |
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| **15.** | **Date of Next Meeting** –The next Governing Body meeting would be held on Thursday 22nd March 2018, starting at **7.00pm.** |  |
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|  | The meeting ended at 8.55pm. |  |

**Appendix 1**

**Effectiveness of governance arrangements [pages 44-45 of the Ofsted School Inspection Handbook]:**

**evidence proposed by Governors that Homerton is meeting these criteria**

**Inspectors will consider whether Governors:**

* **Work effectively with leaders to communicate the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school and develop a culture of ambition**
  + Centre Development Plan
  + Governor reports
  + Observations
  + Making sure parent communications happen regularly
  + Website up to date
  + Consider policy
  + Minutes of Governor meetings
  + School brochure/website etc
* **Are transparent and accountable, including in recruitment of staff, governance structures, attendance at meetings and contact with parents**
  + Minutes on website
  + Serve on interview panels
  + Some have carried out safer recruitment training
  + At the start of the year, appointments to Committees are confirmed
  + Attendance in minutes
  + Parent governor respres4entatives
  + Asking staff to contribute
  + Policies
* **Ensure that the school’s finances are properly managed and can evaluate how the school is using the pupil premium, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch up premium, primary PE and sport premium, and special educational needs funding**
  + Committee and Governing Body minutes – evidence of questioning and challenging
  + Use of pupil premium on the website
  + Budgetary control report
* **Provide a balance of challenge and support to leaders, understanding the strengths and areas needing improvement in the school**
  + INSET funding
  + Governors visits and reports – the range of these, whether they are targeted, their outcomes
  + Support the headteacher and leadership team during regular Curriculum and Resources Committee meetings
  + Follow-up to the last Ofsted report – evidence of follow-up in meetings and in observations/reports
  + Centre Development Plan RAG rating
* **Provide support for an effective headteacher or are hindering school improvement because of a lack of understanding of issues facing the school**
  + Governing Body and Committee minutes
  + Regular and documented headteacher performance management
  + Reports of Governor visits
  + Local authority KIT reports or similar
  + Centre Development Plan reviewed by the Governing Body
  + Meetings between Chair of Governors and headteacher
  + Governors serving on Committees provide in-depth support and the improves their understanding
  + Head’s report to Governors
  + Attendance levels at meetings
* **Performance manage the headteacher rigorously**
  + Headteacher’s performance review
  + ‘Nominations Committee’ annual cycle
  + Detailed in policy
  + Set objectives
  + Governors trained on headteacher performance management
  + Measurable targets set
* **Understand the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on the progress of pupils currently in the school**
  + Headteacher’s report – statistics
  + Observations via Curriculum Committee
  + Pupil records and assessment data e.g. learning journeys
  + Reports received by Governing Body including baseline, progress and exit data
  + Self-Evaluation Framework
* **Ensure that assessment information from leaders provides governors with sufficient and accurate information to ask probing questions about outcomes for pupils**
  + Governors’ reviews of data
  + Governors expect leaders to present data at Governor meetings
  + Evidence that Curriculum Committee and interrogated data e.g. minutes