

What is a Governing Board?

The governing board exists to make sure that the school runs effectively. It is a strategic role and acts as a check and balance on the performance of the school and the headteacher, who runs the school on a day-to-day basis.

The core functions of the governing board are:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
2. Holding the executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils and the performance management of the staff
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.
4. Ensuring the voices of stakeholders are heard.

Throughout the pandemic, the governing board (and in particular the Chair, Rev. Stephen Walker) has continued to support the Headteacher virtually and has made itself available when possible. However, board meetings have necessarily been virtual and the work of committees was suspended. School visits by link governors was often constrained by COVID.

As life has returned to 'normal' over the past 12 months, governors are once again able to visit school in person and attend board meetings face-to-face. We have reconstituted our two committees, the Resources Committee which looks after finances, premises, staffing and health and safety; and the Pupil Progress Committee, which oversees the curriculum and pupils academic progress. These committees will meet once a term and report back to the full governing body, which meets twice a term.

We have had several changes to the governing board during this past year.

At the start of the academic year, we said farewell to Elizabeth Moss, Sarah Shaw and Emma McClean. We welcomed two new governors, Sue Blagden (co-opted) and Helen Patterson (parent governor).

In the spring, we also said farewell to our Chairman, the Rev. Stephen Walker, who has retired from the ministry to spend more time with his family. Stephen has been an inspirational and generous Chair of Governors and has been a safe pair of hands at a time when all around was uncertain. He has provided Mari Palmer with quiet, reliable, unstinting support and has been a welcome constant in an ever-changing world. He is irreplaceable and will be sadly missed.

We also welcomed two new governors in the spring - Helen Smith as our new Local Authority governor and Karen Storey as a Co-opted governor.

At the final full governing board meeting of this year, Tracy Thompson tendered her resignation, although she will continue to teach Class 1. This leaves a vacancy for a staff governor, which will hopefully be filled at the start of next term following staff elections. The Governing Board has one further vacancy for a Foundation governor and the board would welcome applications from any interested parents.

Attendance at full governors' meetings has been 87.5% this year, which reflects the changing composition of the board. However, we are fortunate that the consistent support from our two longest-serving governors, Jeremy Durant and Jo Johnson, has enabled the school to feel confident in the continuous commitment of their governing board.

Our Governing Board currently consists of:

Sue Blagden – Chair, Safeguarding Governor
Helen Patterson – Vice Chair, Health and Safety Link Governor
Jeremy Durant – Chair of Resources Committee
Jo Johnson – Safeguarding Link Governor
Helen Smith – SEND Link Governor, Chair of Pupil Progress Committee
Karen Storey – Co-opted Governor
Mari Palmer – Headteacher
Helen Lowdell – Clerk to the Governors

Our vision for the school – and how we'll get there

The governing board is responsible for setting the school's vision (what the school will look like in three to five years' time) and strategy (what the school will do to get there). This process is particularly important for our school in light of the recent government White Paper regarding compulsory academisation for all schools by the year 2030.

Over the coming months, the governing board intends to review our existing strategy to ensure that it is fit for future purpose. This process will include conversations with pupils, parents and staff. In particular, we will look at the ways in which we can position our school to integrate seamlessly into whichever MAT (multi-academy trust) best fits our own Christian ethos and our values.

Our review process will begin with a governors' strategy day at the start of next term and will continue throughout the year as we refine our plans and identify the key performance indicators that we will need to monitor our progress. We will keep parents informed on a regular basis and the board would welcome any feedback from parents.

The best education for all pupils

The governing board is responsible for holding the headteacher to account for the education of pupils and the management of staff. Mrs Palmer presents a Headteacher's Report to Governors each term which is reviewed at the full governors meeting, with appropriate challenge from governors where necessary. She also provides a verbal report to governors at the second board meeting each term. In addition, the School Development Plan is reviewed in detail by governors each term and progress is monitored against the milestones that have been set. A named governor is assigned to each strand of the School Development Plan; they liaise with Mrs Palmer on a regular basis and report back to the governing board.

Due to the pandemic, it has been difficult for governors to compare achievement and progress data with local and national averages over the past year. However, with the return of standardised assessments this year, governors will be more able to measure the performance of our pupils in the coming year. KS2 SATs results for Year 6 this summer are largely positive and show progress in all subject areas.

Collective worship is a cornerstone of our faith and has been well supported by our previous Chair of governors, Rev. Stephen Walker, who led services and gave talks to the pupils throughout his tenure. Following his retirement, our Christian ethos continues to be upheld by our Foundation governor, Jeremy Durant, who regularly visits the school. Our well-attended Harvest Festival, Carol Service and Easter Service, together with our Leavers' Service all bear testament to our continued commitment to the Christian faith.

We are in the fortunate position of once again being over-subscribed this year. Our pupil numbers are currently at 81. 11 pupils will leave us this term and we will welcome 11 new starters next year, keeping our roll at 81. However, our current facilities are designed for [73] pupils, so space is, as always, at a premium. The new Class 1 building is already full to bursting and discussions have been initiated with the planners and county representatives about what we can do next. The temporary 'Shepherd's Hut' in front of the school has alleviated matters regarding office space but the governors will be hoping to find a more permanent solution as part of our strategic review.

The governors' have reviewed and approved all statutory policies and familiarised themselves with other school policies throughout the year. The governing body has also approved the budget and monitored expenditure against budget. We are delighted that the school will once again benefit from Research school funds for the next 3 years and from the knowledge and expertise that this association brings.

The future

The next academic year brings with it a SIAMs inspection and possibly an OFSTED inspection too. This will put added pressure on a staff body already working at or near their limits and these inspections will ask a lot of the children as well. However, I am confident that the school will approach these challenges with customary good cheer. Our children have the benefit of a warm and happy atmosphere conducive to positive learning and a supportive and nurturing staff that is second to none. In our school, everyone matters. We expect everyone in our school community to thrive in a safe, challenging and stimulating environment where we all achieve our very best. Together, we can face the future secure in the knowledge that in everything we do, our Christian values will shine through.

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
Love your neighbour as yourself.*

Sue Blagden
Chair of Governors.

July 2022.