



ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2024/5

The Core Functions of the Governing Body

- ensuring that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined;
- ensuring that the Headteacher performs their responsibilities for the educational performance of the school; and
- ensuring the sound, proper and effective use of the school's financial resources.

This statement seeks to outline the impact of governance arrangements at the school throughout the course of the 2024/25 academic year.

Governor Membership, Vacancies and Attendance

The Instrument of Government allows for 14 governors across different categories.

Current membership: 11

Current vacancies: 3

In 2024/25 we lost two governors towards the later part of the academic year. Richard Probyn stood down as a Foundation Governor and Pauline Stevens stood down as a Parent Governor. Julia Wilcock renewed her position as Staff Governor. Our Clerk, Linda Nixon also resigned in April 2025.

Chair: James Harrison

Vice-Chair: Sarah Richardson

Clerk: Linda Nixon until April 2025.

Attendance: Governors strive to attend all meetings where possible. If they cannot attend face to face, we will try to organise an online attendance via Teams/ Zoom.

Attendance at Governor meetings are published on the school website. Attendance at the Full Governing Body (FGB) meetings can be found at:

https://www.abbotsripton.cambs.sch.uk/web/attendance_record/687986

The Structure of Governance

As well as meeting as a Full Governing Board, there are also 3 committees, in order to ensure sufficient oversight, support and accountability towards areas of identified priority and statutory coverage.

The school names these committees as:

- Data Evaluation and Monitoring (D.E.M) – which mainly deals with analysing school performance data and monitoring teaching and learning/ curriculum progression.
- Faith Matters – As a church school this committee considers all matters relating to our church ethos and values, diocese requirements and Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) standards.
- Resources, Health, Safety, Security, Property and Wellbeing (RHSSPW) – this mainly deals with financial management, strategic resource issues, health and safety, property/ planning management and wellbeing (of staff and children).

All groups have a continued oversight of the school's safeguarding responsibilities and manage the updates of school policies aligned to the particular areas of responsibility.

In addition to the above, the school also appoints a Headteacher Performance Management Panel annually.

Committees related to particular purposes such as dealing with complaints or exclusions are constituted as they are required, in line with the determining policy guidance.

Impact of the work of the Full Governing Body

In addition to their 3 core functions, over the course of the last academic year, the Governing Body has demonstrated notable impact with regard to;

- Securing a new leadership structure for the academic year ahead**

Following the resignation of our Headteacher, we began discussions with neighbouring schools to establish a temporary leadership model for the year ahead. As a result, we have partnered with Fourfields Primary School and adopted a shared leadership structure comprising a Head of School, Mr Jake Heather, and an Executive Headteacher, Mrs Sue Blyth, effective from September 2025.

- Ensuring the future financial viability of the school**

Like many other primary schools, we are facing financial challenges in the years ahead. To secure the long-term sustainability of the school, the Governing Body has been exploring a range of options for collaboration with other schools.

The main challenges faced and addressed by the Board in 2024/5 have been:

Recruiting new staff

Many of our current challenges stem from the very areas where we have made the greatest impact. The departure of our Headteacher resulted in the loss of significant experience and in-depth knowledge of the school. In addition, our School Business Manager — who also served as our Clerk to Governors — retired, creating further administrative pressures for the Governing Body. Our Head of School and Executive Head who have been in place since the start of the 2025/6 academic year and our new office staff have made great strides to offset this loss of in-depth school knowledge.

Balancing Financial Resources

This remains a significant challenge for the Governing Body. Schools are continually being asked to achieve more with fewer resources, which is becoming increasingly difficult — particularly when striving to balance these demands with the well-being and personal development needs of both staff and pupils.

Impact of the work of the DEM Committee

Over the course of the last academic year, the DEM Committee has demonstrated notable impact with regard to:

- **Monitoring**

With the support of the committee, leaders can be assured of a robust cycle of assessment, review, and intervention, contributing to stronger outcomes in reading, writing, and maths. By examining progress data alongside attendance, safeguarding, and behaviour indicators, the committee has also supported the development of a more holistic understanding of pupil needs.

- **Data**

Each year, improved data transparency and a deeper shared understanding of assessment information have strengthened the partnership between senior leaders and governors, ensuring that everyone is working from the same evidence base. The committee has kept pupil progress at the forefront of leadership discussions by providing regular analysis, challenge, and interpretation of data.

The main challenges faced by this Committee this year have been...

Many of the DEM meetings take place during the day (we have tried to limit evening meetings in order to balance well-being for staff). This however does mean some governors are not able to attend meetings all meetings. We may review membership of this committee for this reason.

Impact of the work of the Faith Matters Committee

Over the course of the last year, the Faith Matters Committee has demonstrated notable impact with regard to:

- Improving relationships**

The parish covenant, designed to strengthen partnerships between the school and local churches, was finalised this year. A meeting was held with members of the local PCC committees, whom the foundation governors represent on the governing body. This provided a valuable opportunity to reinforce relationships with our church partners and explore practical ways in which the school and local churches can continue to work more closely together.

St Andrew's Church, Abbots Ripton continues to be used for some school services and the children enjoyed visiting the church where the vicar and local colleagues assisted with the 'Stations of the Cross' in the lead up to Easter.

The main challenges faced by this committee this year have been...

It remains a challenge when foundation governors represent a parish in which they do not live and are not members of the PCC. To strengthen awareness and communication, annual reports are issued to keep all parties better informed and engaged. We aim to include church events in our own school newsletter.

Impact of the work of the RHSSPW committee

Over the course of the last year, the RHSSPW Committee has demonstrated notable impact with regard to:

- **Resources**

Financial scrutiny from the committee has improved transparency and enabled leaders to make informed, strategic decisions.

- **Health & Safety/ Property**

Regular health and safety reviews have strengthened risk management and ensured the school remains a safe environment for pupils, staff, and visitors.

- **Safeguarding**

The committee's oversight of safeguarding, along with the link Governor for Safeguarding, has reinforced a culture of vigilance, ensuring policies and procedures are consistently applied and regularly updated.

- **Wellbeing**

Although wellbeing remains challenging to sustain amid high demands on staff and limited funding, the committee's focused oversight has ensured that practical, achievable measures are prioritised, and that the wellbeing of the whole school community remains central to decision-making.

The main challenges faced by this committee this year have been...

The main challenge facing the committee is the increasing pressure to deliver higher standards and broader provision while operating within very limited financial resources. Expectations from government and all stakeholders continue to grow, yet funding has not kept pace. This creates difficult decisions around prioritisation and requires the committee to maintain tight financial oversight while supporting leaders to make the best possible use of every available resource.

Governor Training

Governors work collectively, so we are always able to benefit from our different points of view and considerations within meetings. However, the Governing Body has also benefitted from training courses on the following topics throughout the course of the year;

Termly Governance Briefing

Termly top tips (Governor Services)

TES Safeguarding refresher training

DfE improving attendance – what boards should know

AI, Education and the Law

Analysing Data (Gov Services)

School improvement and well-being (Gov Services)

Essential safeguarding for governors (NGA)

Early reading and Phonics (Gov Services)

Safeguarding online

The Role of PCC in school governance (Ely diocese)

New to Governor induction (Gov services)

Improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils (Gov Services)

Headteacher Performance Management Review (Gov services)

SFVS (Gov Services)

Safer Recruitment (Gov Services)

Safeguarding – a Governor's role (Gov services)

Being an effective Safeguarding Governor (Gov Services)

SEND (What Governors need to know (Gov Services)

School funding, budgeting and financial monitoring (Gov Services)

Schools Property Maintenance (Gov Services)

A Governor's Role in Health and Safety (Gov Services)

Environmental Sustainability for Schools (Gov Services)

Following completion of a training course, Governors are required to share their experience with fellow Governors through completion of a feedback form, highlighting key learning points. These can then also be discussed at the relevant meeting if necessary.

Governor Monitoring

As well as attending meetings, governors are also expected to visit school to understand more about school life and particular areas of priority (typically linked with different areas of the curriculum, or school development).

Throughout the course of this year, governors have undertaken particular monitoring in relation to:

Safeguarding

Pupil Premium

SEND

Health and Safety

Maths

Reading

PE

Computing

Art

R.E

Collective Worship

EYFS

SATS administration

Compliance

The Governing Body has ensured that an effective safeguarding culture is in place. Our work includes:

- Half termly safeguarding visits
- Completion of statutory safeguarding reports/ checks
- Named safeguarding governor
- Safeguarding updates/ figures included in every Headteacher's Report
- Annual safeguarding training for governors
- Safeguarding questions included during every monitoring visit
- Property/ Health & Safety checks completed
- Appointments in accordance with Safer Recruitment training

The Governing Body has ensured that the relevant policies and procedures are in place by:

Policies are reviewed on a rolling schedule, organised by the School Office staff. These are updated as necessary and then reviewed by all staff and governors via email. Comments are collated, further amendments made and then these are ratified by the Chair of Committee at the next available meeting.

Forward Planning

In 2025/6 our biggest challenge remains securing the long term viability of the school through financial security. We will be focussing on a long term leadership model to support our work in this area.

'Inclusion for All Framework'

Inclusion is the removal of barriers and ensuring a culture of belonging for all pupils. Within the 'Inclusion for all Framework' we will create a sense of belonging and promote well-being and attendance through safeguarding, curriculum, special education needs and disabilities support, behaviour and transition.

At Abbots Ripton we are committed to;

- Creating an environment that meets the special educational needs of each child in order that they can achieve their learning potential and engage in activities (including extra-curricular opportunities) alongside peers who do not have special educational needs and disabilities
- Ensuring high levels of confidence and partnership working by requesting, monitoring and responding to parents/ carers and pupils' views
- Making clear the expectations of all partners in the process of supporting pupils with SEND

- Ensuring a high level of staff expertise to meet pupil need, through well targeted continuing professional development and reflective staff meetings.
- Facilitating full inclusion in all school activities for pupils with medical conditions (where this impacts on SEN/disability) through consultation with health and social care professionals.
- Identifying and monitoring the roles and responsibilities of all staff in providing for children's special educational needs and disabilities.
- Enabling all children to have full access to all elements of the school curriculum by making reasonable adjustments.
- Meeting the needs of vulnerable learners (including those with SEND) by working in cooperation with the Local Authority and other outside agencies to ensure there is a multi-professional approach is taken when needed.
- Ensuring that our Church values, school ethos and school culture is one of kindness, compassion, a celebration of individuality and inclusion.

Other information and Contact

Further information regarding the work of the Governing Body can be found at:

http://www.abbotsripton.cambs.sch.uk/web/our_governing_body/209683

The point of contact for the Governing Body is the clerk, who can be emailed at clerk@abbotsripton.cambs.sch.uk