

**ABBOTS RIPTON C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023/24**

This statement seeks to outline the impact of governance arrangements at the school throughout the course of the 2023/24 academic year.

**Governor Membership, Vacancies and Attendance**

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

Current membership: 11

Current vacancies: 3

In 2023/24 we welcomed one new Governor to the board. Scarlett Mitcheson joins as a Foundation Governor for Abbots Ripton PCC. The Staff Governor will be coming to the end of her term in October 2024, so this will be opened up to staff so the position can be filled again.

Chair: James Harrison

Vice Chair: Liz Pendered

Clerk: Linda Nixon

**Attendance:** Governors strive to attend all meetings where possible. If they cannot attend face to face, we 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

[http://www.abbotsripton.cambs.sch.uk/web/attendance\\_record\\_fgb\\_meetings/305663](http://www.abbotsripton.cambs.sch.uk/web/attendance_record_fgb_meetings/305663)

Committee attendance can be found at

[http://www.abbotsripton.cambs.sch.uk/web/attendance\\_record\\_-\\_committee\\_meetings/687986](http://www.abbotsripton.cambs.sch.uk/web/attendance_record_-_committee_meetings/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 school foundation, ethos, 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**

Over the course of the last academic year, the Governing Body has demonstrated notable impact with regard to;

- **Successful Ofsted outcome**

The school underwent an ungraded Ofsted inspection in June 2024 and we were delighted that the school maintained its overall judgement of **good**. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be **outstanding** if a graded inspection were carried out. This positive outcome reflects the robust governance and leadership in place. Governors were well-prepared, drawing on extensive training completed throughout the year, which enabled them to confidently and effectively respond to Ofsted's questioning.

- **Succession planning**

Several governors took on new roles within the Full Governing Body, focusing on monitoring specific subject areas. It was agreed that each governor would adopt a particular area of focus for in-depth monitoring over a two-year period, allowing them to gain detailed expertise. Additionally, governors were paired with a 'buddy' to ensure that knowledge and insights were shared across the governing body, preventing any single individual from holding all the information.

### **The main challenges faced and addressed by the Board this year have been:**

**Preparing for Ofsted:** Governors dedicated significant effort to ensure the school was 'Ofsted ready,' with focused training and strategic planning to meet inspection requirements.

**Balancing Financial Resources:** A key challenge was managing the school's financial resources amidst growing demands and a tightening budget. The Board worked diligently to make informed decisions that maximised the impact of available funding.

**Monitoring Staff Wellbeing:** Given some specific challenges for staff, governors closely monitored staff wellbeing. In a small school, the challenges faced by one group can have a ripple effect across the entire community, and the Board took proactive steps to support staff through these difficulties.

### **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;

- **Increased scope of monitoring.**

We have monitored subjects that have not been a specific priority in a while such as Art and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL). We have had to prioritise other areas such as Phonics (due to the implementation of a new scheme) and Writing (as it remains a focus for improvement for the whole school), Governors have a greater oversight of the curriculum in its entirety as we have endeavored to broaden our subject monitoring.

- **Improved 'monitoring of the monitoring'**

We have become more aware and reflective of our own practices as a whole Governing Body, but this has been led by DEM. We have undertaken considerable work on sharing best practice (we have invited visitors from other governing bodies to come and discuss their methods with us), had group training and meetings very focused on the Education Inspection Framework led by our Local Authority Advisor to challenge our thinking and encourage greater self-evaluation. As a result we have introduced an 'impact' section at the end of all meeting minutes so we can consider the impact each meeting has had on school improvement.

- **Improved Understanding of School Data**

There is a continued improvement in our understanding of school performance data. Whilst this continues to be strong when judged against other local and national outcomes, Governors on DEM are ever more knowledgeable about the narratives that accompany this data and the operational issues staff face with recent data trends (such as impact of absence).

### **The main challenges faced by this committee this year have been:**

As a small school it can be difficult to balance monitoring and the wellbeing of staff. Many staff members have responsibility for more than one subject area. As such we must be mindful of not over-burdening staff with too much scrutiny, whilst at the same time assuring ourselves that teaching and learning is the best quality possible for our children.

### **Impact of the work of the Faith Matters Committee**

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

- **Covenant Statement**

The Diocese requested each church school draft a Covenant Statement to act as a partnership agreement between school and church. The Committee made a good start on this document and will be looking to finalise it within the next academic year.

### **The main challenges faced by this committee this year have been:**

Fostering strong links with our parochial church councils, which our foundation governors represent, can be challenging. As a small school, some of our foundation governors do not reside within the parish they represent, which can sometimes limit the depth of the relationship between the school and the church councils. Despite this, the governing body continues to work towards strengthening these connections and ensuring effective communication.

### **Impact of the work of the RHSSPW Committee**

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

- **Improved Financial Management**

Committee members have undertaken additional and more specific financial management training, including for SFVS and budget-monitoring, and have given summary feedback to the RHSSPW committee. This has had a positive impact on our abilities to scrutinise information more meaningfully.

- **Improved Health & Safety monitoring**

Shadowing was introduced for Health and Safety walk-arounds and reports, offering another voice and critical eye, and helping with role succession. In addition, relevant professional experience meant that RHSSPW were able to advise on challenges with asbestos consultants (see 'main challenges faced...' below).

- **Impact on Wellbeing of Staff & Children**

With a small and very driven workforce and some more challenging circumstances than usual this year, RHSSPW were keen to focus on staff wellbeing, mental health and general perceptions about life at the school. Analysis was undertaken through direct discussion, anonymous questionnaires and regular feedback in meetings. Detailed discussions followed about ways in which any identified issues or challenges could be managed or alleviated. SR, a governor who is not on RHSSPW, attended some DEM governor training and fed back to us (at FGB) on ways to

make staff questionnaires/feedback more meaningful and thus resulting data more useful. Resulting improved methods will be used for future analysis.

**The main challenges faced by this committee this year have been:**

**Financial Management:** As is the case nationally, the school faces some significant financial challenges in the coming years. The RHSSPW are very alert to this. We have been involved in ongoing strategic discussions on behalf of the FGB and continue to scrutinise Income & Expenditure and financial decision-making.

**Strategic Resource Issues:** As a small school, any change to staffing can be very disruptive but staff transitions have been few and have been well-managed.

**Health & Safety:** There were significant concerns about poor advice given to the school from an external asbestos consultant and the provision of, and billing for, services provided by contractors the consultant recommended. Thankfully, this has been resolved, concerns about possible contamination have been allayed, billing has been corrected, and a complaint has been lodged over the poor service provided.

**Property/Planning Management:** No notable challenges.

**Wellbeing of Staff & Children:** As a small, high-achieving school with a loyal and driven staff, burnout is a significant concern. Additional challenges this year have included a more challenging than normal year group, taking up additional resource, time and energy and impacting almost every member of staff in some way. RHSSPW (and the wider FGB) were very alert to this and kept checking in regularly with the head and staff members.

**Governor Training**

Governors work collectively, enabling us 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;

Schools Property Maintenance/Estates Management

Termly Governance Briefing

Developing and Monitoring the Primary Curriculum

Being an Effective Governing Body (Getting Ofsted Ready)

Improving Outcomes for Disadvantaged Pupils

New to Governance Induction - Maintained Schools only

Termly Clerks' Briefing and Networking Sessions

Governor Cyber Awareness Training

Safer Recruitment in Schools

Headteacher's Performance Management Review  
Safer Recruitment in Schools – Refresher Course  
Balancing School Improvement and Well-Being  
Early Reading and Phonics  
A Governor's Role in Health and Safety  
Safeguarding - A Governors Role  
Schools Funding, Budgeting and Financial Monitoring.  
Analysing and Using Data

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;

P.E  
Art  
Phonics  
Early Years  
Computing  
MFL  
History  
Computing  
RE  
Writing  
Collective Worship

### **Compliance**

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

Policies are reviewed on a rolling schedule, organised by the School Office Manager. 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 Governors at the next available meeting.

### **Forward Planning**

Following a successful year at Abbots Ripton School, the main challenge that the Governing Board faces is a financial one. We have extremely high standards and a track record of impressive attainment and progress scores, but the continued strain on finances means this may ultimately impact on available resources. The challenge will be to manage finances without suffering a negative impact on the success of the school and we may have to keep an open mind in how we can achieve this.

### **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](http://www.abbotsripton.cambs.sch.uk/web/our_governing_body/209683)

The point of contact for the Governing Body is the clerk, Mrs Linda Nixon who can be emailed at [clerk@abbotsripton.cambs.sch.uk](mailto:clerk@abbotsripton.cambs.sch.uk)