

Annual Governance Statement
Governing Body of Theale Church of England Primary School
Academic year 2024/2025

Our Purpose

In accordance with the Government's requirement for all governing bodies, the 3 core strategic functions of the Theale C of E Primary School Governing Body are:

1. ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
2. holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils;
3. overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Our Board

Per our Instrument of Governance (reconstituted August 2015), our Governing Body consists of ten governors:

- 2 Foundation Governors (Oxford Diocese)
- 2 Parent Governors
- 1 Local Authority Governor (West Berkshire)
- 1 Staff Governor
- the Headteacher
- 3 Co-opted Governors.

Information and profiles of the current Board can be found on the Governor page on the School Website. The attendance of Governors at meetings can be found at the end of this document.

What We Do

The full Governing Body (FGB) meets six times a year, and also has a number of subgroups to consider different aspects of the school in detail. At Theale, we have a Finance Committee to review the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well spent and a Pay Committee. We also have First and Second Committees in place to deal with any complaints or disciplinary matters that may arise.

We also visit the school to have more focussed meetings on our areas of expertise, such as the curriculum, the quality of teaching and learning, safeguarding, finance, H&S. Governors often support school day trips. In March each year we spend the whole day in school prior to our meeting to carry out a range of observations and meetings.

We have the privilege of having the Rev. Martin Davy on our board. His regular visits to the school to take assembly are popular with the staff and pupils, but also adds to the knowledge we as a governing body have of the school.

A summary of our work in 2024/5

The Board of an 'Outstanding' school has particular challenges. The school is outstanding due to the incredible hard work and dedication of all the staff. The Board is conscious that it needs to work in a way that enables it to gather all the evidence and information it needs to do its job well without adding unnecessarily to the workload of staff. It's a delicate balance which we keep under constant review. The Board and individual governors do this by using existing reports and information, covering several tasks in one visit, holding meetings at the end of the school day rather than in the evening, involvement in ongoing school activities such as school trips and assemblies and working alongside the school's

Local Authority adviser. We also have a 'Governor Day' when many activities can be carried out simultaneously and we can do activities such as discussions with pupils. Most governors, as parents or other community members, also see aspects of the outcomes of the work of the school in other situations.

All of the minutes of the FGB meetings can be found on the school website. We have a number of items that we discuss at every meeting (safeguarding, finances, H&S, school update etc), and a number of items that we discuss are certain times of year.

At our first meeting of the school year, we agreed roles and our focus for the upcoming year. For 2024/25 we agreed this would be:

- a full complement of governors all diligently fulfilling their individual and collective roles,
- appointment and induction of an effective clerk,
- a successful Ofsted,
- a budget in credit at the end of the financial year,
- strong movement on our consideration of academy status,
- initial preparation for SIAMS.

Point 1: a full complement of governors all diligently fulfilling their individual and collective roles

During 2024/25 Françoise Woolley resigned due to work related reasons. She led GB work on safeguarding and special educational needs and did a great job over a number of years. She kindly gave advance notice of her intention to resign so we were able to recruit her replacement (Lindsay Ansell). She has considerable experience in these areas and was appointed so that a handover period was possible which enabled a very smooth transition. At the end of the year Jacinta Holmes, resigned (moving away from the area). We are very grateful for her commitment to the school while a governor particularly in strengthening the links with the church. She was a Foundation Governor and her replacement was appointed by the Diocese and will be in place for the first meeting of the new academic year.

The governing body regularly reviews its skills to focus training where needed and use this information when we have vacancies to ensure we have the broad range of skills required in a Governing Body. We carried one co-opted vacancy for most of the year while we sought someone with financial expertise to strengthen the skills of the GB. Mr Oli Gannicliff was recently appointed to fill that vacancy from the start of the new academic year.

Governors with specific roles have carried these out diligently and kept the GB updated.

I have notified the GB that I intend to stand down at the end August 2026 and so we are actively looking for a co-opted governor with educational expertise to replace me.

Point 2: appointment and induction of an effective clerk

The Clerk to the Governors is a key role. Margo Mallett was appointed as the Clerk to the GB and has done really well getting to grips with the way the GB functions and the supporting software. She has now completed a full cycle of meetings and activity and is proving to be a very capable clerk. We are now making greater use of central IT systems and are less reliant on paper!

Point 3: a successful Ofsted

I am so delighted to be able to say that we have been re-accredited as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. The long wait I talked about in my last report is over. It is not only good to know that the school's continued success has been acknowledged by Ofsted, but that we can look forward to a period without having to be constantly prepared for their visit.

Point 4: a budget in credit at the end of the financial year

We have not achieved this goal yet but we are making real progress towards it. The key problem we faced was not having a clear understanding of our true financial position. Since our long-standing School Business Manager left we have had two short-term appointments and three gaps. This meant that the budget for the 2024/5 year had to be produced by the LA, but this later transpired to have an error which increased our costs for the year by £50k. Because of this, it became impossible to achieve a balanced budget by the end of the year.

We also had to continue processing £1.5m worth of invoices associated with the insurance claim for the flood (this was at the instruction of the DfE to avoid VAT being charged). There was also the challenge of identifying additional school costs, consequent of the floods, that we had to charge to the insurance company.

However, we have made a very successful appointment of an experienced School Business Manager who has made phenomenal strides in making sure that all monies, invoices and payments are allocated to the correct funds. We can now be confident that we have an increasingly accurate picture of our finances. We have carried a deficit into this financial year and are currently agreeing a strategy with the Local Authority (as we are legally obliged to do), to ensure that we have a balanced budget within a short a timescale as practical. These discussions are currently ongoing.

Point 5: strong movement on our consideration of academy status

We have not been able to make any progress on this due to our financial situation. Until this becomes clear and a balanced budget is in sight, we would be in a weak position in conversations with any academy trust or the DfE. Once the budget error became clear, we put any work on this area on hold.

Point 6: initial preparation for SIAMS.

As a church school we get inspected by Ofsted and by SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools). This inspection focuses more on the cultural ethos and spiritual development of pupils in all aspects of school life. Early in the year it became clear that our inspection would be later than we had assumed. Staff and governor training began in the summer term and this will be a focus area for 2025/6.

Educational performance

We continue to monitor pupil performance and are proud of the pupils' continued positive attitudes and eagerness to embrace our broad curriculum. Once again, we had a very strong set of academic results at all levels. We continue to monitor how 'vulnerable groups' of children will be supported and how the Pupil Premium Grant is being spent by the school and what impact this has on the outcomes, and a report on this is available on the website. Pupils leave us extremely well equipped for the next stage of their education.

Safeguarding

Governors are also responsible for safeguarding children and staff in school and we have a Nominated Governor for Safeguarding who regularly meets with the designated safeguarding lead and other staff members as well as providing regular updates to the governors about any safeguarding matters.

Health and Safety

Amy North leads on our Health and Safety responsibilities. She visits the school and carries out checks of the premises with the school's caretaker. This remains a big task as everything needs to be reviewed and updated for the new school building and post flood. We work closely with the School Business Manager, Caretaker and Senior Leadership on this.

Jon Houghton

September 2025

Governor Attendance at Full Governing Body meetings

Governor		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Catherine Morley	Headteacher	6/6	6/7	6/6	5/6
Jon Houghton	Co-opted	6/6	7/7	7/7	6/6
Michael Carpenter	Co-opted	4/6	0/2	N/A	N/A
Amy North	Co-opted	N/A	2/2	5/6	5/6
Paul Davey	Co-opted	N/A	2/4	0/1	N/A
Martin Davy	Foundation	5/6	4/7	6/6	2/6
Theresa Howard	Foundation	N/A	1/2	0/1	N/A
Alice Gough	Foundation	3/5	1/4	N/A	N/A
Francoise Woolley	Parent	5/6	7/7	6/6	3/3
Sanjiv Anand	Parent	4/6	4/7	N/A	N/A
Kirsty Holehouse	Staff	N/A	7/7	3/3	N/A
Aurelia Noel	LA	N/A	4/7	5/6	5/6
Michelle Carey	Parent	N/A	N/A	1/2	N/A
Jacinta Holmes	Foundation	N/A	N/A	1/1	4/6
Lindsay Ansell	Parent	N/A	N/A	1/1	6/6
Maria Bradbury	Staff	N/A	N/A	1/1	5/6