

## Annual Governance Statement

**Date:** 2024-25

*Governing boards are not required to produce an annual report; however, at Sphere Federation we believe communicating with our school community is important.*

### Overview

Our role as a governing board is to provide strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance. Our core functions are set out in regulation and include, but are not limited to ensuring:

- that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the schools are clearly defined
- that the Head of Federation performs their responsibilities for the educational performance of the schools
- the sound, proper and effective use of the federation's financial resources

Each governor has specific responsibilities. Below are summaries from each of the governors from the last 12 months.

### Safeguarding

**Governors: Sue Hayward-Giles, Rachel Cooper**

Over the last school year, Sue and I continue to meet each half-term with the one of the Heads of School to review and challenge all aspects of safeguarding across Sphere Federation. We use a checklist for each visit ensuring that all aspects of safeguarding are discussed over the school year. Each school has undergone an external safeguarding audit with excellent feedback. Recommendations have been acted on, such as online safety training for all staff including the whole governing board. We have focused not only on the amount and type of training but the effectiveness of training and how we know that safeguarding is robust across the federation. Furthermore, we have integrated questions about safeguarding into other visits for all governors such as assessing the vision from a Christian distinctiveness perspective and when evaluating the governance around SATs processes, ensuring that safeguarding is translated into all aspects of school life.

### Assessment

#### Equality and Inclusion

**Governor: Nolan Keep**

To continue to investigate and challenge Equality and Inclusion, my focus this year has remained keenly on the difference that Pupil Premium funding is making to our children. I am particularly pleased to report on the positive impact we are seeing. We are strategically investing this additional funding in ways that benefit all children, demonstrating an inclusive approach. This ensures that improved learning outcomes are experienced across Sphere Federation whilst simultaneously providing targeted and beneficial support to those who require the greatest help. A notable success this year has been the effective implementation of Pupil Premium funding in supporting schemes such as 'Think Like a Pony'. This initiative is clearly impacting the school and, crucially, benefiting our Pupil Premium children in a meaningful way. My review process continues to be robust and data-driven. I meet with David Roundtree each term to review the assessments tracker, and I also meet with the Heads of School each term. These regular discussions are vital for maintaining oversight and facilitating informed challenge. Governors rigorously review assessment data and outcomes to identify the precise impact of teaching and additional interventions. This enables me to consistently challenge the allocation of resources, such as Pupil Premium, and to view the impact of changes and initiatives across Sphere Federation. I will continue to investigate and challenge our approach to Equality and Inclusion in the coming year, building on the positive momentum and insights gained from our current practices.

### Early Years Foundation Stage

#### Early Reading

**Governor: Rachel Cooper**

This year, I have returned to the role of governor for Early Years Foundation Stage and Early Reading. I have had the opportunity to meet with the leaders for Early Years (Lottie Flynn) and Early Reading (Vicky Latham). These termly meetings all have a particular focus appropriate for the school year; for example, in the summer term we anonymously review Early Years profile scores and Phonics Screening Check outcomes. Questions and discussions are focused in line with the strategic priorities of Sphere Federation. Where appropriate, we discussed examples of adaptations of the curriculum relevant to the current cohort of children. I have had the opportunity to see phonics being taught in one of the schools and I was able to observe some of these adaptations in practice. I have also discussed how the curriculum is adapted to highlight Christian Distinctiveness at St James' CE Primary.

Next year, there will be focus on adapting the outdoor spaces for each school and it will be interesting to see the changes and any impact on, and the experiences of the next cohort of children.

### Reading and Writing

#### Governor: Rachel Barker

My areas of focus are Reading and Writing. As the link governor, I have regular purposeful sessions with Jen Wilson (Reading Leader) and Ollie Catherall (Writing Leader), including our termly meetings which include visits to each of the schools in Sphere Federation. During these visits, we review successes and learning points within these subjects, including the resources used, what is working and key challenges. For example, we have explored the impact of adaptive teaching, considered how Christian distinctiveness is highlighted through Reading and Writing activities at St James' CE Primary, or how the school's vision and values are reflected in the chosen texts and writing tasks. We undertook a learning walk around Moortown where I saw practices such as adaptive teaching, comprehension and writing activities linked with the community in which the school is based.

We also discuss key areas of focus for each subject including continuing to encourage a love of reading to increase inclusion, enhancing transcription skills, and using adaptive teaching in different way to improve basic writing skills. I aim to provide constructive challenge and support during these meetings, so all parties find them purposeful and productive. With planning for the next academic year well ahead, there is a clear, comprehensive, and well thought out plan for continued improvement and development for Reading and Writing across Sphere Federation in place. I am also a member of the Pay Appeals Committee and attended occasional Christian Distinctiveness Committee meetings.

### Maths and Science

#### Governor: Steven Trangmar

It has been another enjoyable year exploring the progress of the Maths and Science curriculum across Sphere Federation. I met with both Paul Wilks and David Roundtree in the Autumn term to review the last academic year outcomes (in Maths), and explore priorities for both subjects for the current academic year. I was introduced to the Maths leadership team at Moortown (John McGriffiths), Scholes (Elmet) (Mark Lindsay) and St James' CE (Rachael Poole). I met with both Mark and Rachael to explore how the curriculum was being delivered, how staff among the schools/year groups were being supported in their practice, and how progress was being monitored. There has been a clear focus and consistency in the approach to [Mastery in Mathematics](#) in all three schools, exemplified during my visits to schools, book looks and lesson observations. It was really great to see how enthusiastic, confident and fluent pupils were in the subject area, and I am confident that the approach taken aligns to our vision and ethos for the federation. I look forward to reviewing progress and outcomes for both subject areas in future years.

### Foundation subjects

#### Governor: Andrew Gibson

This year, I have taken on two new areas of focus: Foundation Subjects and Attendance.

In Foundation Subjects, I am impressed with the evidence I have found of continuous curriculum development, and the continuous professional development undertaken by teachers and staff to ensure the breadth and depth of the Foundation Subjects learning across all year groups. Foundation subjects are at the heart of the two-year cycle curriculum structure. I was pleased to notice the consistency of approach across Sphere Federation.

Attendance is a top priority for all schools and excellent attendance is vital for all children. Significant statistical improvements have been made this year, especially at St James' CE Primary. I have observed the strong relationships between staff and families, and the caring culture that helps and supports our families when needed. My work next year will be to continue to challenge and support the staff and teachers on these two important areas.

### Personal development

#### Governor: Lorna Miall

Following two fascinating years as Finance governor, I was pleased to rotate to the newly created strand governor role for Living and Learning, which covers most aspects of Personal Development. This vital element of the school community touches so many parts of federation life and it has been great to have the opportunity to explore it further. I have spent the majority of my time with Caroline Taylor who has led the Living & Learning programme for many years, understanding the breadth of the curriculum and the way it is embedded into the daily and weekly routines and behaviours of pupils and staff. I have been particularly interested in the metrics used for measuring the success of the topics, themed days / weeks, sporting events and external speakers. This was most relevant in a review I conducted of the effectiveness of the way the PE Premium was allocated by each school. I have reviewed the links between Living & Learning and the schools' self-evaluation forms and school improvement plans and discussed the safeguarding controls in place. I have also reviewed the ways in which Living & Learning is interpreted through a Christian Distinctiveness lens at St James' CE Primary.

### Health & Safety, Estates, GDPR

#### Governor: Craig Barker

I was delighted to have been elected as a Parent Governor for Sphere Federation and have assumed the role for Buildings, Health and Safety, and Data Protection. This role is to ensure that staff, visitors and all the children are safe and protected throughout their time with Sphere Federation.

I am generally focused on all areas connected to health and safety including the physical aspects of the schools and the areas directly or indirectly affecting them (such as buildings, classrooms, outbuildings, play areas, safety certificates, regulation conformity). I have completed a site visit to St James' CE Primary and, after discussions with the Resources Manager and Estates Manager, I am assured that they have this area of the Federation's Schools in focus. I will be looking to pay health and safety visits to all the schools over each academic year.

## Finance

**Governor: Lorna Miall (until November 2024), Kathryn Wenn (from December 2024)**

During the year, I have worked closely with Sue Quirk (Federation Resources Manager) as well as David Roundtree (Head of Federation) and our local authority Finance Officer to understand and challenge the procedures and processes in place to ensure funds are being used effectively, appropriately and in line with each of the schools' plans and budgets.

I have attended the mid-year budget review meeting and annual budget setting meeting to scrutinise the process and better understand the inputs and outputs. I also review and challenge the monthly financial reports to assess progress against these budgets.

A monitoring review of the financial management and reporting of the PE Grant and Pupil Premium funding received has been completed and I was able to see examples of consistency of process across the federation as well as differences in the allocation of these funds between schools, reflecting the differing needs of each school.

I also led the governor review of our schools' financial value statements (SFVS) to ensure accuracy, clarity and completeness. Following this I suggested some clarifications on the financial information provided to the full Governing Board.

## Christian Distinctiveness

**Governors: Kathryn Wenn, Sue Hayward-Giles, Matthew Peat**

The purpose of this group is to support St James' CE Primary leaders in developing and maintaining the school's Christian vision as a lived reality, ensuring it has a positive impact on the ways in which adults and children can be supported to flourish. We use the Church of England SIAMS framework as this basis of this.

The work of the Christian Distinctiveness group focuses on St James' CE Primary but also works with leaders and governors to seek opportunities to enrich the life of the whole federation.

The focus during the first term was on how to increase the understanding of Christian distinctiveness amongst governors and examine the curriculum through the lens of Christian distinctiveness. Governors outside the core group and Curriculum Leaders are now invited to attend on a rota basis. This has worked well and we have been able to discuss examples of tailoring the curriculum and approaches to learning for St James' to integrate with the Christian vision of the school. We have further discussed where concepts from Church of England educational approaches have been used to inform some of the curriculum work and approaches to learning across the wider federation.

In the second term, we focused on approaches to monitoring the impact of the vision of the school in readiness for monitoring in term three. We also reviewed the intentional growth in initiatives designed to strengthen the links between the Church and school which are reaping benefits for both. Monitoring of RE was also undertaken.

In term three, a monitoring visit has been completed to consider the impact of the school vision on pupils and how it helps them to flourish. A SIAMS review was also carried out by our Diocesan Adviser and an additional advisor. The reflections from both will be used to inform the plan for the Christian Distinctiveness group next year.