

## **Federation of St James the Great and St John's Catholic Primary Schools**

### **Annual Governance Statement 2024-2025**

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### **Scope of responsibility**

As governors, we acknowledge we have overall responsibility for ensuring that the Federation of St James the Great and St John's Catholic Primary Schools (hereafter known as, 'the Federation') has an effective and appropriate system of control, financial and otherwise. However, such a system is designed to manage rather than eliminate the risk of failure to achieve business objectives and can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss.

The governing body has delegated the day-to-day responsibility to the Executive Headteacher and the two Co-Headteachers for ensuring financial controls conform with the requirements of both propriety and good financial management and in accordance with the requirements and responsibilities assigned to it by the Department for Education (DfE). They are also responsible for reporting to the governing body any material weaknesses or breakdowns in internal control.

As defined by the DfE, the core functions of all governing bodies, no matter what type of school or how many schools they govern, are:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

In exercising their functions, the governing body shall

- Act with integrity, objectivity, and honesty and in the best interests of the school; and

· Be open about the decisions they make and the actions they take and in particular shall be prepared to explain their decisions and actions to interested parties.

Our governing body has a Code of Conduct which is reviewed and agreed annually. All governors and associate members are obliged to abide by this code.

### **Governance**

The governing board comprises 16 governors:

Foundation Governors x 9	Appointed onto the governing body by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark
Executive Headteacher x1	Governor by virtue of employment at the Federation
Staff Governor x1	Elected on to the governing board by all staff employed by the federation
Local Authority Governor x1	Nominated by the Local Authority (Southwark Council), and appointed by the governing body
Parent Governor x2	Elected on to the governing body by parents of pupils at the Federation – 1 parent governor per school
Co-opted Governor x2	Appointed by the governing body

There are also advisers to the governing body, both Southwark local authority, and school staff who provide particular expertise. There are currently four vacancies for Foundation Governors, although it is hoped that one of those may be filled by the end of this academic year, and efforts will continue with the two parishes and other Catholic parishes to fill the remaining vacancies quickly.

### **Conflicts of interest**

The governing body requires all governors to note any ongoing conflicts of interest on GovernorHub, which the clerk and co-chairs of the governing body review regularly. Governors are asked to advise of any conflict of interest in the agenda at the start of each meeting, and action is taken accordingly for their participation in that part of the meeting.

### **Meetings**

There are three committees that meet termly – Standards & Curriculum, Finance & Resources, and Parish, Parents & Community. The full governing body meets termly also, as well as an extra business meeting at the end of the summer term to plan for the year ahead.

Southwark Local Authority provides a clerking service to our Governing Body. Our clerk is Sally Willcock, and she can be contacted via email at [sally.willcock@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:sally.willcock@southwark.gov.uk).

### **Governance Review**

A review of the effectiveness of the governing board was undertaken during May and June 2025. The results are being reviewed by the co-chairs with a view to current skills gaps, future training opportunities for governors, and to roles within the GB for governors to best use their skills and experience.

### **Vice-Chair's Review of 2024-25**

This year, both schools in our Federation have been inspected.

St James the Great was inspected by the Catholic Schools Inspectorate in November 2024, and received a Grade 1 (Outstanding) in all domains assessed. The inspectors noted that,

- There is an enriched Catholic curriculum that centres on the teaching of Christ
- Staff are committed to ensure that all will achieve including the most vulnerable
- There are very high expectations of behaviour and attitudes to learning
- Pastoral care deeply reflects the teaching of Jesus that it is to children that the kingdom of heaven belongs
- Prayer is central to the life of the school permeating all areas

At the beginning of April 2025, St John's was inspected by Ofsted, and received an outcome of Outstanding in all categories. The inspectors noted that,

*This is a school with high expectations and one in which pupils are treated with kindness and care. Pupils live out the school's vision to 'love and serve one another'. This helps to ensure that the school is a compassionate and supportive environment that enables pupils*

*to thrive academically and as citizens of modern Britain.*

*The school has developed a very ambitious and broad academic curriculum for its pupils.*

*They learn the curriculum very well. This is clearly shown by the very high quality of work that pupils produce in different subjects, which reflects the depth of their understanding. It is also demonstrated by pupils' results in national tests. Disadvantaged pupils achieve equally highly.*

*The school provides many excellent opportunities and experiences that develop the character of pupils. For example, through their charitable work, pupils learn the importance of helping others. Various roles of responsibility, such as reading buddies and*

*membership of the school council, help pupils to learn how to support each other and improve the lives of their community.*

*Pupils are kept safe and have staff who they can talk to if things are worrying them. The*

*behaviour of pupils is incredibly positive. It supports both their learning of the curriculum and helps to foster the school's family feel.*

The governing body are incredibly proud that the hard work and dedication of all staff in both schools, the experienced leadership and the enthusiasm and abilities of all of the children have been recognised by both the Catholic Church and Ofsted.

As expected, and from reading both inspection reports, it can be seen that this academic year has been another busy one in the life of our Federation. Pupils in both schools have had access to a wide range of educational, spiritual and cultural experiences. Our pupils remain at the heart of the decisions that are made by the governing body and the schools' leaders. The two schools in our federation continue to thrive, with both schools' staff sharing best practice, collaborating on curricular and extra-curricular activities, staff training and moderation of assessed work. The senior leadership structure of a part time executive headteacher and two part time co-headteachers has been demonstrated to be effective in terms of school leadership, career opportunities for middle leaders of the federation, and staff retention. The office admin teams in both schools continue to work together also, and continue to be greater together than the sum of our parts.

We began the year by reviewing and agreeing the School Improvement Plans for both schools, ensuring that robust and ambitious plans were made in all five areas for improvement. These comprise the quality of education, behaviour and attitude, personal development, leadership and management, development of spiritual life of the school. Governor training continued to be offered to all governors through Southwark Council. All governors received an in-house safeguarding briefing in the Autumn Term.

The Key Stage 2 SATs results for summer 2024 were strong in both schools for all cohorts of Year 6 children, well above the national average in every subject apart from SPAG at St John's, where the number of children attaining the higher standard of greater depth was slightly below the national average. Changes were implemented in the Autumn Term to the teaching and practice of spelling across the whole school. The attainment data at the end of Year 6 put St James the Great in the top 7% of schools in England. We are very proud of the pupils, and delighted for them, that they completed their primary education with such excellent results, setting them up for their secondary education and GCSEs. Children attending our schools are offered a wide range of opportunities to have a broad, interesting, challenging and Catholic education. They have done very well in all the standardised tests from the phonics reading assessment in Year 1, to SATs in Year 2, the times table test in Year 4 and SATs in Year 6. Governors acknowledge the incredible staff teams in both schools, who have worked so tirelessly and with such enthusiasm and dedication to ensure that the children have had the very best primary education possible.

Pupil Premium funding for both schools has been used to fund additional support staff for specific pupils in upper Key Stage 2; also to provide specific speaking and listening interventions; to purchase additional reading resources for the phonics programme; to provide additional phonics sessions to children requiring extra support; an increase in learning support staff provision recognising the additional need in both schools; funding participation in enrichment activities and providing resources for learning at home and in school for disadvantaged pupils; the art therapist is also funded through Pupil Premium.

Sports Premium income for both schools was spent on specialist sports teacher provision, focussing on multi-skills to enable children to participate in a wide range of games and activities. There has been a focus on challenge for more able children and support for those with lower ability to engage fully and make progress. There has been participation in external sporting activities and competitions, golf lessons, dinghy sailing lessons, specialist dance teaching, as well as specialist SEND sports provision. The impact of each intervention was closely monitored by the governing body, and it was very pleasing to see the breadth and depth of sporting and physical activity that our pupils enjoy, both in lessons and lunchtime active games.

With budgets remaining tight at both schools, governors continue to closely monitor income and expenses. Both schools are proactive in promoting our Nursery provision, and using parish and community links, as well as word of mouth to encourage interest for Reception places and for any incidental places that arise in other year groups. School leaders actively seek best value for money in all purchasing decisions, and the school accounts are monitored line by line on a termly basis by governors. A significant investment is being made into the Nursery Playground of St James the Great, which is being funded through the school's own budget. The works include new climbing and play apparatus as well as a replacement impact surface.

Using financial benchmarking data, governors continue to ensure that our schools use their income wisely, focussing on staff costs and ensuring that staffing provision matches need among the pupil cohorts, and that there is good evidence of effective use of staffing resources in both schools.

Governors have continued to play an active part in the life of the two schools and parishes. Governors have visited both schools regularly, have watched the children learning both in the classrooms and beyond, have witnessed spiritual and moving assemblies and Christmas nativities and tableaux, as well as Mass in school and in the parish church.

### **Looking ahead to 2025-26**

Governors continue to work with school leaders to review projected pupil numbers across Southwark, possible reductions in income from Southwark, and the current direction of travel from central Government and the Diocese towards joining a Multi-

Academy Trust. Governors have reviewed the offer of two MATs that the Federation schools might be eligible to join, and have expressed an interest in joining one of them. The executive headteacher and a sub-committee of governors are working on the next steps of this process.

The two schools of our Federation are thriving, with happy children experiencing great teaching and fabulous wider educational opportunities. The external validation of this through two inspections has been welcome. The staff teams are committed, experienced professionals who are ambitious for the pupils, and the senior leaders are driven and determined that finite financial resources are used thoughtfully to deliver excellent outcomes. It is an honour to serve these two communities.

Jane McManus

Vice-Chair of Governors