

Chairs Annual Report 2025-26

At Chilham St Mary's Church of England Primary School, our Governing Board is made up of dedicated volunteers, parents, staff members, and committed individuals from our wider community, who work together to support the school and its pupils. The only exceptions to this volunteer status are the Headteacher and the staff governor.

Chilham Governing Board

Mr James Dearden	Chair of Governors
Mr Dan Sherlock	Vice Chair of Governors
Miss Rebecca Dolan	Head Teacher
Dr Sophie Duncan	Foundation Governor
Ms Hester Fenwick	Co-Opted Governor
Miss Chloë Arnold	Staff Governor
Mrs Charlotte Tillyard	Local Authority Governor
Dr Vanessa Hutchinson	Parent Governor
Mrs Sarah Osborne	Parent Governor
Reverend S Martin	Ex-Officio Foundation Governor
Jacqui Wapshott	Clerk of Governors

We meet regularly to provide strategic oversight and ensure the school continues to thrive. All meetings are professionally minuted, and copies of these minutes are available upon request from the school office.

The Governing Board's core responsibilities include:

1. **Setting the vision, ethos, and strategic direction** of the school.
2. **Holding the Headteacher to account** for the educational performance of pupils and the management of staff.
3. **Overseeing the school's financial health**, ensuring resources are used effectively.
4. **Ensuring policies are applied fairly** across the entire school community.



Chilham St Mary's CE Primary School
School Hill, Chilham, Canterbury, Kent. CT4 8DE

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Our governors bring a diverse range of expertise, from education and finance to health and safety and leadership, which enables us to guide and monitor the school's strategic development effectively. We actively participate in both formal and informal visits, contributing to the creation and evaluation of the School Development Plan.

Each board meeting includes a detailed report from the Headteacher, covering curriculum highlights, pupil progress, attendance, and school-wide achievements. Governors are always eager to understand what children are learning, how their development is being supported, and to celebrate the successes of the whole school.

The 2025-26 academic year has been one of the most challenging and important periods in the school's recent history. Like many small schools across the country, we have faced significant financial pressures arising from changing pupil numbers and rising costs. After careful consideration, the Governing Board took the difficult decision to restructure the school and reduce the number of classes in order to ensure the school's long-term financial sustainability. Such decisions are never taken lightly, and we recognise the impact they have on pupils, families and staff. However, governors were unanimous in their view that these changes were necessary to secure a stable future for the school.

During the year, the school also underwent an Ofsted inspection. The outcome highlighted a number of areas where improvements need to be made. While this was understandably disappointing for the whole school community, the inspection report also recognised the significant work already underway to address these issues. Inspectors acknowledged the commitment demonstrated by leaders, staff and governors and noted that the actions being taken were appropriate and beginning to have a positive impact. The Governing Board remains confident that these improvements will continue to emerge and that the school is moving in the right direction.

Throughout the year, governors have conducted numerous monitoring visits, giving us valuable insight into daily school life. These visits allow us to engage directly with pupils and staff, observe the implementation of improvement initiatives and witness first-hand the commitment and professionalism of our school team. Despite the challenges faced, it has been encouraging to see the resilience, enthusiasm and kindness displayed by our children, staff and wider community.

Love Trust Respect Honesty Forgiveness Perseverance



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This year also marked the retirement of Mrs Brenda Ladley from the Governing Board after many, many years of dedicated service to Chilham St Mary's. Brenda has provided steadfast support, wisdom and guidance and has made a significant contribution to the life of the school and its governing body. On behalf of all governors, staff, pupils and parents, I would like to express our sincere gratitude for her commitment and wish her every happiness in the future.

Whilst the year has brought difficult decisions and heightened scrutiny, it has also demonstrated the strength of our school community. Governors have worked closely with school leaders to ensure that challenges are addressed openly and constructively, whilst maintaining a clear focus on delivering the best possible outcomes for our children. Our priority remains to support the school in building on its many strengths and delivering sustainable improvement for the future.

On behalf of the Governing Board, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our Headteacher, whose dedication, resilience and hard work continue to make Chilham St Mary's a special place to learn and grow. We look forward to the year ahead with optimism and determination as we continue our journey of improvement together.

James Dearden
Chair of Governors

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