



## Annual Governance Statement

### St. Vincent De Paul Catholic Primary School

#### Purpose of this Governance Statement

*This governance statement has been prepared and published by the Governing Body of St. Vincent De Paul Catholic Primary School*

(hereafter referred to as the Governing Body) in compliance with our duty to report on the ways in which we have fulfilled our obligations and responsibilities relating to (i) our overarching duty to conduct St. Vincent De Paul Catholic Primary School (the school) in accordance with its Catholic character and (ii) our core functions (which are explained below) during the 2024-2025 academic year.

A list of serving Governors is set out at **Appendix 1**.

#### Role of the Governing Body

As the Governing Body of a Catholic school, our overarching responsibility lies in ensuring that the school is conducted in accordance with its Catholic character at all times, and this overriding duty (which is also a legal duty) permeates everything that we do. Further, in accordance with our legal obligations, the Governing Body endeavours to operate at a strategic level, leaving the Head Teacher and senior school leaders responsible and accountable to us for the operational day-to-day running of the school. It is by achieving these aims that we can be sure that our School has effective governance.

The three core functions of the Governing Body are:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
2. Holding the Head Teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and for the internal organisation, management and control of the school, including performance management of staff; and
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

As an integral part of the vision for the holistic formation of children and young people Canon law (Church law) also requires that Catholic schools (which includes academies) are "...at least as academically distinguished as that in the other schools of the area" (806§2) and the Governing Body are mindful of this requirement in all that we do.

#### Scope of Governing Body's Responsibilities

The Governing Body acknowledges that we have an overall responsibility for ensuring that the school 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 our objectives and can provide only a reasonable (as opposed to absolute) assurance against material misstatement or loss.

The Governing Body has delegated the day-to-day responsibility to the Head Teacher for ensuring financial controls conform with the requirements of both propriety and good financial management.

## **Governance Arrangements**

### **Composition of the Governing Body**

The Governing Body is made up of 8 Foundation Governors †, 2 Staff Governors (including the head teacher), 2 Parent Governors, 1 Local Authority Governor and 1 Co-opted Governor\*.

† Foundation Governors are appointed by the Bishop of the Diocese in which the school is situated. The Bishop not only appoints his Foundation Governors because of their particular skills, but, more importantly, for the strict purpose of ensuring, on his behalf, the Catholic character of the School. Foundation Governors are also under important legal duties to preserve and develop the School's Catholic character. In order to ensure that the School's Catholic character is protected and that it is being conducted in accordance with the tenets of its Catholic designation, Governing Bodies of Catholic schools and academies must always have a majority of Foundation Governors.

The Diocesan Bishop is canonically responsible for his schools and academies. He ensures that the Catholic ethos of the school/academy is maintained, particularly through the appointment of Foundation Governors, but also through overseeing the appointment of members of staff and through Diocesan inspection, in order to ensure that the school/academy is fulfilling the objects cited in its Instrument of Government/Articles of Association and the trust deed under which the school/academy was established.

\* Co-opted Governors are appointed by the Governing Body and are people who, in the opinion of the Governing Body, have the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school/academy. On our Governing Body, the Co-opted Governor is a staff member.

### **Governing Body's work this year and Governor's attendance at full Governing Body meetings**

Over the past year, the Governing Body has focused on continuing to improve outcomes for all children in our school community. This has included evaluating the school's performance in relation to pupil results and the quality of teaching by monitoring the School Development Plan. We have continued to prioritize safeguarding and keeping our pupils and staff safe. We have discussed school policies which have been updated and then ratified by the Governing Body.

Following the Diocese plan that all schools should be part of a Catholic Academy Trust (CAT) by 2030, the Governing Body has been working through the implications of becoming part of Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust. The timescale of joining the CAT are still to be determined, but the school has committed itself to moving as soon as is practical and is working closely in consultation with the CAT and the Diocese.

Each Governor is linked to a specific area of the curriculum and staff communicate with termly updates to Governors. Ofsted (November 2022) stated "Leaders have thought carefully about the curriculum in all subjects. They ensure that pupils' learning builds in a logical manner on that of the previous year."

The Curriculum Committee have discussed pupils' progress in Mathematics, English and RE. Each term there has been a special focus at each Curriculum committee meeting to inform and update Governors regarding the many developments – this year emphasis has been on RE due to the implementation of the new RED Curriculum, English – with the new writing scheme – Ready Steady Write and Maths.

The Finance, Premises and Personnel Committee has carefully managed the school's budget and spending on additional items such as increased security in office area, lighting outside on car park, grease trap for kitchen and extra storage within school. The Appraisal process and pay progression proposals have been monitored by the Governors. The pay policy was updated and ratified by the Governing Body in Autumn term 2024.

A Committee of Governors conducts the Head Teacher's performance management and is assisted by an Independent School Improvement Partner.

All Governors have been involved in The Child Protection and Safeguarding policy which has been reviewed and updated to reflect the revised Government guidance in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. Safeguarding has continued to be a priority and child protection issues are reported to the committee.

The full Governing Body has met three times during the year. The governor's meetings take place in the evening, in school. Overall, Governors have excellent attendance at Governing Body meetings. Individual Governors' attendance during the year at Governing Body meetings can be found in **Appendix 2**.

### **Committees work this year and Governor's attendance at Committee meetings**

At St. Vincent De Paul Catholic Primary School we have two committees.

### **Curriculum (and SEN) Committee**

#### **Areas of responsibility**

This committee is responsible for monitoring the delivery and effectiveness of the school's curriculum and SEN support. The Committee will have the power to co-opt members of the teaching/non-teaching staff if required.

#### **Terms of Reference**

- To carry out the responsibilities of the Governing Body with regard to all curriculum and SEN matters, including policy relating to the secular and religious education curricula as advised by the Diocese of Shrewsbury and the implementation of the National Curriculum.
- To advise the Governing Body on its curriculum and SEN policy.
- To advise the Governing Body on Pupil Premium and vulnerable children, and the support school is providing.
- To hold the Head Teacher and other senior leaders to account for improving the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and pupils' behaviour and safety.
- To consider complaints made in respect of the curriculum and collective worship under the authority's procedures as required by section 23 of the Education Act 1993 and to involve the whole Governing Body as appropriate.
- To carry out the responsibilities of the Governing Body as set out in the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and to ensure that that school has robust Safeguarding procedures in place.
- To ensure that the requirements of children with special educational needs are met.
- To ensure pupil premium and sports' funding is used appropriately.
- To ensure that the school fulfils its requirements to publish information about school performance as required and ensure statutory information on curriculum is published on website.
- To monitor and evaluate the impact of continuing professional development on the quality of teaching.
- To advise the Governing Body on its policy for sex education and oversee health education within school.
- Monitoring of remote learning (when required).
- Arrangements for educational visits.
- Identify funding requirements for curriculum development.
- To evaluate the impact of the curriculum in terms of pupils' preparedness for the next stage of education.
- To consider recommendations relating to teaching and learning from external reviews of the school (for example, Ofsted or local school improvement advisers), and ensure an appropriate plan is in place to act on any recommendations.
- To review and monitor any policies delegated by the full governing board.

### **Personnel, Finance and Premises Committee**

#### **Terms of reference**

#### **FINANCE**

- Financial planning
  - To ensure that the three-year budget plan aligns with the priorities of the SDP and recommend this to the full governing board.
  - To draft and adopt a detailed annual budget plan which includes revenue and capital expenditure.
  - To ensure the annual budget plan considers the agreed priorities of the SDP.
  - To make decisions in respect of the service level agreement with the Local Authority.
  - To ensure that the financial implications of staffing decisions are explicitly identified, understood, and budgeted for.

- Financial monitoring
  - To monitor the income and expenditure throughout the year of all delegated and devolved funds against the annual budget plan.
  - To evaluate the allocation of Pupil Premium funding within the annual budget.
  - To hold the school to account for the spending of Pupil Premium funding and associated outcomes.
  - To recommend to the governing body the school's charges and remission policy, and to keep this under annual review.
  - To oversee the effective financial management of the school through SFVS.
  - To review, on an annual basis, the school's financial procedures relating to assets and disposals.
  - To review and maintain the school's policies for budget management, procurement, and assets and disposal.
  - To consider expenditure requests, as necessary.
  - To consider contracts to be entered into up to the value of £5,000 whether for goods, services or works.
  - To consider the allocation of capital funds for capital projects, if delegated by the governing board.
- Financial reporting
  - To review reports from the SBM regarding the spending of the school's budget throughout the academic year and report the findings to the full governing board.
  - To report any significant anomalies in the performance of the school against the annual budget to the full governing board.

## **PERSONNEL**

- To develop, review and oversee the implementation of the governing body's personnel policies.
- Review the school staffing structure to ensure it meets the requirements of the curriculum, pupils, and the running of the school.
- To oversee the appointment of all members of staff on administration and teaching assistant level and above (except Headteacher/Deputy)
- Review annually, the school performance management policy for all staff.
- Monitor a training strategy for teachers and support staff.
- Consider applications for early retirement, secondment and leave of absence not covered by local agreements.
- Consider applications from members of staff for a reduction of hours worked or changes to their working pattern, i.e. flexible working applications.
- To keep under review staff work/life balance, working conditions and well-being, including monitoring absence.
- To draft and review, in consultation with the Headteacher and staff, a policy on absence management for the approval of the governing body.
- Consider recommendations made by the Statutory Teachers Pay and Conditions Document.

## **PREMISES (INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY)**

- To decide for governors to inspect the premises on a regular basis.
- Prepare annual program of repairs and maintenance.
- Agree level of maintenance service the school will buy from service providers.
- Research and be involved in drawing up an Asset Management Plan and Accessibility Plan for the school.
- To recommend a hiring/lettings policy to the governing body and to oversee its implementation.
- To carry out the governing body's responsibilities in relation to Health & Safety, including recommending a draft Health and Safety policy. statement to the governing body and provide regular reports on the monitoring of health and safety.
- Monitor to ensure that suitable risk assessments have been prepared and action taken to minimise risk.
- To carry out the governing body's responsibilities in relation to the security of school premises and equipment.
- To approve off-site visits and activities of more than 24 hours.
- To ensure all governors and staff have access to health, safety and safeguarding policies codes of practice, risk assessments and other health and safety procedures issued by the Local Authority and that the documents contained in them are consulted and acted upon.

The Personnel Finance and Premises Committee will report and make recommendations to the Governing Body on:

- future building programs
- the premises development plan
- the ICT development plan
- the Asset Management Plan

#### **SAFEGUARDING – FULL GOVERNORS**

- Ensuring a member of the senior leadership team is appointed to take lead responsibility for safeguarding (the DSL) and make sure all staff members undergo child protection and safeguarding training and receive regular refresher training and child protection and safeguarding updates as required, but at least annually.
- Considering school site security in relation to safeguarding.
- Ensuring that all relevant recruitment, selection and pre-employment checks have been conducted for all teaching and support staff, temporary staff, governors, trustees, and volunteers in accordance with KCSiE.
- Making sure all staff members, including temporary staff, governors, trustees, and volunteers, have been subjected to the appropriate level of DBS checks.
- Ensuring that the school maintains a single central record, and that this is up-to-date and accurate.

#### **Pecuniary Interests**

To ensure that any pecuniary interests are declared at each meeting by everyone present.

The school also has statutory committees that meet through the year such as:

- Headteacher Performance Management Panel
- Admissions
- Pay Committee

Individual Governors' attendance during the year at Committee meetings can be found in **Appendix 3**.

#### **Governors' Future Plans for the School**

The Governors will continue their work, in line with the government agenda, to ensure that the school is the best school it can be.

The Governors will uphold the Mission, Vision and Aims of the School and support the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in delivering the Strategic Priorities set out in the School Development Plan.

The Governors will continue to review the Governance arrangement, the skills mix and training of Governors to ensure that the school, its staff and pupils are properly supported.

The Governors will continue to monitor the educational performance and financial performance of the school, through regular meetings, visits and making appropriate interventions.

The Governors will oversee the implementation of best-practice in Safeguarding at the School.

Following the Diocese plan that all schools should be part of a Catholic Academy Trust (CAT) by 2030, the Governing Body will continue working through the implications of becoming part of Our Lady Help of Christians CAT. The timescale of joining the CAT are still to be determined, but the school has committed itself to moving as soon as is practical and is working closely in consultation with the CAT and the Diocese.

#### **Contact Details**

#### **Minutes of Governing Body and Committee meetings**

Minutes of Governing Body and Committee meetings are public documents – copies can be obtained from our School Office.

### **Review of Value for Money**

The Governing Body has used its resources to provide good value for money during the academic year and has assessed where value for money can be improved including the use of benchmarking data where available.

### **The Risk and Control Framework**

The school's system of internal financial control is based on a framework of regular management information and administrative procedures including the segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability, where appropriate. In particular it includes: –

- Comprehensive budgeting and monitoring systems with an annual budget and periodic financial reports which are reviewed and agreed by the Governing Body;
- Regular reviews by the [Finance, Premises and Personnel Committee] of reports which indicate financial performance against the forecast and of major purchase plans, capital works and expenditure programmes;
- Setting targets to measure financial and other performance;
- Clearly defined purchasing (asset purchase or capital investment) guidelines;
- Delegation of authority and segregation of duties;
- Identification and management of risks.

### **Capacity to handle risk**

The Governing Body regularly reviews the key risks to which the school is exposed together with the operating, financial and compliance controls that have been implemented to mitigate those risks.

### **Review of effectiveness**

The Governing Body has responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the systems in place in the school to identify and manage risk and plan to address any weaknesses (if relevant) and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

### **How to contact the Governing Body**

We always welcome suggestions, feedback and ideas from parents/carers and the wider school community – please contact the Chair of Governors, Mr Mike Dobson, at [mdobson@stvincents.cheshire.sch.uk](mailto:mdobson@stvincents.cheshire.sch.uk)

This governance statement is approved by order of the members of the Governing Body on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2025 and signed on its behalf by:

**Mr Mike Dobson**

**Governor**

**Miss Bernadette Groarke**

**Head Teacher**

**Appendix 1**

**Governing body of St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School**

**List of serving governors 2024 - 2025**

| <b>Governor details</b>                              | <b>Category of Governor</b> | <b>Term of office expiry date</b> |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Bernadette Groarke (Head Teacher)                    | -                           | ex officio                        |
| Mike Dobson (Chair)                                  | Governing Body              | 31/08/2028                        |
| Fr David Long (Parish Priest)                        | Foundation Governor         | 31/08/2028                        |
| Stephen Graham                                       | Foundation Governor         | 31/08/2026                        |
| Helen Williams (Chair of Curriculum)                 | Foundation Governor         | 31/08/2027                        |
| Grainne Davies (Deputy Head)                         | Co-opted Governor           | -                                 |
| Kate Watson  | Staff Governor              | 03/10/2027                        |
| Julia Mullan   | Foundation Governor         | 31/08/2028                        |
| Hilary Heap  | Foundation Governor         | 31/08/2028                        |
| Eve Smith (Chair of Finance, Premises and Personnel) | L.A. Governor               | 24/11/2027                        |
| Angela Nield   | Parent Governor             | 26/09/2028                        |
| Amy Hayes  | Foundation Governor         | 31/08/2028                        |
| Evelyn Nichols (Vice Chair)                          | Foundation Governor         | 31/08/2027                        |
| Lisa Benskin   | Parent Governor             | 21/11/2026                        |

## Appendix 2

### Governing body of St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School

#### Governor attendance at Full Governing Body meetings for 2024-2025

| <b>GOVERNOR</b>                                      | <b>FGB Meetings Attended</b> | <b>Out of a possible</b> |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Bernadette Groarke (Head Teacher)                    | 3                            | 3                        |
| Mike Dobson (Chair)                                  | 3                            | 3                        |
| Fr David Long (Parish Priest)                        | 3                            | 3                        |
| Stephen Graham                                       | 3                            | 3                        |
| Helen Williams (Chair of Curriculum)                 | 2                            | 3                        |
| Grainne Davies (Deputy Head)                         | 3                            | 3                        |
| Kate Watson  | 3                            | 3                        |
| Julia Mullan   | 2                            | 3                        |
| Hilary Heap  | 2                            | 3                        |
| Eve Smith (Chair of Finance, Premises and Personnel) | 2                            | 3                        |
| Angela Nield   | 3                            | 3                        |
| Amy Hayes  | 3                            | 3                        |
| Evelyn Nichols (Vice Chair)                          | 3                            | 3                        |
| Lisa Benskin   | 2                            | 3                        |

### Appendix 3

#### Governing body of St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School

#### Governor attendance at Committee meetings for 2024-2025

| <b>GOVERNOR</b>                                      | <b>Committee Meetings attended</b> | <b>Out of a possible</b> |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Bernadette Groarke (Head Teacher)                    | 5                                  | 6                        |
| Mike Dobson (Chair)                                  | 6                                  | 6                        |
| Fr David Long (Parish Priest)                        | 3                                  | 3                        |
| Stephen Graham                                       | 3                                  | 3                        |
| Helen Williams (Chair of Curriculum)                 | 2                                  | 3                        |
| Grainne Davies (Deputy Head)                         | 6                                  | 6                        |
| Kate Watson  | 6                                  | 6                        |
| Julia Mullan   | 1                                  | 3                        |
| Hilary Heap  | 3                                  | 3                        |
| Eve Smith (Chair of Finance, Premises and Personnel) | 2                                  | 3                        |
| Angela Nield   | 3                                  | 3                        |
| Amy Hayes  | 6                                  | 6                        |
| Evelyn Nichols (Vice Chair)                          | 3                                  | 3                        |
| Lisa Benskin   | 0                                  | 3                        |