

Chair of Governors

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Saffron Walden

ROLE PURPOSE

The Chair of Governors provides overall leadership to the Governing Body, ensuring it operates effectively, lawfully and in full accordance with the school's Catholic mission and values.

The Chair enables the Governing Body to:

- set and uphold a clear strategic vision for the school;
- hold the Headteacher and school leaders to account for educational outcomes, safeguarding effectiveness and financial performance;
- ensure compliance with statutory duties and robust governance, assurance and accountability; and
- act at all times in the best interests of pupils, staff, parents and the wider school community.

The Chair acts as the primary link between the Governing Body, the Headteacher, the Diocese and external stakeholders, fostering a culture of respectful challenge, transparency and high standards of governance.

CORE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Governance Leadership and Effectiveness

- Provide confident and inclusive leadership to the Governing Body, promoting collective responsibility, constructive challenge and effective decision-making.
- Ensure the Governing Body remains focused on its strategic role, avoiding operational involvement while maintaining appropriate oversight and assurance.
- Lead the planning and conduct of Governing Body meetings, including:
 - agreeing agendas that prioritise strategic issues, risk and assurance;
 - ensuring papers clearly state their purpose (decision, discussion or noting);
 - enabling full and effective participation from all governors.
- Work closely with the Clerk to ensure accurate, timely and compliant records that fairly reflect discussion, challenge and decisions.
- Ensure the Governing Body fulfils all statutory and regulatory responsibilities.

2. Educational Standards, Safeguarding and SEND

- Ensure robust oversight of:
 - educational standards, pupil outcomes and school improvement priorities;
 - safeguarding arrangements, culture and statutory compliance;
 - SEND provision and inclusion, including legal duties and proportional assurance.
- Oversee the effectiveness of safeguarding governance, including link governor arrangements and appropriate scrutiny.
- Support the Governing Body to remain informed about the wider education landscape, including inspection frameworks and evolving regulatory expectations.

3. Financial Oversight and Sustainability

- Lead the Governing Body in discharging its financial responsibilities, including:
 - scrutiny of budgets, forecasts and financial risks;
 - ensuring value for money and effective resource allocation aligned to strategic priorities;
 - maintaining appropriate internal controls, audit and assurance arrangements.
- Promote long-term financial sustainability in the context of school funding pressures.
- Ensure access to appropriate financial expertise within the Governing Body where not personally held.

4. Relationship with the Headteacher

- Establish and maintain a professional relationship with the Headteacher that balances support with appropriate challenge.
- Act as a trusted sounding board while maintaining clear lines of accountability.
- Ensure concerns are appropriately escalated to the Governing Body where required.
- Lead (or ensure appropriate leadership of) the Headteacher's performance management in line with diocesan and statutory guidance.
- Provide stability and support during periods of inspection, change or organisational challenge.

5. Catholic Ethos and Diocesan Relationship

- Uphold and actively promote the Catholic ethos, mission and values of the school.
- Ensure that the Catholic life of the school is central to all strategic decision-making.
- Act as a key point of contact with the Diocese and ensure diocesan guidance and canonical requirements are reflected in governance practice.

- Ensure alignment between statutory responsibilities and the distinctive Catholic character of the school.

6. Governance Improvement and Succession

- Lead regular reflection on Governing Body effectiveness, including skills, structure and impact.
 - Support governor development, induction and succession planning.
 - Promote continuous improvement in governance practice, proportionate to the size and context of the school.
 - Facilitate or commission external reviews of governance where appropriate.
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KEY RELATIONSHIPS

- Headteacher
 - Clerk to Governors
 - Vice Chair and committee chairs
 - Diocese (education officers)
 - Local authority and other external partners
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TIME COMMITMENT

- Attendance at all full Governing Body meetings and Chair's meetings.
 - Regular engagement with the Headteacher, Clerk and Vice Chair.
 - Thorough preparation for meetings and documentation.
 - Availability to respond to emerging issues between meetings.
 - The role requires significantly greater time than that of other governors, including regular weekly engagement during term time and additional commitment during inspection, recruitment or periods of significant change.
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PERSON SPECIFICATION

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

Catholic Commitment

- A practising Catholic able to uphold, promote and articulate the Catholic ethos of the school.
- Commitment to the mission of Catholic education and partnership with the Diocese.

Governance Experience

- Substantial experience of governance at board or governing body level, ideally including experience as Chair or Vice Chair.
- Strong understanding of the distinction between governance and management, with the confidence to maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Experience of effective scrutiny, constructive challenge and assurance.

Financial and Risk Awareness

- Strong financial literacy, including experience of budget oversight, financial risk and internal controls; or
- the judgement to ensure access to appropriate financial expertise where not personally held.

Education, Safeguarding and SEND Understanding

- Good understanding of education, safeguarding and SEND from a governance perspective.
- Ability to ask informed, proportionate and challenging questions and ensure appropriate follow-through.

Leadership and Interpersonal Skills

- Calm, authoritative and respectful leadership style.
- Ability to manage complex, sensitive or challenging discussions, including conflict where necessary.
- Strong communication skills and the ability to build trust while maintaining accountability.

Integrity and Judgement

- High standards of personal integrity, discretion and confidentiality.
- Sound judgement and the ability to act consistently in the best interests of pupils and the school.

DESIRABLE CRITERIA

- Professional experience in finance, audit, law, governance or regulation.
 - Experience of governance in Catholic education, education trusts or other regulated sectors.
 - Experience of organisational change or governance improvement.
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VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS

The Chair of Governors is expected to:

- model the highest standards of governance and ethical behaviour;
 - promote openness, fairness and accountability;
 - foster a culture in which challenge is welcomed, and continuous improvement is prioritised;
 - demonstrate respect, professionalism and transparency in all interactions; and
 - act at all times in a way that builds confidence in the Governing Body and the school.
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SAFEGUARDING

The Chair shares collective responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and must ensure that safeguarding remains a central priority within the work of the Governing Body.

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Saffron Walden

About Thomas More Catholic Primary School

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is a caring, faith centred primary school in Saffron Walden committed to academic excellence, spiritual growth, and a supportive community environment.

Established in 2011 from a predecessor school, St Thomas More Catholic Primary School operates as a single academy trust dedicated to providing a Catholic education grounded in Gospel values. The school emphasises nurturing faith, spiritual development, and moral guidance alongside academic achievement. It offers a caring environment where children are encouraged to grow spiritually, socially, and academically, fostering respect for one another and a sense of community.

Leadership and Governance

- Head Teacher: Mrs A. Stockdale.
- Prospective governors would work with the governing body to shape the strategic direction, support the Senior Leadership Team, and ensure the school's ethos is upheld across both curricular and extracurricular activities.
- The governance structure is designed to involve engagement with teachers, staff, parents, and the wider community to maintain high standards of education, safeguarding, and Catholic values.

Staff Composition

The school comprises a committed team of educators and support staff, including:

- Classroom teachers with subject leads in Science, Geography, History, English, Maths, Religious Education, Music, Computing, French, and PE.
- Teaching assistants providing valuable SEN support and classroom assistance.
- Office and administrative staff ensuring smooth school operations.
- Midday supervisors overseeing pupil wellbeing during lunch breaks

Curriculum and Learning

St Thomas More offers a broad and balanced curriculum, integrating academic, spiritual, and life skills:

- Core academic subjects are taught alongside religious education and creative arts.
- Students engage in both indoor and outdoor learning, including Forest School programs for Key Stage 1 and Eco Curriculum initiatives for Key Stage 2, promoting environmental awareness and stewardship.
- The school provides numerous morning, lunchtime, and afterschool clubs, catering to a range of interests and abilities, alongside extended hours programs such as Early Birds and Double Club

Academic Achievement and Inspections

- The school has generally performed well in academic assessment results, with pupils achieving expected standards in key subjects.
- Ofsted and Catholic School inspections highlight the school's commitment to high standards, supportive teaching, and community engagement, with recent inspections showing positive outcomes.

Community and Student Life

St Thomas More fosters a family-oriented environment, where children are encouraged to achieve their potential with the support of dedicated teachers and active governors. The school actively engages with parents, local partnerships, and diocesan initiatives, promoting a strong sense of shared responsibility and collaboration.