



St. John's Church of England VA Primary School
Finding the light in ourselves and each other
Inspired by the Gospel according to John (chapter 8, verse 12)

An aspirational school that encourages every child regardless of their background to 'soar on wings like eagles' in their learning and personal development (Isaiah 40:31)

Governor Induction

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*A truly inclusive school that is built upon the values of
Hope - Joy - Love - Forgiveness - Faith - Goodness*



St. John's Church of England VA Primary School

Introduction

Welcome to St John's Church of England VA Primary School (St John's) and thank you for giving your time and skills to become a valued member of the largest voluntary organisation in the UK.

We hope your time as a Governor with us will be enjoyable.

This induction helps to explain the roles and responsibilities of being a Governor, how the Governing Body is structured in our school and how the Governing Body carry out its duties. We expect that being a Governor will involve 30-50 hours per year as a minimum including attending meetings, school visits and other engagements with the role.

St John's School Governing Body believes it is essential that all new Governors receive a comprehensive induction pack covering a broad range of issues that we believe will assist you and provide you with confidence in your new role.

The induction pack will:

- Welcome new governors to the Governing Body;
- Introduce the role and responsibilities of governors and provide links to further information;
- list all the administrative steps.
- Encourage new governors to visit the school;
- Explain the partnership between the Headteacher, school and Governing Body;
- Provide or point to background material on the school and current issues;
- Allow new governors to ask questions about their role and/or the school;
- Explain how the Governing Board and its committees work;
- Emphasise the responsibilities of governors;
- Identify training needs for each governor.

We also recommend that you visit the school before attending your first full Governing Body meeting. Getting to know other governors, staff and children will be a priority for you but it is also important to take some time, in the early days, to make sure you are clear about your role in school. You will be most able to support the school when you feel supported.

Free training is available for all Governors. A list of the training courses available can be found at <http://hfleducation.org/>. See also the [Governor Training Pathways](#) on HFL which highlights certain training which is useful to start with and is available through 'Modern Governor'.



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Section One – About St. John's School

St John's Vision Statement – Finding the Light in Ourselves and Each Other

Our vision statement is linked to John 8:12 because at St John's we want all of our children to have 'the light of life.' It's important to us that our children know their special gifts and can be happy within themselves, as well as knowing the gifts of their classmates. We can all get frustrated or upset with one another for different reasons, but compassion, empathy and understanding are essential, and these attributes quite often get forgotten in society. Therefore, we need to find the light in everyone (including ourselves) and everything, whilst remembering that although we are all unique, we are all made in God's image.

Our Ethos

We want to nurture a school community where each child feels safe, respected, valued and known. St John's is a community in which everyone supports one another on the journey of discovery and learning.

We believe that children fulfil their potential in a stimulating, supportive and inclusive environment. We will encourage all of our children, whatever their ability, to be the best that they can be. We will foster the development of an enquiring attitude towards learning and encourage children to be reflective, resilient and responsible. The endeavours of all children are valued, and achievements are celebrated and shared.

We will provide an inspiring Christian environment in which our values are evident in all aspects of the school and we promote spiritual and moral growth. We encourage all in our community to treat one another with kindness and consideration and support our neighbours near and far, valuing our strong links with Digswell Parish and others in our community.

School Outline

St John's is a popular school with good academic standards. Our ethos of care and consideration for all is underpinned by our Christian Values, which are: Joy, Peace, Forgiveness, Hope, Goodness and Love. St John's is a one-form entry school, with approximately 220 pupils on roll. The numbers of pupils in receipt of pupil premium monies and those with special educational needs are below national averages. The school is situated in Digswell Parish, which includes a parish church and a community hub with a worship space and which covers Haldens, Sherrardspark, Knightsfield and Digswell Village. The Parish has an ecumenical agreement with Digswell Methodist Church which is known locally as Digswell Village Church.

The school is concerned with the education of the 'whole child', in that religious, moral and social values play an important part in the life of the school. Ofsted last inspected the school in April 2023, following the previous inspection in November 2017 and said that the school continues to be good.



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Approximately half of its pupils come from the local village of Digswell, and the remainder from further afield in Welwyn Garden City. In common with many traditional church schools, its original buildings date from the nineteenth century, although additional classrooms have been added over many decades. It is fortunate in its outdoor spaces which include a hard playground, playing field, riverside nature reserve, woodland area, vegetable plot and pond.

General Information

The contact details of our school is:

- St John's Church of England VA Primary School Hertford Road, Digswell, Welwyn, AL6 0BX.
- Telephone: 01438 714283 Fax: 01438 712991
- E-mail: admin@digswell.herts.sch.uk

The Headteacher is Mr Arnold Worton-Geer who was appointed in September 2024. The Chair of the Governors is Mr. Nick Johnson who was originally appointed in December 2017.

The school's current admissions arrangements adhere to the published criteria contained in the 2022/2023 Hertfordshire Local Authority guidance.

The school day starts at: 8.40am and ends at 3.25pm (2.10pm on a Friday)

The Nursery class begins at 8.40am and ends at 11.40am (or 3.30pm for those who stay for the afternoon session)

The school offers a breakfast club and an after-school club, as well as a range of extra-curricular activities provided by third-party providers.

Next steps for the school

Ofsted recommended that leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that there is still a focus on the newly implemented phonics programme. Some teachers are still developing teaching strategies to ensure all pupils recognise groups of letters and the sounds they make. This slows their progress in becoming fluent, accurate readers. Leaders should ensure they provide clear guidance and support to all staff so that teachers consistently make effective choices in teaching all elements of leaders' chosen phonics programme.

Staffing

The current staffing structure can be viewed [here](#).



Section Two – About the Governing Body

The National Governors' Association (NGA) states that a Governing board is made up of people representing all the different stakeholders in a school such as parents, staff, the church, the local community and the local authority. This group of people work together as a corporate body with no one person having any greater voting rights than any other (this includes the Headteacher and chair of governors).

The role of the governing board is key to the effectiveness of a school. Time and time again Ofsted (the national inspection body for schools) has noted that the most effective schools demonstrate effective leadership and management— including by the governing board.

Ofsted sees the governing board as part of the leadership team in school and will be looking for a partnership where there is frankness and mutual respect. The Ofsted handbook for inspecting schools states that 'creativity and dynamism in reflecting upon performance, promoting change and capitalising on links with the local community will suggest excellent governance'.

Different types of governors

- Parent Governors— parents or carers elected by other parents or carers with children at the school or, on occasion, appointed by the governing body;
- Staff Governors— the Head Teacher and staff members elected by teaching and support Staff;
- Community Governors— individuals chosen by governors from the local community who represent community interests;
- LA Governors— appointed by the Local Authority who take regard of the skills and experience which schools require and appoint candidates who support the schools' ethos and mission;
- Associate Members— a discretionary category appointed by the governing body from individuals who may be able to make specific contributions, but who are not governors and have no vote at full governing body meetings but may have limited voting rights at the committee level.
- Foundation Governors- appointed by the PCC or the Diocese (and includes the minister of Digswell Parish, ex officio)

What School Governors do

Effective governance is not just a vital driver of school improvement; engagement as a school governor is one of the most popular means of formal volunteering in the UK. School governors provide strategic leadership and accountability in schools.

Each individual governor is a member of a governing board, which is established in law as a corporate body. Individual governors may not act independently of the rest of the governing board and decisions are the joint responsibility of the governing board.



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The 3 functions of our governing board are to:

- Ensure the clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school
- Hold executive leaders to account for the educational and financial performance of the school, and the performance management of staff
- Oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure money is well spent

The headteacher is responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school and the implementation of the strategic framework established by the governing board.

Full details of the role and responsibilities of Governors can be found in the Code of Conduct for Governors (<https://stjohnsdigswell.net/governor-statement/>).

Governor Information

The instrument of government can be viewed [here](#).

Standing Committees

The Governing Body has 2 standing committees:

- Quality of Education
- Resources

Each member of the governing board is encouraged to sit on at least one of these committees. Each committee will normally meet once each term. There is also a HeadTeacher Appraisal panel which meets annually.

Additional Panels are formed by the governing body throughout the course of the year but are dependent on the context and demand e.g., Staff Disciplinary Panel, Exclusions Panel Admissions Appeal Panel etc. Such panels do not need to be identified at the start of the year, they are formed depending on availability, experience and governor training.



Section Three – Being a Governor at St. John's

What should happen when you become a school Governor

Before becoming a school Governor, you will be asked to complete a Governor application form. The nature of this will depend upon which type of Governor you are.

However, once appointed, you will need to also complete/provide:

- A pecuniary interest statement (this will identify any business/commercial/financial interest you may have that might give rise to a potential conflict of interest).
- A skills matrix so that we can use this as a tool to help us with development needs.
- 2 references.
- A Disclosure and Barring (DBS) check. It is a statutory requirement for governors and associate members to undertake a DBS check before starting duties as a governor. It is for the governing body to ensure the process of the governor DBS completion is in place and must be processed within 21 calendar days of appointment.

Introductory documents

Upon your appointment, you should familiarise yourself with key information about the school. Most of these can be found on the school [website](#), but others may be provided in hard copy. If you can't find anything you think is important, please contact the school or the Chair of Governors.

- Information for new parents
- Access to recent School Newsletters
- School staffing structure
- A calendar of School events via the school website
- A copy of the School Development Plan
- A copy of the school's latest OFSTED Report
- A handbook of Financial Procedures and Scheme of Delegation
- A copy of the last Annual Progress Review (APR)

From the governing body, you should receive:

- Governing body committee structure, terms of reference and details of working groups
- Names of governors and contact details
- Copies of key policies including the School Visits Policy
- The last Headteacher's Report to the Governing Body
- Minutes from the last full Governing Body meeting
- Governor visits policy
- Code of Conduct

Most of these documents will be available either on the school website or on Governor Hub (which you will get access to once you have completed all the new governor checks.)



New Governor's Checklist

Action	Responsibility
<p>After the election/appointment, the new governor will be contacted for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initial welcome • invitation to next meeting(s) • confirmation of their contact details • to provide them with this Induction Pack 	Chair/ Head
The Governance Professional should be informed of any new Governors	Appointing authority
The New Governor's details inputted into the database	Governance Professional
Undertake the DBS process ¹	New Governor/ school
Welcome and induction pack to be sent to new Governors	Governance Professional
Complete an interest statement.	New Governor
Complete a skills matrix and send to the Governance Professional	New Governor
Provide 2 references to the school.	New Governor
Photo to be taken for notice board	School
School email account to be set up	School
Complete the online safeguarding course (School Office to provide access details)	New Governor
Sign up for and complete the 'Induction for Governors' Course	New Governor

¹ Arrangements must be made for the new governor to meet with the member of the office staff who processes DBS checks (ID checker) and take along the original ID (check with ID checker what is required). The DBS certificate will go to the named governor at their home address. A copy is not sent to the school. Upon receipt of the original certificate, it must be shown to the ID checker as the information is input on the single central record. A copy of the DBS not be held on file. In the event, that a disclosure is listed but does not deem the person unsuitable to work with children but may require a risk assessment being put in place, a copy of the risk assessment should be kept on the individual's file.



Meetings of the Governing Body

Agenda and Meetings

There is a strategic planning cycle for the Governing Board which sets out the key timings for decisions and how the governors engage with those. This sets the annual agenda and objectives for the Governing Board, with identified actions to be taken to achieve those objectives. This includes an annual plan of work to be covered during meetings of the Governing Board and its Committees; and a longer-term strategic cycle to include a periodic review of the school vision and policies. The plan is available in the documents section of Governor Hub.

The Governing Body appoints a Governance Professional who has been delegated responsibility for preparing a draft agenda for each full governing body and committee meeting, with the chair and headteacher adding anything they feel is needed. Any governor has the right to ask for items to be included on the agenda but should discuss them first with the chair and/or the headteacher. As governors are generally given two weeks' notice for termly meetings, the Governance Professional needs agenda items and associated paperwork at least three weeks before a meeting.

Some matters should not be discussed at full governing body meetings as there are legal procedures that must be followed and which might be compromised if the governing body discusses the matter. These are usually matters relating to individual members of staff or pupils for example disciplinary issues or parental complaints. Speak to your Governance Professional, chair of governors or headteacher if you have any doubts about whether a matter can be discussed appropriately.

The agenda is made up of two parts:

- Part A is the open part of the meeting. The minutes from this part of the meeting are available for anyone to read.
- Part B deals with confidential matters and should not be discussed outside the meeting. During this part of the meeting, observers will be asked to leave unless the governing body is in agreement that they be allowed to stay.

As a governor, it is very important to remember that if you are unable to attend a governors' meeting (whether full governing body or committee meeting) you should send your apologies to the Governance Professional to Governors. If you do not attend any governors' meetings for six months you may be removed from the governing body unless the governors have agreed to your absence.



Section Four - Useful Links

- **Herts for Learning:** <https://www.hertsforlearning.co.uk/>
- **DFE (Department for Education)** - The website is the central source of information on education policy. There is a section specifically for governors
<https://www.hertsforlearning.co.uk/business-services/governance>
- **Governance Handbook [DfE]** For School Governors, Governance Professionals and individuals involved directly in the governance of maintained schools, academies and Free Schools in England <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook>
- **Ofsted** - Here you will find inspection reports for schools, the framework for inspection and the evaluation schedule. www.ofsted.gov.uk
- **National Governors Association (NGA)** The National Governors' Association (NGA) is the representative body for school governors in England. An independent organisation; their aim is to improve the well-being of children and young people by promoting high standards in all schools, and improving the effectiveness of their governing bodies. www.nga.org.uk
- **The Key** - The key provides information in response to questions from school governors.
<https://schoolgovernors.thekeysupport.com/>
- **St Albans - Diocese** Governor Section -
<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/schools/governance/>
- **The constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools** – Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and local authorities in England – August 2017 -
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/constitution-of-governing-bodies-of-maintained-schools>
- **The right people around the table** – A guide to recruiting and retaining school governors and trustees (National Governors' Association 2018) -
<https://www.nga.org.uk/Knowledge-Centre/Governance-structure-roles-and-responsibilities/Roles-and-responsibilities/Composition/The-right-people-around-the-table-a-guide-to-recru.aspx>



Section Five - The seven principles of public life

(Originally published by the Nolan Committee: The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established by the then Prime Minister in October 1994, under the Chairmanship of Lord Nolan, to consider standards of conduct in various areas of public life, and to make recommendations).

- **Selflessness** - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Integrity** - Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or make decisions to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- **Objectivity** - Holders of public office must act and make decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- **Accountability** - Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- **Openness** - Holders of public office should act and make decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- **Honesty** – Holders of public office should be truthful
- **Leadership** – Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

All those elected or appointed to boards should fulfil their duties in line with the seven principles of public life (the Nolan principles). They should also be mindful of their responsibilities under equality legislation, recognising and encouraging diversity and inclusion. They should understand the impact of effective governance on the quality of education and on outcomes for all children and young people. In addition, all those involved in governance should be:

- **Committed** - To Devoting the required time and energy to the role and ambitious to achieve the best possible outcomes for young people. Prepared to give time, skills and knowledge to developing themselves and others in order to create highly effective governance.
- **Confident** - Of an independent mind, able to lead and contribute to courageous conversations, to express their opinion and to play an active role on the board.
- **Curious** - Possessing an inquiring mind and an analytical approach and understanding the value of meaningful questioning.
- **Challenging** - Providing appropriate challenge to the status quo, not taking information or data at face value and always driving for improvement.
- **Collaborative** - Prepared to listen to and work in partnership with others and understand the importance of building strong working relationships within the board and with executive leaders, staff, parents and carers, pupils/students, the local community and employers.
- **Critical** - Understanding of the value of critical friendship which enables both challenge and support, and self-reflective, pursuing learning and development opportunities to improve their own and the whole board's effectiveness.
- **Creative** - Able to challenge conventional wisdom and be open-minded about new approaches to problem-solving; recognise the value of innovation and creative thinking to organisational development and success.



Governor Induction Document Control

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