

Annual Governance Statement for the Governing Board of Lady Joanna Thornhill (Endowed) Primary School – 2024/25

In accordance with the Government's requirement for all governing boards, the three core strategic functions of the Governing Board of Lady Joanna Thornhill (Endowed) Primary School are:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
2. Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Governance arrangements

The Governing Board operates on a 'Circle' model and, as of September 2025, is made up of:

- Co-Chair of Governors: Ellie Brown (Foundation)
- Co-Chair of Governors, Pedagogy & Professional Development Governor: James Coumbe (Co-opted)
- Inclusion and SEND Governor: Stephen Cartwright (LA Governor)
- Safeguarding Governors: Caroline Hart-Johnson (Parent) & Adam Priestley (Parent)
- Health & Safety Governor: Lenny Jeffries (Foundation)
- Quality of Education and Leadership Governor (Learning & Development): Rob Muskett (Parent)
- Staff Governor: Emily Burrell
- Headteacher: Rachael Foster

Committees & Panels:

- Pay Panel: Adam Priestley (Chair), Ellie Brown, Rob Muskett
- Head Teacher Performance Panel: Rob Muskett (Chair), Stephen Cartwright, James Coumbe
- Finance Committee: Ellie Brown (Chair), James Coumbe, Lenny Jeffries, Stephen Cartwright

There is currently two vacancies for co-opted governors, which we expect to fill in Autumn 2025.

Attendance at meetings remains strong and no meetings have been cancelled for lack of quorum (the number of governors needed to ensure that legal decisions can be made). Governors' attendance record for the academic year 2024-25 can be seen on the Governors' webpage.

The work we have done this year

Ofsted inspection

Governors were very pleased to welcome Ofsted inspectors to the school this year. We met with them as part of the inspection process, and it was a chance to reflect on the journey the school has been on in the last few years. We were incredibly happy with the final result and proud of everyone at the school for the outstandingly positive report, which can be read here:

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50272166>

Three-Year Strategy

This was the second year of our three-year governance strategy. The three core elements of our strategy are **children**, **inclusion** and **community**. This year, we have maintained a clear focus on delivering our strategic priorities through regular monitoring, visits, and engagement with pupils, staff, and stakeholders.

Children

This year we reviewed our governance roles, and re-aligned them to the core priorities set out in our school development plan and to our statutory requirements (e.g. safeguarding). Our monitoring visits this year have focused on understanding the delivery of these priorities as set out in the School Development Plan. Governors observed:

- The school's curriculum "for the Head, Heart and Hand" continues to be well implemented with clear progression visible in pupils' work.
- Adaptations in Early Years provision to meet a high rate of SEND (27%) in the current cohort, including additional staff support and targeted interventions.

- The significant positive impact of literacy initiatives such as Little Wandle, Story Dough, and Curious Quests, leading to increased vocabulary and engagement in reading and writing.
- Positive pupil voice feedback on leadership roles, clubs, and creative opportunities, including the highly successful Year 6 production of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.
- Governors also scrutinised reading engagement and the use of Accelerated Reader, ensuring it remains inclusive and adaptable to different children's preferences.

We were once again very fortunate to be able to spend an afternoon at the school during the summer term to meet with pupils and school staff to look in more detail at the work they had been doing and ask about their experience of life at the school.

Inclusion

The governors aim for the school to be an inclusive environment, with all children's needs met, an accessible curriculum and celebration of diversity and equality. The SEND Link Governor has met regularly with the Inclusion Lead to monitor provision, transitions, and staff training, confirming that SEND support is embedded across the curriculum rather than treated as an add-on. From these visits it very clear that inclusion is of the highest priority for the school.

This year saw continued success in securing high needs funding, although we remain mindful of the financial risks of the new community funding model. The board has maintained challenge to ensure budget planning takes into account the uncertainty in future funding allocations.

Governors were incredibly proud of the school achieving the UNICEF Gold Rights Respecting Award this year, and very happy to meet the UNICEF team that visited the school to tell them about the fantastic work being done by staff and children. The Gold Award is a real recognition of the embedding of fairness, equity and inclusivity the school continues to strive towards.

Community

The school's relationship with the local community remains vibrant. Highlights include:

- The children continued to get out and about in the local community, including choir visits to local care homes, a Reception class visits to the café and church, and
- We continue to receive amazing support from the dedicated volunteers running the Friends' Association, and the fund raising they do continues to have a real impact on the opportunities for the children – recently the Friends agreed to support fund raising for the new Art Studio, which is now moving forward following a biodiversity assessment on the proposed site within the school grounds.
- The Thornhill Trust continue to play a role in the school, through our shared board members (Lennie and Ellie) and their commitment to the Lady Joanna Legacy, financial support to ensure that all children are able to access culturally enriching activities during their time with the school.

Future priorities for 2025/26

In the coming year we have a number of priorities:

- We want to continue our focus on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion both in school and within the governing board.
- We will be paying close attention to the impact of changes to SEN provision in Kent.
- We will be supporting the implementation of the new Art Studio and evaluating its benefits for teaching and learning

Ellie Brown & James Coumbe

Co-Chairs of Governors

July 2025