Governor News

Spring Term 2025

A message from our Chair

Mike Hope,
Chair of the Witham Schools Governance Board

Welcome to Governor News!

We're your school governors, here to keep you updated on all the fantastic work happening behind the scenes to support our schools. The Witham Schools Governance Board oversees both Howbridge Church of England Junior School and Rivenhall Church of England Primary School, ensuring they continue to thrive and flourish.

This newsletter is designed to give you an insight into the key developments and successes across both schools, and to help you feel even more connected to the wider school community.

You might be wondering what we, as school governors, actually do. We're a group of volunteers dedicated to shaping the direction and future of our schools. While we don't get involved in the day-to-day running, we do have a role in setting the schools' overall strategy.

Our team is diverse, with each of us bringing our own experiences and viewpoints. This mix helps us make well-rounded decisions that consider many perspectives. We meet every half term to review the schools' progress, tackle challenges, and celebrate successes.

One of our key responsibilities is to both support and challenge the schools' leadership. We focus on areas like:

- quality of education
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- safeguarding
- Christian vision

with the aim of making sure our schools provide the best possible education and environment for every child.

Our priorities

Here's a quick snapshot of some of our priorities over the last few months:

Academic performance

We reviewed the academic performance of both schools, focusing on their progress against the national 'Age-Related Expectations' criteria and discussed the strategies and actions in place to further improve outcomes. We also explored ways to set individual goals for pupils, ensuring their progress is celebrated and supported every step of the way.

School premises

We're delighted to see the progress on the new classroom at Rivenhall, made possible through funding we successfully secured from the Vine Trust. This much-needed space will provide additional learning opportunities for our pupils and enhance the school environment. We also have new laptops on order to ensure pupils have the resources they need, as some of the existing laptops have been damaged or reached the end of their lifespan.

Meanwhile, at Howbridge, we've taken proactive steps to improve safety by requesting funding from the Vine Trust to update the gates and fences.

Inspections

It has felt like inspection season recently! Following the successful Ofsted inspections last year, where both schools achieved 'Good' outcomes with very positive feedback, both schools underwent their SIAMS inspections over the past term. A SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) inspection focuses on how effectively a church school's Christian vision influences its ethos, curriculum, and the overall development of pupils—academically, personally, and spiritually. The inspectors were full of praise.

For Rivenhall, they said:

"Rivenhall Church of England Primary School's Christian vision is deeply understood and cherished by the school community. It shapes decision-making at every level and ensures that pupils feel valued and an integral part of the school. As one parent aptly described, 'regardless of your background, it is like a hug. It welcomes you in.'"

For Howbridge, they said:

"The strong Christian vision drives the work of the school. It binds together a community where individuals belong and thrive. Strong and committed leaders, well supported by the trust, model the school's Christian vision and values. This lifts expectations and has a powerful effect on the flourishing pupils and adults."

We would like to express a huge thanks to our wonderful pupils, parents, carers, and staff at both schools. These inspection successes wouldn't have been possible without your support and dedication.

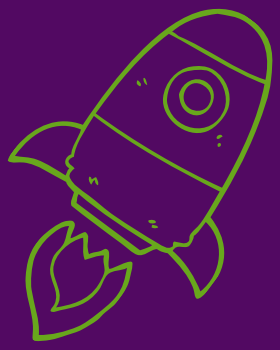
Attendance matters

At both of our schools, we place a strong emphasis on regular attendance because it is vital to your child's education and overall development. Since the pandemic, absence rates in schools across the UK have risen significantly, with recent figures showing that persistent absence rates (where a child misses 10% or more of school) are now at 22.3%, a sharp increase compared to pre-pandemic levels. This trend highlights a growing concern for the long-term impact on children's learning and well-being.

Being in school consistently is about much more than academic achievement, it helps children build essential social skills, develop healthy routines, and engage with enriching activities. Every missed day adds up — just two days of absence per month means a child loses an entire month of education over a school year. As The Times recently reported, "missing school, whether for a birthday treat or a minor ailment, chips away at a child's chance of achieving their full potential."

Studies consistently show that pupils with higher attendance are far more likely to achieve strong GCSE results. For example, research indicates that 84% of students with perfect attendance achieve standard passes in English and Maths, compared to less than 50% for those missing even 10% of the school year.

Recent changes in attendance legislation now require schools to take a firmer approach to unauthorised absences. However, we're here to support you. If you have questions about the new measures or need advice, don't hesitate to get in touch with your school.



A parking plea!

As both of our schools are in residential areas, we kindly ask you to be considerate when parking during drop-off and pick-up times. Please avoid blocking driveways or parking in ways that cause inconvenience to our neighbours. Your cooperation helps us maintain good relationships with the local community.

Additionally, please don't park in, or walk through. the school car parks as these areas are reserved for staff and need to be kept safe for everyone. Ensuring a clear and secure environment around the school is a priority, and we appreciate your help in keeping these areas safe for all our children and helping us make the schools run smoothly!

Meet your school governors

Mike Hope
Community Governor - Chair

Rebecca More
Executive Headteacher

Ellie Taylor
Head of School, Howbridge

Danny Lucchesi
Associate Governor

Rev. Howard Schnaar
Ex-Officio Governor

Sunny Cooper
Parent Governor

Laura Cowell
Parent Governor

Daniel Oliver
Community Governor

Taylor Green
Community Governor

Emily Predebon
Community Governor

Vacancy
Foundation Governor (someone who is actively involved in our local church community)

Have a concern?

If you ever have a concern, please don't hesitate to reach out to your child's class teacher or another member of staff. We're committed to addressing any issues quickly and ensuring they're resolved as early as possible. We're here to help!