

along with advice on RE and collective worship.

Emma Kelsall, our diocese's governance coordinator, said: "Foundation governors are responsible for ensuring the ethos of the school is delivered, and that has a particular connotation when it's a church school. Our training helps governors keep the Christian message at the forefront as they go about their work."

A governing body will include people with a range of expertise, interests and experience. Their remit is wide, from overseeing finance and resources, to understanding performance data, to helping form and enforce policies. There are, of course, a lot of meetings: but governance is also profoundly hands-on.

'Our children are amazing - they are incredible humans!'

"I think of myself as a critical friend," says Barry Rowswell, chair of governors at St John's C of E Primary School in Gosport. He's helped the school get back on its feet after an Ofsted verdict of 'requires improvement' by prioritising openness and the importance of listening.

"Being a headteacher is a lonely position, so I'm there to be a sounding board, as well as a non-judgmental ear for pupils and staff," he said.

Foundation governor the Rev Tim Watson says that the Leesland Federation Infant and Junior schools in Gosport have also been on a journey. Two years ago, an Ofsted report said they 'required improvement'. Their latest report described the schools as 'good'.

He said: "It can take its toll on the staff, living under that, and I want to be an encouragement. One thing I do is bring in cake and chocolate!"

In these schools, which step up to meet the challenges of a deprived catchment area, he sees the impact that his everyday acts of support can have. In his role as both governor and resident clergy, Tim has listened to pupils read, given certificates, gone on school residentials and trips, and played games after school with children and their parents.

He believes that these small things can be deeply meaningful to the life of the school: "It's about presence, rather than any particular gifts or skills. My role is to accompany teachers and children as they journey through education together."

The sense of reward turns the



The Rev Tim Watson outside Leesland C of E Infant School in Gosport

Pollination project is a big hit

AT St Alban's C of E Primary School, the governors support a pupil-led campaign to help pollinating insects.

The children took part in Polli:Nation, a national biodiversity and education project, and learned that around 80 per cent of our food is at risk of being lost because of the rapid decrease in pollinating insects. They decided to take action, and set up the Pollinator Promise, which encourages people to plant a 1x1 metre patch of pollinator-friendly plants.

"We do a lot of work looking at our impact on the world, and how we can live as citizens of the world," said headteacher and governor Nicola Hordell.

"Our vision is 'Inspired to make

a difference in God's world with excellence and love'. For the pupils, living out this vision has meant asking their parents, friends, local businesses and community groups to sign up and protect the future of pollinators."

A group of student ambassadors called The Hive help develop the school grounds to provide shelter and feeding habitat for bees and butterflies. Pupils recently won a national competition with a video featuring their pollinator artwork.

"The children have really latched onto the campaign because they really want to build a sustainable world," said Nicola. "As governors and teachers, we can inspire them, but also equip them with the skills they need to take a proactive role. They've got a difference to make."



Pupils from St Alban's C of E Primary School with their wall that attracts bees

hard work of governance into a profound privilege. "Our children are amazing," he said. "They're incredible humans, full of hope and energy and spirit - it's a privilege to step into the schools' world and share time with these people."

However varied and complex governance might get, it all comes back to championing the education and wellbeing of pupils. It's the governor's job to ask how every decision benefits the children, making school a place where everyone can fulfil their potential.

And it's seeing children flourish which makes the demands and responsibilities worthwhile. "If you give children and opportunity, they always amaze you," said Nicola Hordell. "The more you give them, the more they thrive and show you amazing things."

If you are interested in becoming a governor at one of our church schools, please contact our governors' support team on 023-9289 9651 or sharon.brueton@portsmouth.anglican.org

'It's a calling to help this school to improve'

"I FELT it was a calling I couldn't refuse," said Barry Rowswell, who became chair of governors at St John's C of E Primary School in Gosport last year.

After a 2016 Ofsted report found that many areas needed work, Barry took up the challenge of helping the school move forward.

A big part of this has been reshaping the governing body itself. After a series of vacancies, new governors were appointed who brought the right blend of skills to support the school. Thanks to training from our diocese and local authority, the team was able to update their knowledge and become more effective.

"A key aspect of this was the recognition that we had to work as a team along with the staff of the school," said Barry. "We've put a program in place to make sure we're always being effective together - for example, making sure that whenever governors



Barry Rowswell with children at St John's C of E Primary in Gosport

visit the school, it's with a clear purpose."

These visits are integral, allowing governors to monitor their area of responsibility and experience the impact their decisions have on the ground.

Barry has witnessed first-hand how transformative it can be when

a school lives up to its vision.

"The values of the school are those which I attempt to live by in my own life - Love, Courage and Respect," he said. "These enable the pupils to overcome disadvantage, to move forward with mutual respect and to have a positive purpose in life."