ELLINGHAM & WOODTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS FEDERATION

Governors' Annual Report

Academic Year 2025–26

"To love our neighbour, enabling everyone to flourish and reach their full potential."

Our inspiration comes from Luke 10:27

Compiled by Diane Perry-Yates
Chair of Governors

September 2026

A year of challenge, improvement and distinctive federation life

Throughout 2025–26, the Governing Board maintained close oversight of both Ellingham CE VC Primary School and Woodton Primary School, with a clear focus on educational standards, safeguarding, financial sustainability and the Federation's Christian vision. Governors continued to use the Circle Model of Governance, refreshed link responsibilities and established a structured programme of monitoring linked to school priorities.

The year combined notable successes with significant challenges. Ellingham underwent a SIAMS inspection in November 2025, with governors commending the resulting report. Across the Federation, curriculum leadership remained strong and governors heard directly from subject leaders in RE, writing, computing and online safety, history, art, modern foreign languages, SEND, mathematics, science, behaviour and design technology. These presentations enabled governors to test how well curriculum intent was translating into classroom practice and pupil outcomes.

The Board also remained focused on the Federation's future sustainability. Falling birth rates and lower pupil forecasts continued to affect both schools, particularly Woodton. Governors scrutinised class structures, staffing assumptions, admissions, marketing and the financial implications of falling rolls, while remaining committed to maintaining high-quality provision in both communities.

Educational standards and curriculum development

Writing was a central school improvement priority. Governors monitored the embedding of Literacy Tree, Spelling Shed, handwriting and dictation, alongside support from VNET. By the end of the year, KS2 outcomes showed clear improvement. At Ellingham, 80% achieved the expected standard in reading, 60% in writing and 73% in mathematics; at Woodton, 83% achieved the expected standard in reading and mathematics and 100% in writing. Governors particularly noted that Ellingham's expected-standard writing outcome had doubled from the previous year.

Governors also received evidence of strong wider curriculum provision. RE was reported as well established, with high-quality work, increased visits and visitors and an ambition to progress from the Silver to Gold RE Quality Mark. History and art were supported by Kapow, with assessment and retrieval practice increasingly embedded. Mathematics continued to develop through a mastery approach, while science benefited from work with the Ogden Trust, STEM enrichment and Science Week. Woodton pupils won the Federation's STEM challenge final at East Coast College.

Online safety and computing received particular scrutiny. Governors explored filtering and monitoring arrangements, individual logins, screen time and the developing implications of AI. A specialist presentation from Schools Broadband in March gave governors assurance about filtering, monitoring and escalation arrangements. The Board also identified cybersecurity as an area for continued oversight.

Safeguarding, SEND, inclusion and behaviour

Safeguarding remained central to the Board's work. Governors reviewed the annual safeguarding report, monitored the Single Central Record and premises, maintained safeguarding training and scrutinised filtering and monitoring. The Board also requested assurance about ICT backup arrangements following a data-handling error on the Single Central Record.

SEND levels remained above national averages and increased further at Ellingham. Governors challenged leaders on how needs were being met, how Graduated Provision Maps were being used to secure additional funding and how staff were supported. The SENDCo reported increasing social, emotional and mental health and neurodivergent needs, sensory-circuit provision and continued work on INDES, the SEND Information Report and the IPSEF. Governors recognised both the Federation's reputation for nurturing pupils with additional needs and the financial and staffing pressures this created.

Behaviour became a more significant concern during the summer term. Both schools experienced increased physical and verbal aggression, with some complex cases affecting pupils and staff. Governors scrutinised the use of suspensions, trauma-informed practice, parental engagement, Step On

and Step Up training and the impact on staff wellbeing. Further behaviour and adaptive-teaching training was planned for September 2026, together with review of the Behaviour Policy.

Christian vision, SIAMS and personal development

The Federation's vision - "To love our neighbour, enabling everyone to flourish and reach their full potential" - continued to shape governance discussion. Governors reviewed the SIAMS self-evaluation, considered inspection questions at meetings and explored how the vision influenced curriculum, behaviour, inclusion, staff support and relationships. The Board agreed to continue this reflective approach during 2026–27.

Ellingham's SIAMS inspection in November 2025 was an important milestone and the resulting report was warmly commended by governors. During the year, leaders also developed spirituality through the Windows, Mirrors and Doors approach, Collective Worship floor books, pupil prayer, spirituality days and work on outdoor reflective spaces. Governors supported a review of the Federation's vision and values to ensure they remained memorable, accessible and meaningful for children.

The Federation's wider commitment to inclusion was reflected in Schools of Sanctuary work, Black History Month, racial justice activity, eco-school work and community engagement. Governors noted the importance of giving pupils in small rural schools a broad understanding of diversity, equality and their place in the wider world.

Financial oversight and long-term sustainability

Financial sustainability was one of the Board's most demanding areas of scrutiny. Governors reviewed Budget Revisions 2 and 3, the 2026–29 Budget Plans, Budget Revision 1, Budget Control Reports and the Schools Financial Value Standard. Questions focused on staffing, supply costs, learning resources, energy, pupil forecasts, SEND funding and the affordability of existing class structures.

Falling rolls created particular pressure. During the autumn, forecasts showed a significant future loss at Ellingham and the need for Woodton to reduce to two classes from September 2026. By January, Woodton's revised budget was in surplus across three years after allowing for a class reduction, while Ellingham required future restructuring assumptions. In March, both three-year budget plans were approved. By July, Ellingham showed a surplus across all three years, while Woodton again showed deficits in years two and three, making it a continuing financial risk requiring further action.

Governors repeatedly emphasised the importance of making timely local decisions rather than allowing financial pressures to dictate later intervention. They also challenged the continued ring-fencing of £66,000 capital funding originally intended for a third classroom at Woodton, concluding that the project was no longer viable because of falling birth rates and agreeing to seek permission from Norfolk County Council to de-capitalise part of the funding.

Admissions, pupil numbers and the future of the Federation

Governors monitored pupil numbers and admissions closely throughout the year. Reception intake at Ellingham was particularly low in September 2025, while Woodton achieved its PAN of seven. Marketing activity included flyers, open evenings, stay-and-play opportunities, social media and promotion through the local community.

Following Local Authority area planning discussions about surplus places, the Board resolved in November to retain a PAN of 12 at Ellingham and seven at Woodton. Governors considered it important that decisions about area-wide reductions in school places were led transparently by the Local Authority rather than relying on individual small schools to volunteer reductions. Housing development at Woodton and in-year transfers at Ellingham were monitored as potential contributors to future sustainability.

Governance effectiveness, monitoring and development

The Board refreshed link roles at the start of the year and undertook monitoring in SEND, safeguarding, pupil premium, premises and health and safety, GDPR and the Single Central Record. Governors also received a Local Authority governance topical audit and agreed the Federation response, noting that the recommended actions were already in place.

Governor development remained active. Training included safeguarding, safer recruitment, SEND, finance and budget monitoring, Headteacher Performance Management, cybersecurity, Ofsted briefings, independent review panels and Taking the Chair. The Headteacher Performance Management process was completed with external VNET support. The Board also maintained oversight of policy compliance and approved a wide range of statutory and operational policies during the year.

Key governance achievements in 2025–26

Area	Governance impact
Standards	Maintained detailed scrutiny of school improvement and curriculum provision; celebrated improved 2026 outcomes, particularly writing and strong Woodton KS2 results.
SIAMS & vision	Supported Ellingham through its SIAMS inspection; strengthened scrutiny of RE, Collective Worship, spirituality and the practical impact of the Christian vision.
Safeguarding & inclusion	Reviewed safeguarding, SEND, behaviour, filtering and monitoring, the SCR and premises; challenged leaders on increasingly complex pupil needs and staff wellbeing.
Finance	Approved and challenged budget revisions and three-year plans; maintained close focus on falling rolls, staffing structures and Woodton's longer-term deficit risk.
Admissions & sustainability	Retained PAN at 12 for Ellingham and 7 for Woodton; monitored marketing, housing growth, in-year admissions and future class structures.
Governance	Refreshed link roles, maintained a monitoring programme, completed HTPM, engaged in substantial CPD and responded positively to the governance topical audit.
Wider development	Supported Schools of Sanctuary, sustainability and climate action, enrichment, STEM, curriculum visits and community engagement across both schools.

Priorities for 2026–27

The Governing Board enters 2026–27 with a clear set of priorities. These include sustaining the improvement in writing and wider outcomes; responding to increased behavioural and SEND complexity; maintaining strong safeguarding and cybersecurity oversight; and ensuring that the revised SIDP reflects the new Ofsted standards and a stronger emphasis on inclusion.

Financial sustainability will remain a major focus. Governors will continue to monitor pupil numbers, the impact of revised class structures, additional SEND funding and Woodton's forecast deficits. The Board will also pursue the position on capital funding set aside for Woodton, develop a Federation risk register and oversee implementation of the Sustainability and Climate Change Action Plan.

Governors will continue their programme of monitoring and professional development, including scrutiny of the IDSR, behaviour policy changes, ICT backup arrangements and progress against the Federation's Christian vision and SIAMS inspection questions.

Closing reflection

The Governing Board records its thanks to the Executive Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, School Support Manager and all staff across Ellingham and Woodton for their commitment during a demanding year. Governors also recognise the contribution of pupils, parents, volunteers, PTAs, churches and the wider communities that support both schools. The Board remains committed to securing a sustainable future in which both schools can continue to provide nurturing, inclusive and ambitious education, enabling every member of the Federation community to flourish and reach their full potential.

Diane Perry-Yates
Chair of Governors
21 September 2026