



Annual Summary of Actions & Achievements for the School Improvement Board of Grace College **2025-26**

A Message from the School Improvement Board

This report shares the work of Grace College School Improvement Board (SIB) during the 2025–26 academic year. The SIB is made up of volunteers who support school leaders, ask thoughtful questions and help ensure that improvement remains focused on students, families, staff and the wider community.

It has been a significant year for Grace College. The school has continued to move forward through challenge, external scrutiny and a clear focus on improvement. Governors have seen the dedication of leaders and staff, the resilience of students, and the determination across the Trust to support Grace College on the next stage of its journey.

Across the year, the SIB has provided support and challenge across safeguarding, SEND and inclusion, attendance, behaviour, curriculum, teaching, achievement, sixth form, personal development, finance, health and safety, staffing and the school site.

The Board is proud of the progress made and remains ambitious for Grace College to provide a safe, inclusive and high-quality education where every student is known, supported and encouraged to thrive.

Further information about governance within Emmanuel Schools Foundation (ESF) is available at [Governance - Emmanuel Schools Foundation](#).

Meet the governing board

Name:	Role/Responsibility:
Tom Smyth	Chair – Monitoring: Behaviour & Attitudes, including attendance.
Aileen Conlon	Monitoring: Safeguarding, Child Protection, and Leadership & Management.
Natasha Tyrwhitt-Drake	Vice Chair, Monitoring: SEND, Looked After Children, Pupil Premium, Quality of Education and Curriculum.
Shayne Elsworth	Retired from position June 2026
Maira Ledger	Retired from position June 2026
Jessica Cooper	Monitoring: SEND, Looked After Children, Pupil Premium, attendance, people, mental health and wellbeing.

Regular Attendees

Mark Pike	ESF CEO
Matt Waterfield	Director of Education
Rachael Hooker	Principal
Darren Warburton	ESF Finance Director
Christine Taylor	ESF Company Secretary
Kelsey Stoddart	Governance Professional

Key Achievements and Actions

Safeguarding

- Safeguarding remained a core priority, with the SIB reviewing welfare needs, child-on-child reporting, LAC/CIC support, staff training, DSL capacity and safeguarding systems.
- The Board welcomed confirmation that safeguarding standards were met during inspection and recognised the work of staff in maintaining safe and responsive practice.
- Challenge focused on reporting thresholds, bullying categorisation, welfare processes, trauma-informed responses and how safeguarding information is used to identify trends and support pupils early.

Inclusion

- SEND, Pupil Premium, LAC and Alternative Provision were reviewed regularly, with governors focusing on attendance, outcomes, access arrangements, student passports, transition and classroom implementation.
- The SIB supported the continued development of The Lodge and in-school provision, including functional skills, re-engagement pathways and support for pupils with SEMH and complex needs.





- Governors challenged leaders on the progress of SEND and disadvantaged pupils, ensuring that support is targeted, evidence-led and linked to improved access, attendance and achievement.

Curriculum and Teaching

- Curriculum and teaching were reviewed through updates on Quality of Teaching and Learning, KS3 assessment, adaptive teaching, literacy, writing, maths and science improvement work.
- Governors welcomed stronger middle leadership, the appointment of a new Head of Maths, Trust support and the move towards more targeted and bespoke professional development.
- Challenge focused on consistency of classroom practice, pupil engagement, use of assessment information, and curriculum decisions around languages and the fourth GCSE option.

Achievement

- The SIB monitored Y11, Y13, Y10 and Y12 attainment closely, including examination readiness, intervention, FFT ambition, pupil-level analysis and support for SEND and disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors welcomed the positive start to examinations, the stronger Y11 position compared with the previous cohort and the detailed booster programme in place before and during exams.
- Further challenge focused on maths, English, foundational knowledge, aspiration, passivity, mobility and how the school will secure sustained improvement for future cohorts.

Attendance and Behaviour

- Attendance and behaviour remained a major focus, with governors reviewing broken weeks, punctuality, local authority support, attendance hub work, family engagement and pupils with multiple risk factors.
- The Board welcomed the calmer school culture, stronger punctuality to lessons, reduced suspensions and permanent exclusions, and the impact of more consistent behaviour systems.
- Governors challenged leaders on balancing high expectations with reasonable adjustments, especially for pupils with SEND, SEMH needs or difficulties with self-regulation.

Personal Development, Wellbeing and Careers

- Personal development, careers and co-curricular opportunities were reviewed, including Gatsby Benchmarks, future skills, NEET risk, work experience and wider student opportunities.
- Governors welcomed increased co-curricular engagement, the development of whole-school events, Camp Grace, student voice and examples of enrichment supporting inclusion and reintegration.
- The SIB encouraged the school to continue strengthening stakeholder voice, family engagement, communication and pupils' sense of belonging, confidence, character and aspiration.

Sixth Form and Future Pathways

- The Associated Sixth Form was monitored through updates on Y13 and Y12 attainment, recruitment, retention, destinations, student experience and shared leadership arrangements with Emmanuel College.
- Governors welcomed the encouraging predicted Y13 position and the strong interest from current Y11 pupils, while continuing to monitor capacity, transition and support for lower-attaining students.
- Challenge focused on ensuring Grace College students see the sixth form as belonging to them, and that pathways remain ambitious, appropriate and well supported.

Leadership, Governance, Finance and Site

- The SIB supported the school's response to inspection feedback, the finalised improvement plan and RISE support, ensuring actions are aligned and focused on sustainable improvement.
- Governors reviewed leadership capacity, communication, line management, workload, staffing investment, recruitment and how additional capacity will translate into visible impact.
- Finance and estates oversight included alternative provision costs, agency costs, the 2026/27 budget, staffing investment, School Rebuilding Programme work, site risks and health and safety actions.
- Governance continued to strengthen through focused questioning, action point follow-up, link monitoring, review of roles and preparation for six SIB meetings in 2026–27 to support the drive for improvement.

Future Governance at Grace College





As Grace College moves into 2026–27, the School Improvement Board will continue to support leaders while holding them to account for the areas that matter most to students, families and staff. Governors will maintain close oversight of safeguarding, inclusion, SEND, attendance, behaviour, curriculum, teaching, achievement, personal development, careers, sixth form and the school site. A key focus will be ensuring that improvement work is sustainable, well led and clearly linked to better experiences and outcomes for pupils.

The SIB will continue to work closely with the Trust so that local governance remains focused, well supported and effective. During 2026–27, the Cycle of Business and meeting structure will be reviewed to ensure governor time is used well, challenge remains purposeful and oversight is directed towards the areas where Grace College most needs support and assurance. Six meetings have been scheduled for the year to provide more regular opportunities for scrutiny, follow-up and support as the school continues its improvement journey.

Grace College School Improvement Board currently stands at four members; this is below the target of nine. There remains a clear need to augment capacity further during 2026–27, particularly given the current size of the board and the need to ensure resilience across key areas of responsibility. The Trust is working hard to grow and strengthen the SIB.

Looking ahead, governors are encouraged by the commitment shown by leaders, staff, students and the Trust. The Board will continue to celebrate progress, ask honest questions and keep students at the heart of its work, supporting Grace College to build confidence, strengthen relationships with families and the community, and provide an education rooted in hope, ambition and care.

