

blessed mary
upham

APCM 2025

Reports for 2025/2026

Prepared for the Annual
Parochial Church Meeting
of **Blessed Mary Church**
2026

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upham

Your Church
Always Welcome

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR TO 31ST DECEMBER 2025

Background

The parish is the Parish of Upham in the Deanery of Bishop's Waltham. The Church in the parish is the Church of the Blessed Mary and is located in Church Street, Upham.

NAME	DATE ELECTED OR LAST RE-ELECTED	DATE TO RESIGN AND CAN BE RE-ELECTED	COMMENTS
Rev James Hunt			Ex Officio
Frances Baxter Vacant			Ex Officio Ex Officio
Vicky Gardner	2024 (R-E)	2027	
Rosemary Bickle	2025 (E)	2028	Deanery Rep
Simon Beloe	2024 (R-E)	2027	Ex Officio Treasurer
Janet Dunford	2023 (R-E)	2026	
Andrea Penter	2023 (R-E)	2026	Ex Officio Secretary
Jane Perrott	2023 (R-E)	2026	
Barney Dunford	2023 (R-E)	2026	
Andrew Cox	2023 (E)	2026	Deanery Rep
David Ashe	2025 (Co-opted)	2028	

School Governor Reps: James Hunt, Rosemary Bickle, Cynthia Kimble, Karl Therkelsen, Jo Smith, Yuliya Tarnakop, Hannah Faulkner

Role

The PCC of the Parish of Upham has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, the Revd James Hunt, in promoting in the Ecclesiastical Parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has maintenance responsibility for the Church building and the upkeep of the churchyard. The PCC has complied with its duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (in respect of the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

Membership

The members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. Elected members must resign at the end of three years in office but may stand for re-election. Our Deanery Reps are currently Rosemary Bickle and Andrew Cox and we are grateful for the time they give to this on the PCC's behalf. We now have one warden in post, Frances Baxter, but hope to fill the other post when we can and also appoint 'assistant' wardens to support.

Status

The PCC is a charity excepted from registration with the Charity Commission.

Bankers

The bankers to the PCC are Barclays Bank PLC.

Independent Examiner

The independent examiner is Mrs Susan Harris of 10 Upham Street, Upham, Southampton SO32 1PH. We are hugely grateful for the work undertaken by Mrs Harris on our behalf.

Church Attendance

There are 67 on the Church Electoral Roll. A full review of the electoral roll is currently taking place. The usual Sunday attendance counted on a "normal" Sunday during the year was 21 adults and 3 children.

Review of the Year

The full PCC met five times during the year, both in person again and also via Zoom. The PCC wish to thank our Rector, Rev. James Hunt, and Rev. Jane Beloe for their leading worship in the Church and for their contributions to the Christian community in the Parish. The PCC also wishes to record its thanks to other members of the ordained and lay ministry who have given their time to contribute to the worship in the Parish or to lead it when the regular clergy were not available. We also want to thank Sam Sessions in the Parish office for all her support and to Kate Smyth for leading our family, children and youth work including: Sunday Funday, Butterflies, GWNN and Table Talk.

A number of the PCC members are Governors of Upham Church of England (Aided) Primary School. The PCC values its links with the School and congratulates the Headteacher, Mr Woolley, staff and children on their continued success. Yuliya Tarnakop and Hannah Faulkner were welcomed as new governors. Hannah has subsequently resigned and we are looking for a replacement.

Revd James

The year (25/26) was a good year in the life at Blessed Mary with some new people and more consistent congregations week by week. Morning prayer on a Monday was held via Zoom. Pastoral care within the church family and to the wider community has been good.

The Church Fete in 2025 was held again this year in the grounds of The Manor House, Upham and we are very grateful to Rob and Judy Horne for allowing their lovely home to host the event.

Harvest Festival was celebrated in the church in early October. Remembrance Sunday Service took place inside the church. The Carol Service took place on December 21st and as always was very well attended and a great success. Particular thanks go to Roger Hansford, our organist and the choir. The Christmas services on Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day were also much appreciated by all. Many thanks to all those who assisted.

The PCC encouraged awareness among the congregation of the need to give to others by inviting contributions of food to the Bishop's Waltham Food Bank.

At the beginning of 2026 the 'little village library' was launched in Blessed Mary and is a welcome addition to the church encouraging the exchange and reading of books, and as people do so, the use of Blessed Mary as a 'hub' of the village. We are very grateful to the Men's Shed, Barney Dunford and others who have helped, for its construction and installation.

In addition to those already mentioned, the PCC wishes to thank everyone who contributed in any way, in particular, Mr Dunford for his work as Verger; Andrew Cox and Rosemary Bickle for representing the Parish at the Deanery Synod; The Rev. Jane Beloe for all her ministry; Janet Dunford and Clare Elliot for Pastoral Care; Cliff Jacobs for managing the distribution of the Parish News; Jane Massey and her team of flower arrangers; Kim Gibson and all the Bell Ringers; Joanne Harvey and John Clements for their super efforts in keeping the church and churchyard so tidy; Roger Hansford, Rosemary Bickle and others who throughout the year provided accompaniment on the organ. We are also grateful for all the support provided by our church band to support Sunday Funday and the informal service on 4th Sundays. Thank you also to all those who read the lessons and who prepare and read the intercessions; the Chalice Assistants and the Altar Assistants. Lastly Richard Clark, Barney Dunford and Simon Beloe for their contribution towards the maintenance of the fabric of the Church and the time spent in this pursuit.

Finally, the PCC wishes to record its thanks to all those to whom thanks has not already been given in this report, and who have contributed in so many ways to the life of the Church in 25/26.

The Church is in very good order, however, we are still awaiting the appointment of a church Architect. Working parties were organised both for the maintenance of the church fabric and for the churchyard during the year.

Finally, as we look to 2026 and 2027, we want to continue to all the good things that we are doing in the life of Blessed Mary, which is a very busy and active village church with good energy and faith. As we look forward, there are two important areas we want to address. First, how we might encourage more giving in support of the church; and second, we want to review what we want to offer in terms of 'Family, Children and Youth' ministry and mission so that we can encourage the church family to grow.

Financial Report for the year ended 31/12/2025

The Treasurer regrets that this year the deficit has grown to £8,860 from that in 2024 of £3,239. He is loath to report also, that the church's reserves have reduced by £22,622 in the last four year from £73,831 to £51,209. The church must take steps to reduce this outflow by either increasing income, reducing expenditure or, more likely, a combination of the two.

The items contributing to the deficit are various, some are reversible, and some will continue to impact the church's finances.

Income for 2025 totalled £55,660 a decrease of £2,667 from 2024. Collections at services and sundry donations have held up well, but GiftAid income has reduced by just over £4,000. Unfortunately, this reduction will also impact the amount of tax that we can reclaim by some £1,000 although this will not be crystallised until April 2026. It should be remembered that GiftAid income was swelled in 2024 by the appeal for the renovation of the bells. Income was positively influenced by a good result from the church fete, an increase of £800 over the previous year.

Expenditure for 2025 totalled £64,520 an increase of £2,956 over the previous year. This increase was largely due to an increase in the Diocesan Parish Share of £1,212 and to the repairs to the ceiling in the north aisle and the south side of the nave. The cost of the repairs was £8,280 although we were able to claim back the VAT of £1,380. An inspection of the electricians is required every 5 years and during the preliminary works there was an urgent need for remedial works which has cost £1,100 to date. Further work will be necessary in 2026. Notwithstanding the increase in Repairs and Maintenance, there was an increase of only £2,300 over the previous year, when the work was done on the bells. The 2025 increase was offset by a reduction in Utility costs of £2,500. There were other marginally increased costs in Music (£200), Upkeep of the Churchyard (£350) and the Family, Children and Youth costs (£300). Upkeep of Services increased £360 due to purchases of wine, wafers and candles.

At the end of the year current assets stood at £51,209 (2024 - £60,069) made up as follows:

Cash & Bank:	
Current Account	£7,971
Unrestricted funds:	£14,878
Designated Funds:	£21,943
Restricted Funds:	£14,385
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	£51,209
Funds held at CCLA:	£43,212
Balance at Barclays Bank:	£ 7,997

At the close of 2025, funds above those which are required for current expenditure are maintained with Barclays Bank plc paying a maximum of 1.4% (2024 – 1.4%) and in a CBF Church of England Deposit Fund (CCLA) paying 1.1% (2025 – 1.4%). Investments in any other form need the prior approval of the PCC.

Simon Beloe, Treasurer

Music at Blessed Mary

1. Overview

The past year has once again been a busy and rewarding period for music at The Church of the Blessed Mary in Upham. With a full schedule of services, weddings, and special events, both the choir and organists have enjoyed contributing to enriching worship and strengthening the musical life of our Church.

2. Wedding Season 2025

The 2025 wedding season was busy, with many couples requesting live organ music and, in some cases, our choir. This has highlighted the continued value of our music offering, and the efforts of our singers continue to be much appreciated.

3. September 27th Concert 2025

A major highlight of the year was the concert '**Echoes of Eden**' held on September 27, featuring:

- The combined choirs of the Church of the Blessed Mary and St Peter's Church, Bishop's Waltham, with additional guest voices were conducted by Michael Coker and accompanied by myself
- A special performance by **The Lowry Girls** from Gosport, who sang four songs
- Solos from **Tamsin Withers, Michael Coker, Angie Jones** and myself
- An accompanying **Art Exhibition** curated by **Rosemary Bickle**.

Ticket sales raised approximately £500. These funds were used to purchase new anthem books for the choir and to provide an additional choir cassock and surplice. The concert was well received and proved to be a wonderful example of collaboration between our musical groups, with support from many other members of Blessed Mary and the wider parish. Thanks to Rosemary Bickle for writing an explanation of 'The Sublime in Art and Music' for the Concert programme, and articles for the Parish Magazine and 'Upham Update' to reflect on the success of the evening.

4. Seasonal and Special Services

Throughout the ecclesiastical year, the choir has continued to enhance worship through their commitment and musicality, particularly during Lent and Easter, Advent and Christmas 2025.

Mothering Sunday and Easter

The choir contributed to Mothering Sunday and Easter Sunday 2025, singing anthems to enrich the liturgy and enhance the enjoyment of those attending.

Nine Lessons and Carols at The Church of the Blessed Mary, 2025

The joint choirs of the Church of the Blessed Mary and St Peter's Church once again played a central role in the annual Nine Lessons and Carols Service. The combined forces of the two churches worked together very well, adding depth and quality to this much-loved event. Roger and Michael shared the leadership of the music for this service and it is hoped to do the same again next year – having a separate date for the St Peter's Nine Lessons and Carols Service would be beneficial for 2026 and onwards. This allows for stronger musical offerings at both evenings, and gives more choice for parishioners – as many wish to attend both venues.

5. Musicians at The Church of the Blessed Mary

Musical support throughout the year has been strong.

- **Rosemary Bickle** has continued to play regularly on the second Sundays for Sunday Funday and Evensong services. Rosemary also continues to be a stalwart support in terms of organisation and communication for musical planning.

- Rosemary has also provided occasional cover for services on the 1st, 3rd, 4th, or 5th Sundays when needed.
This arrangement has ensured continuity of music across all services, with myself as the main organist.
- Thanks also to Graham Perrott for his contribution on the guitar throughout the year, and to Graham and Jane for hosting the choir supper in December. I would like to thank all choir members for their valued contribution, commitment, and lovely voices.
- I would also like to thank the whole parish community for the support I have received during a year of change for my family and children.

6. Conclusion

This year we have continued to offer music ministry to the Church community, providing enjoyment for all involved. From weddings to concerts and weekly worship, the dedication of our choir members, soloists, guest musicians, and supporters has helped to sustain a vibrant and inspiring musical tradition. We extend heartfelt thanks to everyone involved and look forward to another year of music-making together for 2026-27.

Roger Hansford

Choir

In my voluntary choir co-ordinating role in 2025, I continued to assist our Music Director, Dr Roger Hansford, with choir administration - liaising with him on the selection of suitable choir anthems for key services, sending out choir anthem rehearsal links and coordinating choir attendance for weddings, funerals and all our main services, including Mothering Sunday, Harvest Festival and Remembrance Sunday. I would like to thank all choir members for all their commitment, home practising and excellent singing in the services.

Throughout the year I played the organ for the Compline and Simple Sung Evensong services. On the second Sundays, I played the keyboard for the Sunday Funday services, liaising with Kate Smyth and our guitarist, Graham Perrott. I also played for several other Contemporary and Communion services and rehearsals, to provide cover for Dr Roger Hansford when required.

Roger approved my suggestion of the theme of 'Sublime Music and Art' for our September Concert and agreed that I should manage an associated Art Exhibition, so I researched relevant choir anthems and audience participation hymns and wrote an explanation of 'The Sublime in Art and Music' for our 'Echoes of Eden' Concert programme. The Art Exhibition was curated to follow the theme of 'The Creation of the World' and displayed the work of artists from the church choir and guests. Also included were six framed prize-winning paintings created by children from Upham Primary School, depicting some of the unusual animals and insects to be found in the song: 'Badgers and Hedgehogs', written by contemporary composer, Andrew Carter, to convey a child's perspective on the wonders of Creation. The artworks were on display all weekend and much grateful thanks are due to all the artists and those who helped to host the Exhibition – especially to Janet Dunford who kindly provided delicious tea and cakes for visitors and to Barney Dunford and Graham Perrott for organizing and setting up the Art Display stands.

As the link between the two Benefice choirs, I continued to regularly attend St. Peter's Church Choir rehearsals and to liaise with their Organist and Director of Music, Michael Coker. Some of our choir members regularly sang in the Choral Evensongs held throughout the year at both churches and several singers from St. Peter's supported our wedding choirs at the church of the Blessed Mary this year. In October, I played the organ for a 9 a.m. service, plus the associated choir rehearsal, at St. Peter's Church.

The traditional 9 Lessons and Carols service at the Blessed Mary Church held on 21st December was extremely well attended by an appreciative congregation. This year, we again welcomed St. Peter's Church Director of Music, Michael Coker, who kindly conducted us, whilst Roger played the organ and thanks are due to both these excellent musicians. Our choir included extra singers from St. Peter's Church, plus our guest singers, all lending valuable support to our three choir anthems: 'Adam Lay ybounden' arranged by Peter Warlock, 'Myn Lyking' arranged by RR Terry and 'Long Ago' written by local musician and composer, David Burgess and arranged by Kate Jones. Both choir and congregation enjoyed singing the nine traditional Christmas carols during this wonderful service and afterwards we all appreciated the delicious festive food on offer.

Rosemary Bickle 26.03.26

Rosemary Bickle

Deanery Synod: Andrew Cox and Rosemary Bickle

FINANCE 2025

Resourcing the Deanery

The full Deanery Synod met three times during 2025 and a financial report on the Deanery's own finances was given at each meeting.

The Deanery received a grant of £5,000 from the Diocese towards Deanery running costs, so is currently well resourced. Despite on-going financial pressures, all Parishes in the Deanery except one, paid their Parish Share in full in 2025. However, a number of Parishes had deficits of income against expenditure and had to call on previously accumulated funds to meet the payment. The new methodology for calculating the Parish Share was introduced this year and was generally well received - although some Parishes had to negotiate reduced figures as the calculated figures were unaffordable.

The Diocesan Budget was reviewed and 2026 is likely to be another financially challenging year for the Diocese, with a significant projected deficit. This is partly because the Diocese has filled the vacancies carried forward from previous years and there is now a full complement of 139 clergy. Also, the triannual settlement by the Church Commissioners was less favourable than hoped for and there is a limit to how long the Diocese can continue to fund such deficits.

Diocesan Mission and Ministry Vision Development

The vision of the Deanery is to build a community of Jesus-centred, kingdom-seeking disciples, with a priority on work with children, young people and adults, to enable a new generation to grow, find their voice and develop sustainable worshipping communities.

The three elements to deliver this vision are: to **revive** the wellbeing and spiritual leadership of our diocese, to **revitalise** our churches to connect all with the Christian message and to **renew** the Church in areas where it is not represented. To support this rejuvenating strategy, the national Church is investing £1m per annum for 5 years (from 2024) into the Diocese's targeted strategic plans via a bidding process.

In Bishop's Waltham Deanery, the bid for infrastructure support for the Meon Valley Group of Parishes has been agreed but has yet to be implemented due to the early retirement of Rev. Andy Davis on health grounds. A full-time Priest in Charge and three Associate Priests have been appointed, so the Vision for this Group can now be developed and implemented. Further bids are being prepared for a Pioneer Minister for Boorley Green and a Family, Children and Youth Worker, who will be supporting the Deanery as a whole.

The Reverend James Hunt, Rector of Bishop's Waltham and Upham, was appointed to the role of Area Dean of Bishop's Waltham in Hampshire from **May 29, 2025**, along with Rev. Fiona Grove as Assistant Area Dean during the Deanery Ascension Day service. Archdeacon Kathryn officiated.

The new Area Dean was invited to introduce himself to the Deanery Synod meeting in June. James has served in this Deanery and Parishes of Bishop's Waltham and Upham for 18 years and he views the strength of the Church of England as lying with the parishes that make it up, not the other way round. He said that he will ensure that the Deanery is represented at the Diocesan Synod, and that feedback is brought from there to the Deanery Synod and on to the parishes.

The Rev Jill Kingston, Assistant Curate, Warren Park and Leigh Park, was appointed to be Associate Priest (0.5), Swanmore and of the Newtown, Soberton and Hambledon and of Meon Bridge Benefices, from June 16th, 2025.

The Rev Liz Quinn, Assistant Curate, Swanmore and of the Newtown, Soberton and Hambledon and of Meon Bridge Benefices, was appointed to be Associate Priest, Swanmore and of the Newtown, Soberton and Hambledon and Meon Bridge Benefices, from June 16th, 2025.

A well-attended Deanery morning was held in September led by the Lead Academy, which focussed on how to grow Churches individually and the Deanery as a whole.

The Deanery Development and Implementation Plan for rejuvenation in the Deanery, 2026 - 2030 was presented to the Bishop's Staff Team by Rev. James Hunt, Rev. Fiona Grove and Rev. Paul Quinn OBE and was well received. The plan sets out the Deanery's aspirations and goals for the next 5 years and includes detail of **Revive** Initiatives, **Revitalise** Initiatives and **Renew** Initiatives focussing on the Meon Valley Parishes, family and young people, children's missional outreach and a Church Plant at Boorley Green. Some organic internal plans should be achievable within existing structures, finances and leadership and some strategic external plans will need external support for revised structures, finances and leadership. A suggested timetable for their implementation is included with the Plan to help the Deanery measure delivery of its Vision over the medium term.

Lay Worship Leaders

Eleven new Lay Worship Leaders continued their training in 2025 to be commissioned to serve the whole Deanery, while concentrating on their own Parish or Benefice for the most part. Canon David Isaac organised the course and the trainers. The course was run at Hambledon as a deanery project over consecutive Saturday mornings. It was informal in approach and covered the different styles of worship, how a service is put together and how to do a reflection on a Bible passage. Following a course of safeguarding training, the newly trained leaders were commissioned on 12.01.26 by the Area Dean, The Reverend James Hunt, and the Assistant Area Dean, The Reverend Fiona Grove.

General Synod meeting 11th July – 15th July

15th July 2025: A proposal 'to adopt the Professional Guidelines for Clergy as an interim measure while we wait for the pastoral guidance' was passed by a very large majority and Issues of Human Sexuality will be replaced in the interim by the Professional Guidelines for the Clergy during the discernment process. All Synod Reports are available on the General Synod website.

Children and Youth (Family Children and Youth Report)

Butterflies

Thursdays 10-11.30

Baby and Toddler group run by Yuliya and local villagers Diana Fennell and Liz Cope.

We meet term time on Thursdays from 10 to 11.30am

Our numbers have declined since we lost a few last year to school and nursery and not showing signs of growth again.

We have around 6 families that come but not very regularly. This can be quite discouraging as the session has not changed in its style or the huge welcome they get.

We hope to do another social media plug and try and interest more new families to us.

We have also been chatting about making the group into a coffee morning for all ages with baby toys out also. Once the Book Library is ready in the church may get more foot fall through the door that could potentially build up our mission outreach.

Please pray as we wait and seek the Lord.

We wonder if we provide a once-a-month special session that's well advertised, we may attract families to us? Like a sensory session/ sports session/ messy play session?

Sunday Funday

2nd Sunday of the month (except Aug Oct Nov)

A few regular families attend but some families come and go and are not regular attendees.

Those that do come enjoy the family style service.

I have been asked to do a questionnaire to engage with our current families on what they like or dislike about this service. And a few more questions to engage on where we are, and if the group is sustainable. Personally, I find that not running every month apart from the Summer does not help with the momentum in making it a regular event.

We had to stop the March service due to Mother's Day service the following week which then prevented us from meeting another month as Sunday Funday.

Thanks to Rosemary Graham, Jane, Yuliya and Rev James for your commitment in practical aspects.

The reports from families so far have been very encouraging but I do wonder if the location and the time prevents people coming?

Sports Camp-

Feb Half term

We ran a successful sports camp for 20 children during half term in Feb.

It was a shame we could not run in Blessed Mary or work alongside the Ash Wednesday service as we ended up running in St Peters. Some children came from Upham school due to leaflet drop.

Table Talk-

1st and 3rd Thursday of the month

We have around 12 adults that attend this group but no families at the moment.

We run a morning full of chatter and community. Often a craft or jigsaw has been popular. Sometimes a game or a game of pool.

We have a nice lunch together followed by a spiritual conversation that often leads to healthy discussion.

Over the winter months we run in The Barn, across the way from church but intend to meet up in church after Easter.

We have recently printed some new leaflets to distribute to locals as we would like to welcome some new folk in.

Retreat Nov 2025

I ran our 3rd mini retreat with a few from Table Talk. We went to Lyme Regis for a time of friendship and fun. About 10 of us attended.

We walked, ate well and made some wonderful Christmas decorations. We had a group art session with an artist. We watched the Christmas lights being lit with the locals which was nice.

Two Christian discussions were also part of our time away and left folk thinking more about the Christian faith in Jesus.

Collective Worship

Once a month I lead collective worship in Upham Primary School.

I enjoy these, but wish we had more time with each class year to go deeper.

We have had brief discussions of hosting a Lego church lunch club.

I have also invited the school to visit our church using Rural Missions booklet to help the children explore and find out what really goes on in the church.

Ongoing training and other things

I have recently come back from the Kingdom Builders conference near Birmingham for children's workers. It was a useful 2 days to network and spend time with other workers.

I am currently on a Discovering Chaplaincy Course which has been interesting as a mission tool away from the church building.

I'm considering attending a course designed for individuals involved in New Worshipping communities led by lay people. This training could greatly benefit Blessed Mary and help me guide mission efforts within my own context.

I have had a personal bumpy 2025 /26 time and not been easy, however I am sure the Lord helps you and me when we really depend on Him and at times feel a bit broken and dented!

Thanks for allowing me to work in your beautiful community for 5 years.

Kate Smyth

Meon Valley Foodbank

You will not be surprised to hear that we continue to live amongst individuals and families in our locality who are in food poverty, though much of it is hidden. The Meon Valley Food Bank was set up in 2015 to meet the growing need for help and eleven years on, that need is still with us and has grown hugely since our early days. We are supported generously by both food and financial donations which enable us to provide food and basic essentials. Clients come in off the street or referred to us by agencies such as Social

services, Citizen's Advice, Housing Associations and local churches. Numbers vary but can range from 30 to 70+ referrals and 50 to 170+ food donations a month

These are just some of the situations we meet in our clients. With our links with local schools, we were able to provide food for 145 children at Christmas and at this Easter, 80 children who are entitled to free school meals but receive no assistance during the holidays.

Our clients have included: - (In all these cases it can be a single person, couple or a family)

- Rough sleepers in tents, caravans and cars
- People recovering from addiction
- People waiting for universal credit to arrive
- People/families where the main earner cannot work due to injury, illness, and disability
- People on zero hours contracts
- People who have lost their job
- people escaping domestic violence and in temporary accommodation
- People where universal credit does not cover all the bills
- Pensioners on pension credit
- people suffering from mental illness

Thank you for the support you already give as a church and welcome any who would like to support us going forward.

Rev David Proud

Chair of Trustees

Upham Church of England Primary School Report

Chair of Governor Report - February 2026 by Gemma Rainger This year has once again demonstrated the school's purposeful learning culture, its strong community spirit, and its unwavering commitment to every child's wellbeing and progress. Children continue to benefit from a broad and engaging curriculum, supported by ongoing improvements in the quality of teaching and learning across all subjects.

Governors have taken an active role in monitoring this, including visiting Religious Education lessons to observe how the subject is taught and how pupils engage with it. The school has also offered a rich programme of drama and musical activities.

A particular highlight remains the annual Christmas nativity performances, where each class selects a charity to receive the generous donations made by audience members. These events not only showcase the children's confidence and creativity but also reinforce the school's values of kindness and community. My sincere thanks go to all staff, led by Mr Woolley, for bringing the schools vision of "Love" and "Care" to life through their dedication, professionalism, and unwavering commitment to every child's education.

The school concluded the 2025/26 financial year in a positive position. This stability has enabled continued investment in:

- Technological infrastructure to support high-quality teaching and learning
- Professional development and high-quality teaching
- Targeted support to ensure all children can thrive The governing body remains vigilant in its oversight of school finances, ensuring that resources are used effectively and sustainably.

The school continues to be strengthened by the generosity and involvement of its wider community. We are deeply grateful to the many volunteers who give their time to enrich school life. This includes visitors who share their faith, professions, and expertise with the children, as well as those who support fundraising efforts to enhance school facilities and resources.

Special thanks go to the Friends of Upham School Committee for their leadership, energy, and creativity, and to everyone who participates in events that raise much-appreciated funds for the school.

Thank you to our Foundation Governors for their time, dedication and being so actively involved in the Governance of the school and ensuring that the Schools Christian Values are at the heart of the Schools strategy.

It has been a privilege to serve as the Chair of Governors for the past 4 and a half years. The Governing Body board is thoughtful, committed, and deeply rooted in doing what is right for the children and the school community. I'm proud of what we've achieved together—through challenges, through change, and through the steady work of strengthening the school year after year.

The achievements of this year reflect the collective efforts of staff, pupils, families, governors, and the wider community. Thank you to everyone who contributes to making Upham School a nurturing, ambitious, and joyful place for children to learn and grow.

Gemma Rainger

Safeguarding Report

Reporting period: 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

Safeguarding remains a central part of the life and ministry of St Peter's Church Parish. We are committed to promoting a safer church for children, young people, and vulnerable adults, and to ensuring that safeguarding is taken seriously across all aspects of parish life.

During the year, the Parish has continued to maintain and strengthen its safeguarding arrangements. Safeguarding has remained under active review, with appropriate oversight through the Parish Safeguarding Officer, clergy, churchwardens and PCC. The PCC has continued to receive safeguarding updates and to recognize safeguarding as an essential part of good governance and pastoral responsibility. Over the course of the year, attention has been given not only to routine safeguarding administration, such as training and safer recruitment, but also to strengthening local safeguarding practice. This has included clearer local protocols and better-defined boundaries in response to some of the practical safeguarding challenges faced in parish life. In particular, work has been undertaken to improve the Church's response in situations involving vulnerability, pastoral complexity, and the need for appropriate risk management. The Parish has also had to manage safeguarding matters requiring careful handling and appropriate liaison. These have been addressed with due regard to confidentiality, safeguarding guidance, and the need to balance welcome, pastoral care and the safety of the wider church community. It would not be appropriate to report case details publicly, but the APCM may be assured that safeguarding concerns arising during the year have been taken seriously and managed appropriately.

Safeguarding training continues to be an important priority. Those in relevant roles are expected to complete the training required for their ministry or office, and work has continued during the year to maintain compliance and ensure that safeguarding awareness remains current. Safer recruitment and DBS processes have also continued to be applied where required.

The Parish has made progress in embedding a stronger safeguarding culture, where concerns can be raised appropriately, safeguarding responsibilities are better understood, and the importance of professional boundaries is recognized. This remains an ongoing task, but there has been positive movement during the year.

Priorities for the coming year will include:

- continuing to maintain safeguarding training compliance;
- ensuring safer recruitment and DBS arrangements remain up to date;
- keeping local safeguarding procedures under review;
- maintaining appropriate PCC oversight of safeguarding matters; and
- continuing to foster a church culture in which safeguarding is understood as a shared responsibility.

I would like to record thanks to all those who have supported safeguarding within the life of the Parish during the year, and especially those who have undertaken training, complied with safer recruitment requirements, and helped ensure that St Peter's remains a safe and welcoming church community.

Submitted by:

Luke Hawkins

Parish Safeguarding Officer

St Peter's Church Parish, Bishop's Waltham