



Aston Rowant C+E Primary School
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Headteacher: Mrs Helen France

Meeting of the Full Governing Body of Aston Rowant CE Primary School
Wednesday 10 June 2026 at 18.30

Present:

Jacky Barr (JB) Foundation Governor *ex officio*
 Zoe Batt (ZB) LA Governor
 Helen France (HF) Headteacher *ex officio*
 Caroline Isabelle (CI) Foundation Governor
 Matt Parker (MP) Foundation Governor
 Tom Sowerby (TS) Foundation Governor (Chair)
 Abi Tindall (AT) Parent Governor
 Ben Wilson (BW) Parent Governor

In attendance: Martin Pounce, Governance Professional

Apologies: Gill Tyler, (GT) Foundation Governor and Alexi Olsen (AO) Staff Governor

		Action
1.	<p>Welcome and Prayer</p> <p>TS welcomed everyone and HF opened the meeting with prayer. The meeting was quorate.</p>	
2.	<p>Apologies for absence / declarations of interest</p> <p>Gill Tyler’s and Alexi Olsen’s apologies were accepted.</p> <p>No declarations of interest noted in relation to items on the agenda.</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes of meetings held on 29 April 2026 and matters arising</p> <p>3.1 The minutes were approved and signed.</p> <p>3.2 Matters arising</p> <p>3.2.1 Policies have been checked and the review schedule will be maintained.</p> <p>3.2.2 Change of vice-chair has been recorded on GovernorHub</p> <p>3.2.3 TS link to English and T & L has been recorded on GovernorHub</p> <p>3.2.4 Governors were reminded to enrol on training before end of summer</p>	

GRATITUDE RESILIENCE OUTREACH WONDER TRUST HARMONY
'Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him.' Colossians 2:7

<p>4.</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p>Committee reports</p> <p>Governors noted:</p> <p>Finance and Resources has not met</p> <p>Teaching & Learning minutes of 22 April 2026 had been shared in the meeting folder.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Five-Year Strategy Discussion</p> <p>This was the major item for the meeting.</p> <p>In preparation the headteacher had shared updated information on school self-evaluation and School Development Plan progress in the meeting folder.</p> <p>Governors had been invited to think about Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats. And the SWOT analysis was discussed.</p> <p>Suggested strengths include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership, particularly of the headteacher but also strong team of governors under the chair’s leadership and advice of the clerk. • Clear shared vision and common goals shared by staff and parents. • Strong new SENDCo • Enriched curriculum including school visits e.g. to Parliament. • Sixty-four children (out of 100) have extra music tuition every week • Willing engagement of children in collective worship. • Strong reputation which means that the school will be full in the Reception year from September 2026 (while numbers in other schools are down). Also it helps to attract good staff. With only two weeks’ notice to fill a teaching vacancy before the end of May, the headteacher received six applications and was able to shortlist four good candidates and appoint a very strong teacher. • Good financial position has enabled important premises improvements. • Change from voluntary controlled to voluntary aided has brought stronger relationship to the Diocese with important benefits. • Membership of the Thame Partnership brings benefits. • Support from the PTA which has raised money for the Library project. • Parental engagement is strong but from a limited number of parents, this represents a growth opportunity. • Early Years is a strength. • There is a strong safeguarding structure. • The school has scored 100% in every Health & Safety audit in the last five years. • Physical setting of the school and its community/family feel is a strength for some but acknowledged that it could also be a weakness for others. <p>Suggested weaknesses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting of the school makes for sometimes challenging access by car • Small school can put some parents off because they feel there will be fewer opportunities (feedback from parent survey) or friendship issues may be heightened. But a child is less likely to get ‘lost’ and issues more likely to be picked up in a small school. Small school makes it difficult to obtain 	

	<p>statistically significant data but that is no longer such a strong focus. Opportunities for competitive sport can be challenging, although school has arranged swimming gala, football and rugby. Ending of PE and Sports Premium may reduce school's ability to offer the current breadth of sports and activities and sports coaching. This will be monitored.</p>	<p>MP to monitor potential impact of Sports Premium loss</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer staff creates difficulties in covering staff absence and there is smaller leadership group and teachers have to lead several subjects. • External communications: a communications plan developed each year is not given sufficient attention in meetings. Governors agreed that it should be a standard agenda item. Governors suggested the school might organise a community event for the village. Setting up a bar in Church (The Aston Arms) works well but congregation need more help and PTA might provide it. • Parental engagement is strong, but from a small cohort. School briefing meetings on aspects of learning are poorly attended whether in school time or evenings. Governors wondered whether virtual meetings with plenty of notice and reminders might work – especially if the school keeps trying. • Volunteers from parents or non-parent community are needed to help support growth, for example to hear children read and support gardening club. These opportunities are advertised in the parish magazine, but even retired people are busy. One volunteer for reading. • Staff sickness and time off adds stress to other staff. Governors wondered whether the Thame Partnership might arrange a pool of supply staff. This has been discussed by partnership heads but would require staff time to organise. • One member of staff on capability process. • Premises limitations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hall too small for many PE activities ○ Classrooms separated from headteacher's office and staffroom restricts contact especially in bad weather. <p>Opportunities include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to set up Nursery in AR – only one nursery in Chinnor • Partnership with organisations and clubs in Aston Rowant (cricket club have reached out) • Using people in the community to help children to learn about enterprise and careers. Careers fair with stalls of people with different jobs to talk about them and/or entrepreneurs to set a challenge. • More working with Thame Partnership. Governors discussed the potential cost savings of having a minibus (small enough for anyone with a driving license to drive?). If Aston Rowant could purchase it, it would be available for other schools to hire. But would they bother to collect and return? • If HF becomes an executive head with another small school they might share subject leaders, sports activities, analysing data with combined and bigger cohorts etc. • Ofsted should be an opportunity to advertise the many strengths of the school. Governors noted that the school has not done enough to inform parents about the new grading system and agreed this should be rectified immediately. Governors discussed ways to celebrate the Ofsted outcomes 	<p>Clerk agenda</p>

GRATITUDE RESILIENCE OUTREACH WONDER TRUST HARMONY

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	<p>with parents and the wider community. Running The Aston Arms as previously described was suggested. They noted that Kingston Blount Village Hall is large.</p>	<p>Inform parents about Ofsted grading system</p>
	<p>Threats include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliant on headteacher staying at Aston Rowant • Staff retention • Ofsted pressure and staff workload • Mixed age teaching is harder. Governors noted that maths is always taught in year groups, Foundation subjects can be taught on a rolling programme but English is more difficult. There is always a range of ability in a single year group and teachers plan to meet all needs. • Volume of SEND pupils -those with EHCP and others on the register are higher than national average. Free School Meals is lower than average. • People’s perception of what is reasonable to expect is unrealistic (possibly because they live in a privileged bubble) and this puts pressure on headteacher and staff. • Low birth rate nationally. • House building in Chinnor may place more pressure on Year 7 places in Lord Williams’s and make it more difficult for Aston Rowant parents to secure places there. (although Lord Williams’s is not perceived so much now as the only good school.) • St Andrew’s School have just appointed a new headteacher and might represent exciting competition. Aston Rowant cannot afford to be complacent. • Inflationary cost increases – may put pressure on school budgets and make it more difficult for parents to afford voluntary contributions to enable visits to go ahead. • School is nearly full – only five under capacity – and therefore can’t grow much further to increase income. • Attendance: extremes between 64 with good attendance who earned an attendance badge (including 14 on 100% attendance over two terms) and 12 pupils with attendance under 90% (including one with 40% attendance) who count as Persistent Absentees (PA). Governors asked whether the 64 good attendees are the same as those who receive music tuition. No. Is PA related to Pupil Premium children entitled to attend breakfast club. Half of PA are children not interested in school. The other half take holidays in term time (108 days lost). Governors asked if there are rewards for <u>improving attendance</u>. Yes, they receive certificates. • Governors asked whether AI is a threat. It can be an opportunity as long as the IT systems can keep up with rapid change. Governors noted that many parents are against AI. AI helps English. • Some children are not school ready – not out of nappies, not cleaning their teeth (so government proposing teeth cleaning in school) not going to bed early enough so too tired to learn, not having conversations with adults because both child and adult are glued to screens with headphones with the 	

	<p>result that speech and language is not developed, not able to use knife and fork. As a result, Early Years is already planning to adapt teaching and all staff will be under pressure.</p>	
	<p>Governors reviewed last year's Post-It exercise where developments were put into actions for the coming year, actions for 3-5 years, actions for 5+ years.</p> <p>There were three sheets covering</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staffing 2. Curriculum 3. Fantastic Facilities <p>Staffing</p> <p>All the developments for Year 1 had been completed. Governors identified actions from the 3-5 year column that should be moved into next year's Year 1 column. They included:</p> <p>NPQEL (National Professional Qualification in Executive Leadership). This will take about 18 months, and cost will include buying in supply so that HF will have some time in the school day to work on it. HF will be in school most of the time with only a few days attending sessions. Governors asked which staff member could deputise. Two members of staff have the potential to step up. They will be encouraged to take the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leaders (NPQML). Governors asked whether the school might create a deputy head or assistant head post. This hasn't been discussed and an option could be to create a senior teacher post which might eventually grow into assistant head or deputy head. Deputy head may be appropriate when HF takes on an Executive head role.</p> <p>The school will have more flexibility with the appointment of a Higher Level Teaching Assistant who can teach if there is a staffing gap.</p> <p>From September all teachers will teach RE, thereby relieving HF of a teaching task. HF reported that she has written the teaching plans for RE.</p> <p>The headteacher explained the salary structure for teachers goes from Main 1 to Main 6 with expected one step per year. There is no further automatic progression, but teachers can apply to the headteacher with evidence that they qualify to move over the threshold to Upper Threshold 1. They must be prepared to take on an additional responsibility such as whole school assessment or deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).</p> <p>There was discussion about the aim of reducing staff workload. It might be better to call it 'More efficient working'. HF reported that actions she has already taken include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • paying for supply cover to release teachers to work on their subject leader role. • Reducing staff meetings and substituting briefing sheets to convey information. • Moving PPA time to the end of the day so that teachers can work it at home if they prefer. 	

Forest School requires a subscription and prescribed curriculum. A better way to deliver nearly the same thing is being called 'Forest Friday' where the school determines the learning content. The school can do more with this.

Curriculum

Nearly all actions scheduled for the current year have been completed and governors expect this to be recognised by Ofsted inspectors.

There was lengthy discussion about the **introduction of the STAR Award** (Skills and Talents at Aston Rowant Award) which the headteacher has not had time to action. The STAR Award is a bespoke version of the Duke of Edinburgh Award designed specifically to meet the needs of Aston Rowant pupils. Having looked at alternative schemes HF believes that this is the best solution and will write this unique Aston Rowant scheme herself. Moving through different levels of independence and resilience it will fit the school GROWTH vision.

HF reported that she hoped to work on it before the end of term so that it is ready to launch in September 2026. Governors appreciated the headteacher's enthusiasm and commitment, but expressed serious concern that the extra work required is unrealistic. Governors agreed that the aim should be to start the school's version of the Star Award in September 2027.

Governors agreed that the action to get the school's **writing standards above national average** would be a task for 2026-27. A constraint that needs to be overcome is pupils' limited attention span which prevents them writing long pieces. To address this the school is starting with an activity where pupils just write for 30 minutes a piece that will not be marked by teachers.

Exploring the **option of purchasing a minibus** to enable more activity outside school will be a task for the coming year.

Developing Languages, coding and exploring AI will also be an action for the coming year.

An aspect that had not been identified in last year's strategy discussion is **environmental sustainability**. The headteacher made a strong case that this represents a good opportunity and should be considered in the year ahead.

Fantastic Facilities

Much of the action identified last year has been completed with help from the diocese and spending of the school's reserves.

The **Library project** has been held up by the planning process. The headteacher expressed concern that parents who have worked so hard to raise funds will not see a result before their children move to secondary school.

Governors agreed that carrying out a feasibility study for a nursery is not realistic at this time and should be moved into the 5-year column.

The headteacher tabled a paper setting out five strategic pillars:

1. Quality of Education
2. Leadership and Capacity including Succession)

	<p>3. Inclusion and SEND Excellence 4. Sustainability and Community 5. Premises, Infrastructure and Learning Environment.</p> <p>Much of the content of this paper had featured in the meeting discussion.</p> <p>Governors agreed that they would reflect on the SWOT discussion and the Five Pillars paper in order to identify tasks for the 3-5 and 5+ years columns for 2026-27.</p>	<p>TS/HF discuss</p> <p>Clerk agenda</p>
<p>7.</p> <p>8.1</p> <p>8.2</p> <p>8.3</p>	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>No issues were reported.</p> <p>JB reported that she had identified a volunteer who would act as a stranger to walk around the school without a visitors’ lanyard to see how many pupils will challenge – and thereby test the safeguarding ethos.</p> <p>Governors who required safeguarding training have completed it.</p> <p>Only one governor has not yet completed the online Prevent training. He will do it very soon.</p>	<p>Complete Prevent training</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>SIAMS and monitoring the impact of our Christian Vision</p> <p>GT has prepared a summary document analysing governor visit reports and references to aspects of the school’s values.</p> <p>There had been 25 visit reports uploaded to GovernorHub in the past year and two more are expected. Governors asked how that compared with other schools. The clerk reported that it compared very well with the governing boards he works with. Governors clarified the expected frequency in Aston Rowant. Twice a year for each governor.</p> <p>GT found that the most frequently reported values are: Trust 21 times Harmony 20 Resilience 19.</p> <p>Even the lowest, Wonder received 12 mentions.</p> <p>Governors asked whether the scoring of references to values should be cumulative over future years or should be reset to zero at the start of each year. They agreed that it should be re-set.</p>	

<p>9..</p>	<p>Date of next meetings</p> <p><i>Governors confirmed the date of the next meeting on</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Wednesday 15 July 2026, 6.30 at school</p> <p>Agenda will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election of chair and vice-chair (mentioned in 29 April minutes) • Meeting dates 2026-27 • Pupil assessment as discussed in Teaching & Learning Committee on 13 July • School Development Plan review. • Refining the strategic discussion of 10 June and identifying tasks for 3-5 years and 5+ YEARS 	<p>Clerk agenda</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>Any other business</p> <p>Governors suggested that a curry night for all board members would be a good way to finish off the year. Wednesdays and Thursdays were preferred. AT will circulate a poll of possible dates for board members to indicate their availability.</p> <p>A governor suggested that there are books which are especially suited to the needs of pupils with dyslexia and wondered whether the PTA might be asked to fund their purchase. It was agreed that the governing board should not ask but that the headteacher could suggest.</p> <p>The clerk stated his view that the quality of strategic discussion had been very impressive.</p>	<p>AT circulate possible dates</p>	

Meeting closed at 8.40

Martin Pounce, 11 June 2026