



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

LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

December 2020

Dear Staff & Parents,

2020 has been a challenging year for everyone. For the school, in addition to the Covid-19 challenge, we have had a number of changes to our staff and the governing body. But changes can bring different perspectives and new ideas which have helped transform and improve some of the things we do.

Earlier this year we promised you an update to the school strategy. The governors met in November to discuss progress to date and agree further actions required.

We started our strategy by carrying out a SWOT analysis to share knowledge, experience and ideas for what Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) we could foresee for the school as it currently is. The results from this exercise, combined with the parent survey information, identified some clear themes that the governors could hone in on. We then spent time discussing and agreeing our overarching vision for the school, namely "*The School of Choice for Parents, Pupils & Staff*". We took all elements of the work done to set five key areas of focus to deliver this vision: Safeguarding; Connections & Engagement; Resource Management; Teaching & Learning; Governing Body. We assigned a governor to "own" each element of our strategy and have started to develop detailed objectives and plans to deliver our vision.

To ensure we focus appropriate effort on both the short and medium-term priorities, we have brought additional control structures to the school by creating a Risk Register (schools like to have registers). This simple but important tool enables the level of risk to be calculated (likelihood x severity) to help identify where to focus our attention. The risks were given a RAG rating (Red, Amber & Green) for what we need to attend to now (red), what should come next (amber) and what we think is acceptable risk (green).

It may come as no surprise that Covid-19 was identified as a red risk. However, the other red risk is that governors currently cannot carry out monitoring visits to the school – which is one of the ways in which the board can oversee the performance of the school. There are others ways in which oversight is achieved, but there is no substitute for just going and looking.

We are very fortunate therefore, that currently we have specialists from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) both helping us as a governing body and as a school to improve. They have been reviewing our progress and the impact of the changes we are making to the School Development Plan. The review was similar to a "mini-Ofsted" inspection, feedback has been detailed, complimentary and positive.

Key to the success of the school is pupil numbers. This was one of the opportunities highlighted in the SWOT review. Work has been ongoing to raise the profile of the school and as a result, we now have a full intake of pupils for Reception. Much of this success can be attributed to our

headteacher's hard work to make the school 'the school of choice'.

We are very pleased to have the financial expertise of Sam Goose join the board as parent governor for finance. He has been joined at the same time by Jane Oakford, our new Bursar. Jane comes with a wealth of experience in this role. We held our first Finance Committee meeting in November with the new team. The Covid-19 challenges has affected both our income and costs, so some expert juggling will be needed to keep the budget in the black for this academic year.

The governors will monitor progress of the strategy throughout the year and have a concluding review in July 2021 in preparation for the following academic year, when the whole process starts again. We will keep you updated with our progress.

Finally, we'd like to recognise the efforts of our whole school community for pulling together and helping our school to continue to operate effectively and drive forwards throughout this challenging period. So, to all parents, staff, members of our local community and of course, our pupils, thank you from the board of governors.

Kind regards,

Board of Governors

Aston Rowant Church of England Primary School