



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

20th July 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

View from the Governing Board

I am writing this newsletter as I am just about to complete my first year as Chair of Governors - and what a year it has been!

Our first task was to find a replacement for the outgoing Head Teacher Mrs Roberts. Recruitment in the teaching profession, as I quickly found out, is a bit like having a 'transfer window' for football clubs to change their players. Head Teachers have a couple of months before the end of term to hand in their notice which gives the school little time to find a replacement. We had a good number of applications and subsequent interviews from which Mrs France accepted our offer and took up the challenge.

On day one our new head gathered many willing parents to help paint the school inside and out - and the work didn't stop there. Having made the school look smarter, Mrs France and her staff then set about working smarter too, such as lesson planning and latterly developing the new teaching structure. The Governors welcomed the restructuring as this will enable better age appropriate teaching methods.

There have been a few staff changes during the year too. Mrs McCleary left on maternity leave and Mrs van der Westhuizen stepped in to provide cover. The children were mesmerised with her stories of the wildlife (especially snakes!) in her home country of South Africa.

Sadly, for the school, Mrs Turton retires at the end of term having served over twenty-five years teaching at the school. The Board wish her a happy, healthy and well-earned retirement.

There have been a couple of changes to the Governing Board in the last 12 months. Claire Rogan our outgoing Chair and Finance Governor left at the end of term. With the very best just-in-time management, Sam Goose joined the Board at the same time to take over the Finance Governor role.

The Board have been renewing the strategy for the school with the aim of becoming the school of choice for pupils, parents and teachers. The strategy will be shared with our Local Authority and after that will be shared with you.

Safeguarding is always the top priority for any school and work has been ongoing throughout the year to improve safety and security. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly and further expenditure is planned for the coming year.

The Board carried out our first Parent-Governor focus group which provided very valuable insight that has contributed to our strategy and will help improve our school. We plan to repeat this exercise in the next academic year. Thank you to all the parents who contributed to this.

We will no doubt all remember 2020 as being the year of the Covid virus.

For the school, the impact of the lockdown on teachers, pupils and parents has been really challenging. The layered cascade of information from Government to Headteacher has created and is still creating, further numerous challenges.

It is understandable that given the restrictions placed by Government, the limited resources of schools and the gradual stepwise easing of lockdown has caused so much unease, confusion and at times, concern. Around the country opinion has been divided as to whether it is best for children to attend school or to stay at home. Some schools remained closed while others seemed to cope with comparatively little change.

The role of the Governing Board was to ensure that the re-opening was safe and followed Government and Local Authority advice. This was not an easy decision and we recognise that not everyone was happy with the result. However, be in no doubt that every effort was made to provide schooling for as many pupils as possible and at the same time comply with the rules. We also understood just how difficult it has been for parents to provide full time care and home schooling.

For September, Government intent is that all schools must accept all pupils and all parents must send their children to school.

GRATITUDE RESILIENCE OUTREACH WONDER TRUST HARMONY



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There is no doubt that between now and September there will be many more developments, more news and more things to take into account for schools to accommodate and be ready in time. But ready we will be.

Looking back on the year, we may just immediately think – lockdown! However, we mustn't forget the good things – the excellent work our new Head Teacher and her team have done to improve the provision of teaching and learning; the revised teaching structure and the happy and productive months of normality we did have.

So, in meantime, enjoy the summer break. See you in September!

Steve Taylor

On behalf of the Board of Governors