

Aldington Board of Governors

Chairs Report - academic year-end 2024

Aldington Primary School is fortunate to have a dedicated and experienced board of governors with a diverse skill set. We deeply value our partnership with the school community, working together to maintain high standards of education. In this report, I aim to share our successes, demonstrating how this partnership is integral to our work as a governing board.

The Governing board works with the Head Teacher to ensure the school strives for high standards of educational achievement alongside strong social-emotional development. At the start of the year, we welcomed Ben Dawson to his new full-time headship, a role that the board has seen him take on with energy and enthusiasm. A well-led school is essential, and it has been a pleasure to work alongside Ben as he implements the vision for the school and its future.

Core Strategic Function

The board has ten governors, comprising elected parents, staff, and community members who are all volunteers. The full board meets six times a year (termly) and we are supported by an experienced Clerk. Governors undertake regular monitoring visits, which are reported to the full board. We attend training to ensure we have the skills to monitor, challenge, and support effectively.

The governing board considers:

- Safeguarding
- Standards, attainment and progress
- High standards of teaching
- The school's development plan
- Attendance
- Staffing
- Budget and finance
- Pupil premium and its impact on pupils
- Health and Safety for premises and stakeholders
- Mental health and wellbeing of all
- Inclusion and equality
- That effective tracking systems are in place

Here are some of the ways in which the governing board has made an impact on the strategic management of the school:

Vision

We started the year by engaging the governors, staff, and children in a comprehensive review of our school's vision statement. We believe the revised statement more accurately reflects our school, outlining where we are now and our aspirations for the future. The updated vision statement can be found on the school website, or [via this link](#).

Curriculum

The board works with a focus on the school development plan. With monitoring and data review, we continue to support the whole school in improving outcomes, particularly in areas that are nationally measured, such as maths, reading, and writing, as well as in the wider curriculum and physical and social-emotional development. The new curriculum planning structure aims to enhance cross-curricular opportunities and ensure consistency across the key stages. The curriculum is a specific area of responsibility for the board and will continue to be monitored as the new structure embeds.

Ofsted

In February, we had a very successful Ofsted inspection. This confirmed that Aldington is a good, safe school, and we were pleased to receive an outstanding grade for personal development, recognising the positive, respectful relationships throughout the school. An Ofsted visit can, by its nature, be challenging and stressful for all involved. It was, however, a positive experience with the senior leadership team and staff taking the opportunity to share the great work they are doing to drive the school forward. It was recognised that the school has made strong progress in developing its curriculum planning structures. The inspector gave very positive feedback at the end of her visit, noting that the school was a solid 'good'; she had enjoyed visiting our school and was particularly impressed when interacting with the children; we are very proud of them!

As highlighted by the Ofsted report, the school works hard to give all our children a broad range of opportunities. The governors have seen this first-hand when joining staff and children on outings and sports, maths, and science events. We recognise that taking part in events and competitions provides experiences and memories that last a lifetime. A particular highlight for me was accompanying the Dance Club at The Great Big Dance Off national finals in Oxford. For some children, moments such as these can be life-changing, and we will work to ensure all children continue to have extra-curricular opportunities.

Finance

The Board is fortunate to have governors who are skilled and experienced in providing financial oversight. This is especially important as school budgets continue to be stretched nationally. Schools' income is directly proportional to pupil numbers, and there is currently a national dip in the birth rate of children who have reached school age. This is being reflected in reduced applications for reception class places in the Ashford area. With this in mind, we were pleased to have been oversubscribed for the September intake; this is a reflection of the good reputation the school maintains and will help our financial security going forward.

Grounds and Environment

The school grounds development and the implementation of OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) at lunchtimes have been a big focus for this year. Anyone who visits Aldington School will likely comment on our amazing site. We recognise the site as a great educational asset for the school, and we will continue to develop the site with a focus on OPAL – the areas for the Wheels, Digging, and Building zones are all high priorities for next year. We recognise that the outdoor environment is as valuable a learning space as the classrooms. The governors are working with the school council to gain feedback on what the children think about the new approach and how they would like it to develop in the future.

The significant improvements to the school building and grounds we have seen this year have come almost entirely from donations and the hard work of staff and volunteers. Support from organisations such as Rail Track and The Tree Council has been invaluable, as has the

significant work of the PTFA. Without this support, we would not be able to offer the children such an enriching environment, so thank you all!

As well as providing rich learning opportunities we also have a responsibility to protect the environment in which the children learn and grow. As such, we have planted trees and hedges and improved the green spaces for the wildlife we share the site with. We have reduced our carbon footprint by installing LED lighting throughout the whole building and air-source heating in the old building. Going forward, we would like to move away from oil heating and expand our solar capacity. In line with KCC and national targets, we have a vision of a carbon-neutral school that will help to reduce our energy costs in the long term and promote a more sustainable future for our school community.

If you have any questions, comments, or ideas about how we can make our great village school even better, please feel free to contact the governing board via the office.

Wishing you all a restful summer holiday.

Kind regards

Dave

David McQuillan

Chair of Governors