

ASTON CLINTON SCHOOL

MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES

Date	Wednesday 27 th March 2024
Time	6pm
Place	via Zoom
Clerk	Emma Lad. Emma.lad@clerks.hertsforlearning.co.uk

Name	Governor Type	Attended
Sue Bradshaw	Co-opted governor	Attended
Hannah Brunning	Parent governor	Attended
Katy Coats	Co-opted governor	Attended
Katherine Cole	Staff governor	Attended
Sean Hayward	Co-opted governor	Apologies
Emma Lad (Clerk)	Clerk	Attended
Carol Macdonald (HT)	Headteacher	Attended
Christine Moxham (Chair)	Co-opted governor	Attended
Sophie Roberts	Co-opted governor	Apologies
Jenny Stark	Local Authority Governor	Attended
Rebecca Taylor	Parent governor	Attended
In attendance		
Tracy Tennies	Early Years presentation	Attended

Governor challenge/questions will be marked in yellow.

Governor Actions are marked in italic.

Meeting started at 6.10pm

Long term strategic aims for the school

- To be the school of choice for the local community
- School is judged at least GOOD by Ofsted, with elements that are judged OUTSTANDING.
- The school is developing its own e.g., TAs to teachers to leaders.
- The school is outward looking:
 - Is a reference point for others and shares best practice.
 - looks to move forward and improve all the time.
 - Keeps up to date with current thinking.
 - Has a stable and committed staff team.

1. Welcome, apologies and reminder of confidentiality.

There were apologies sent by Sean Hayward and Sophie Roberts. The meeting was quorate.

2. Conflicts of interest

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

3. Notification of any other business

There was no notification of any other business.

4. [Early years presentation.](#)

- The school has been working with the Practitioners in partnership group to review the transition process for children from nursery locally. The process was explained to governors including one to one meeting with all parents. The school has listened to feedback and is working to ensure parents have a better understanding of the children's day in Reception.
- Behaviour management techniques were explained including modelling and social stories.
- Reading – Little Wandle supports the teaching. The programme for phonics was explained including the weekly letters to parents and story time daily.
- Writing – techniques used were explained including rhymes used for letter formation, fine motor activities and parental involvement. The Dance with Jessie programme was explained to governors to help with gross motor movements.
- Tales toolkit – this is the first year this has been used and prepares the children for year one with their writing skills. Parents have had a stay and play session.
- Maths is based on a numicon programme.
- Forest school has been launched this year to develop self-help skills. There have been two stay and play sessions for parents and the feedback was very positive.
- Data/ Next steps – There were 50 people with Aston Clinton as first choice last year and there are 56 this year. The school is in line with Bucks and above national for the 'good level of development.' The school would like to open a nursery and there could be funding from Bucks to support this. The impact would be fantastic for the children.
- The school is applying to start an initiative to support the parents.

The governors thanked Tracy for her thorough support and work in the nursery.

G: Is there anything you need from the governors?

HT: The governors are present and supporting which is fantastic.

G: I have visited the Forest school and stay and play sessions. The parents I have spoken to are incredibly welcomed by the transition process and the support from the school. The children were all happy and quickly settled according to the parents. It was a real positive and I would support the nursery being opened.

6.22pm Tracy left the meeting

5. Board membership matters:

- Note any new appointments, vacancies, and expiring terms of service. Agree actions that need to be taken – two co-opted governor vacancies.
- Report on any training undertaken and training needs still to be addressed.
 - *All governors to complete [Refresher Prevent training](#) following updated guidance Jan 24*

All governors
 - Safeguarding training discussion – Sue Bradshaw and the clerk have reviewed the various training programs. The governors after discussion felt that an annual refresher on Modern governor alongside updates from the school regarding changes in practice would be helpful. The HT recommended that the governors have a strategic question at each meeting which the school could answer at each meeting. *The HT, Chair and clerk will review safeguarding training/ questions for next year.*

HT/Chair/ Clerk
 - There is a new safeguarding template in place which the link governor is utilising for monthly reporting. The HT is preparing at present.
 - [Maintained Schools governance guide](#) – guidance distributed via Governor Hub.

6. Minutes of the last meeting to be approved and matters arising to be approved.

The minutes were approved and will be signed by the Chair of governors via Governor Hub. All matters arising are completed or agenda items – see appendix A below.

Chair

7. Chair's action

- Report on any action taken by the chair or vice-chair on behalf of the board since the last meeting – None taken.
- The [chairs report](#) was distributed prior to the meeting.

8. Policy review

Policy review schedule - Curriculum

Policy review schedule - Finance

Policy review schedule - Personnel

9. Headteachers report to governors

- Headteacher's report
 - The school is at PAN but has high mobility.
 - There have been suspensions this term as detailed in the report. They are all male and all have EHCP's. The HT has completed an external review to ensure there is no prejudice to the group and there is nothing further to be done. There is one child who has moved to specialist provision, one child is at off site provision two days a week. One child remains in the school as parental choice is for him to remain with the school.
 - Coaching is being utilised further across the school.
 - The governors will receive the strategic overview with the stakeholder feedback at the next meeting.
 - The HT updated on the safeguarding cases in the school at present. There is a grey area where the families are staying with Family support even if they would have been at a higher level of need previously.

G: What is the impact on the school of the change in support?

HT: On paper it isn't any different but moving from Family Support to moving to the child being at risk is very difficult and professionals are not always being listened to. The family are the main voice, and the parents can choose whether to engage. The school needs to maintain the high standards for safeguarding, and it is concerning that the threshold is higher.

7pm Katherine left the meeting.

G: Is there anything that the governors can do to support?

HT: It will impact the budget as the school is having to put in place more support to ensure children are being supported. The school is now becoming the service for everything and front facing which the governors need to be aware of.

G: Is there support we can put in place for the staff and SLT/ DSL's?

HT: The DSL's all have supervision and where required we escalate to external support. The coaching has been helpful for the staff.

Governors discussed the need to have greater understanding of procedures to ensure they can accurately support where needed. For example, where there can be off site direction to another provision.

- Attendance in line with national trends.
- [School attendance report March 2024](#)
- [School Improvement plan](#)
- Academisation – CONFIDENTIAL ITEM – SEE PART TWO MINUTES
- *Inset days – approved as presented. The HT will now upload to the website.*

HT

10. [Committee reports](#)

Finance, premises, Health and safety committee.

- The proposed documents are a starting point and will become clearer in the future.
- Back pay for term time workers will have to be paid but the school is awaiting the amount to be paid.

11. Safeguarding

There were two incidents reported which are being dealt with thoroughly and robustly.

There has been a complaint to Ofsted and whilst there were no concerns the school is now appointing an external review advisor to ensure the practice is outstanding in the school.

12. Reports from governor monitoring visits

- Governor visit proforma review

Sue Bradshaw reviewed and felt it was helpful to focus governors and ensure they were strategic in their response. There were no changes recommended and governors thanked Sue for her review.

- Receive and evaluate reports from governors who have carried out monitoring visits.
 - Rebecca Taylor – STEM ambassadors
It was good to see in practice the activity from the Staff presentation.
 - Rebecca Taylor - SEND
The staff were very knowledgeable and knew all the children well.
 - OPAL monitoring group
The group have met to review further questions on progression within the school. Sophie and Sean visited and asked questions. There will be feedback from Sophie distributed via Governor Hub.
 - Sue Bradshaw - Middle Leaders
There is coaching and development taking place. There is shared practice from courses. There is definite development for this area.
 - Katy Coats – Single Central record check completed.
- Book future visits

13. Clerks update

*Public Sector Equality Duty to review Equality Objectives annually – [guidance on the Key](#).
Jenny Stark and the HT will review.*

Jenny Stark/ HT

Department for Education's (DfE) [maintained schools governance guide](#) which came into effect on 7 March 2024.

UPDATE from the Key

The guide is now the DfE's primary source of governance information for the maintained sector. It replaces the Governance Handbook, which has now been withdrawn. There are **no significant changes**, and the new guide is likely to reflect what your board is already doing.

A new format

You will notice that this guide has quite a different look and feel from the Governance Handbook.

It's shorter and more streamlined, and it's an HTML document, rather than a PDF. A DfE representative told us that this is to make it "more accessible, concise, and more easily searchable." The government's [digital service blog](#) explains this in more detail.

Some topics have been moved around within the guidance, and in some areas it incorporates guidance from elsewhere.

Go to the bottom of this article to find a list of what's in each section of the guide, to help you find what you need.

Statutory policy list

The list of statutory policies and documents for schools has now been withdrawn and incorporated within this guide. Find it in the [final section](#).

It's not intended to be a complete list and, as before, boards have overall accountability for school policies.

Please note: we're speaking to the DfE to clarify some apparent changes between this list and the [previous list of statutory policies](#). We'll update this article as soon as we get that clarity. Select 'save for later' at the top of this article to get an alert when that happens.

You must promote British values

[Section 2.1](#) states that the school's culture **must** demonstrate that it's actively promoting the fundamental British values of:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs

Although the Governance Handbook set out expectations for the promotion of British values, this has now moved from a 'should' to a 'must.'

Find out more about [British values](#) in our other article.

More focus on requirements rather than best practice

Each section of the guide sets out the DfE's expectations and requirements for good governance.

There is less guidance about **how** to govern effectively than in the Governance Handbook. For example, the suggestions for questions to ask your senior leaders and many of the role descriptors have been taken out.

For guidance on best practice, the DfE points to resources from third-party providers, including GovernorHub.

Clearer requirements for headteachers to report to the board

In [section 3.1](#), the guide states that the governing body **must** assure itself that the headteacher reports to it as required, including on matters relating to:

- Delegated duties
- Providing advice
- Complying with any reasonable direction the board gives

It also states the importance of a positive working relationship between the chair and the headteacher. Read our other articles about [how to work well with your headteacher](#) and the [headteacher's report to governors](#), as well as our guide to [staying strategic](#) rather than operational.

Requirements for cyber security training

[Section 7.7.3](#) states that at least 1 governor should complete cyber security training.

Although this is new to governance guidance, it was already stated in the DfE's guidance on [meeting digital standards](#).

New advice about school visits

[Section 3.3.3](#) clarifies that "individual governors do not have an automatic right to enter the school whenever they wish." We already included this within our [model policy](#), but if your policy doesn't state this, you should consider reviewing this.

This section also gives more detail about the purpose and focus of governor visits, saying they should be focused around:

- Priorities from the school improvement plan ([SIP](#)), or an identified purpose linked to the board's responsibilities, such as safeguarding
- Monitoring whether the school is implementing its policies and improvement plans
- Monitoring how those policies and plans are working in practice

Co-headteachers share a vote

If your school has co-headteachers, this ex-officio role on the governing body still carries **1 vote** only.

We already covered this in our article about [co-headship](#), because we asked the DfE to clarify this with us, but this is now set out in [section 4.6](#) of the guide.

Greater clarity about chair's action

[Section 4.5.1](#) sets out when a chair might make urgent decisions and act on the governing board's behalf. [Legislation](#) already outlined this, but this new section gives more detail than in the Governance Handbook.

It clarifies that the chair can act in circumstances where they think a delay would likely be seriously detrimental to:

- The interests of the school
- Any pupil at the school or their parent or carer
- A person who works at the school

You can read more about [chair's action](#) in our other article.

New guidance about the governance professional/clerk

Performance management

[Section 4.8.1](#) states that it's important that the governance professional or clerk is appraised and recommends this is done by the chair.

The guide sets out that the board is responsible for supporting the governance professional to identify, access and attend training so that they can:

- Maintain their governance knowledge.
- Provide accurate advice.
- Make sure the board complies with its duties.

Read our other articles on [training](#) and [induction](#) for your governance professional or clerk. Your board must listen to their advice.

The guide confirms in [section 4.8](#) that "the governing body must listen to the independent advice the governance professional provides and have regard to that advice when exercising its functions."

Estates management

There are no new requirements here, but other guidance relating to estate management is consolidated and summarised in [section 7.16.1](#). The governing board's responsibilities are now set out more explicitly, particularly with regard to asbestos in schools.

As a reminder, governing bodies must make sure that buildings:

- Provide a safe environment for children, staff and visitors
- Comply with all relevant regulations, including (but not limited to):
 - Health and safety
 - Fire safety
 - The control and management of asbestos

You can read more about your role in [estates management](#) in our other article.

Governors do not need right to work checks

[Section 4.3.3](#) confirms that right to work checks don't apply to governors.

Checks may be required if volunteers receive some kind of remuneration or benefits in kind. You should contact your local authority if you're not sure what counts here.

A stronger emphasis on wellbeing

Staff wellbeing

The new guide mentions workload and wellbeing more prominently and in more detail than the Governance Handbook.

It sets out the expectation that governors will work to ensure the wellbeing of staff and that staff workload is managed. This is in the section on the features of effective governance (see [section 1.2](#)), with more detailed information in later sections.

In [section 2.2](#), the DfE now states that:

"When setting direction, the governing body is encouraged to consider staff workload and wellbeing, in particular, how the school can foster a supportive working environment where:

- Workload is managed
- Wellbeing is prioritised
- Action is taken to support all staff"

There is also a new sub-section about wellbeing called '[Consideration of staff wellbeing, workload and working conditions](#)' within section 4. It makes clear that governing boards must consider the work-life balance of all staff, and signposts resources including the Planning and Resources Review Group's recommendations on [marking](#), [lesson planning](#) and [data management](#).

Flexible working

In [section 4.7.1](#), the DfE encourages the board and the school leadership team to consider implementing flexible working practices, and links to further [guidance](#) on this.

Pupil wellbeing

There's a slight change in wording where expectations are set out for how governors will work with school leaders to set the school's vision. Pupil wellbeing has been added as a focus area, alongside pupil progress and achievement. See [section 1.2](#) of the guide.

A representative from the DfE told us that these changes represent a deliberate emphasis on wellbeing as a key issue across the education sector.

Read our other articles to find out more about [flexible working](#) and [approaching wellbeing strategically](#), and find some ideas for [questions to ask about wellbeing](#).

Other guidance changes to be aware of

In addition to withdrawing the Governance Handbook and the statutory policies list, the DfE has also withdrawn the following guidance:

- Governance Competency Framework
- Clerking Competency Framework
- Governance Structures and Roles

We're working hard to update all our content to reflect these changes. Select 'save for later' at the top of any article to be alerted when we do.

14. Any other urgent business

None requested.

15. Future dates

Date	Start	Committee	Location
Wed 24 Apr 2024	18:00	FGB	School
Wed 26 Jun 2024	18:00	FGB	online

Meeting ended: 7.42pm

Appendix A: Full governing body Matters arising.

Item 4: Confirm [skills audit responses](#) have been sent to the clerk – Sean, Katherine, and Carol to complete.

Clerk/ Sean/ Katherine/Carol – completed.

Item 6: **G: How do we ensure teachers understand what they are teaching if their background is not science based? DHT: GW sends training bite size modules to support staff and there is time allocated within staff meetings. G: We can pick up at the Middle leaders meeting to review.**

Sue Bradshaw – completed.

Governors discussed how best to follow up the presentation and felt that it would be helpful to meet with the schools STEM ambassadors for them to explain about the science curriculum. Rebecca Taylor will follow up and report back.

Rebecca Taylor – agenda item 12.

Item 6: Next meeting there will be a presentation from the reception class teacher regarding new initiatives.

Clerk (Agenda)/ HT – agenda item 4.

Item 7: Link governor to be allocated for OPAL – Katy, Sophie, Sean, and Jenny volunteered to oversee as a group to ensure all areas are incorporated (H&S, Safeguarding, Early years, Sports premium) [Katy will check with Sean that he is happy to support]

OPAL monitoring group – agenda item 12.

Item 8: Delegated to committees for review:

Policy review schedule – Curriculum / Policy review schedule – Finance/ Policy review schedule – Personnel

Curriculum/ finance/ Personnel committee – completed.

Item 9: All governors were asked to comment on the SWOT analysis before half term.

All governors – completed.

Item 11: [SCR checklist template/ Termly safeguarding report Autumn 23](#) - Clerk to email Katy to check if boxes should be completed.

Clerk/Katy – completed.

Item 12: Book future visits – reminder for governors

All governors – on-going.

Item 13: Safeguarding – NGA/ NSPCC – clerk and HT to research appropriate training.

HT/ Clerk – agenda item 5.

[Prevent training](#) to be completed by all governors. Clerk to send links.

All governors/ Clerk - agenda item 5.

Item 14: Governor visit proforma - The clerk was asked to send examples from the Key and HFL/ Bucks. This will be an agenda item at the next meeting.

Clerk -agenda item 12.