



English Bicknor & Aylburton Local Academy Committee Governors' Newsletter January 2026



'Through God's love we learn and flourish together' 1 Corinthians ch 16 vs 14

Welcome to this English Bicknor and Aylburton Local Academy Committee (LAC) newsletter, which we write to update you on the governance of our school.

Christmas and New Year

We hope you have all had a lovely Christmas break with friends and family. As we come back into a new term we would like to wish you all a Happy New Year. We look forward to working with you all again to support our schools so that they provide the best possible education for all our children.

The previous term was full of Christmas events, and it was fantastic to see the children performing at their nativities, concerts, and Christingles with great support from families and the wider community. The children and staff really value this support. Both schools enjoyed various events and Christmas activities including tasty Christmas dinners and a trip to see Dick Whittington on Ice in Bristol.

As Church of England schools, we celebrate Christmas as a key Christian festival: our activities always link back to the gift of Jesus. At English Bicknor, children enjoyed a tabletop sale to purchase gifts for their family expertly organised by the Friends of the School. This is an event the children excel at and really know how to get a bargain showing great independence and excitement for the joy of giving. At Aylburton, children and staff gave their time and effort to sing carols for their community at Taurus Crafts.



Curriculum

As LAC governors, we have a rigorous schedule of school monitoring visits to see first-hand that the refinements made to our curriculum are having their intended impact for our pupils. Our visits are corroborated by visits from external advisors, internal staff monitoring and by pupil attainment data. This gives us confidence in the quality of education standards in our schools.

This year, we have had a whole-school focus on developing Maths fluency. Recent visits show that this is working well; children in Year 6 have seen significant improvement in their mock SATs tests as a result of the focused practice. Younger pupils are more confident in their recall of times-tables and number facts, and pupils are more confident in applying their understanding to different types of problems. Children at both schools appeared to enjoy their maths lessons.

Our phonics scheme continues to work well. We have a proud record of achievement in reading, and the nurture of a life-long love of reading is evident throughout the schools. Pupils could talk about different genres, authors, and stories with enthusiasm. This is helping build their vocabulary and understanding across the curriculum, but also their wellbeing and relationships as they empathise with characters and events in stories they have read.

In the foundation subjects (Geography, Computing, History etc.), there has been a focus on refining our curriculum to give children the strong foundations for later learning. Pupils value their 'learning kits' as tools to build their knowledge and to remember what they have learned. Our curriculum is enriched with visits and activities that directly link back to lesson content.

Termly overviews of the curriculum are shared with families via SeeSaw. More information about the rationale behind our broad and exciting curriculum, and detail of the content in each subject year-by-year is available on each school websites.

Our schools continue to be proudly inclusive spaces for children of all backgrounds and of all abilities; our staff work tirelessly and effectively to not just meet the needs of all our pupils, but to help them flourish and thrive. It is impressive that our children also are inclusive in their interactions and play; this is evidence of a culture that permeates every area of our schools.

We are enormously proud of our curriculum, our staff and most importantly, our children!

Ofsted's New Inspection Framework

Following the 'Big Listen' national consultation, Ofsted have changed the way they conduct and report the findings of school inspections.

Previously, after a two-day inspection, four areas of school were each graded on a scale from Inadequate, Requires Improvement, Good to Outstanding, and an overall grade was then applied.

In the new framework, there are now six inspection areas covering all aspects of school life and each will be graded on a new 5-point scale from 'urgent improvement' up to 'exceptional'; there will be no overall grade. Whilst there are likely to be some similarities between the two systems, these changes are significant and the Ofsted guide for parents ([link](#) to the guide) states that *'It's important to understand that the new grades can't be compared to the old ones: this is a different approach to inspection and a new way of reporting to you.'* The first inspections under this new framework took place in November 2025 in something of a trial period, with the new inspections beginning in earnest in 2026.

Parents at Aylburton will likely be aware that following a routine one-day inspection in September 2023, we had been told to expect a two-day Ofsted inspection in the last academic year. As a result of Ofsted delays and the break in routine school inspections whilst the new framework was developed, we are still awaiting this two-day inspection. Consequently, we will now likely be one of the first schools to be inspected under the new framework when we finally get 'the call'. At English Bicknor, we expect our next inspection in/after summer 2027, but these things are not an exact science!

As with the previous framework, there will still be an Ofsted 'Parent View' survey which we strongly encourage you to fill out as the inspectors use this when making their judgements. However, please do not wait for Ofsted's visit to share any constructive feedback with us if you have ideas how we can further improve or wish to share what is working well for your child/ren. We will conduct our own internal annual 'parent survey' later this year and we welcome your feedback at any point via the school offices: please mark any emails or envelopes 'FAO Local Academy Committee' so that they can be brought to our attention. Making our schools the best they can be for our children is a team effort ('...we learn and flourish together!') and we are grateful for your involvement.

Further information from Ofsted:

3 min YouTube guide: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbl0FvY976g>

Parent guide: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-ofsted-report-cards-and-grades#new-ofsted-grading-system>

As a Local Academy Committee, we are clear in our commitment that our priority is always to do what is in the best interests of the children in our schools, as guided by our Christian vision. With this in mind, we look forward to Ofsted's visits and the opportunity to share everything we have been working on in each of our schools.

Attendance

Thank you for all your efforts in getting your children into school on time and ready to learn. We have seen improvements in punctuality and a reduction in the number of requests for term-time holidays. However, improving attendance is currently

our highest school development priority as children cannot benefit from all our schools have to offer if they are not present. The Government Department for Education does not allow Headteachers to authorise absence for holidays unless there are exceptional circumstances, as they still have the consequence that pupils miss what was taught in school during their absence. There is now overwhelming evidence of the link between regular school attendance and academic success, as well as evidence of the social and wellbeing benefits of school attendance. We welcome your support with improving our attendance out of our desire to see all children flourish in our schools.

Wellbeing

In recognition of the national challenges around children's mental health, this year our schools have introduced the evidence-based 'My Happy Mind' programme that encourages the wellbeing of the child and is backed by the NHS. It helps children build positive mental health, resilience, and self-esteem, and so contributes to making our schools safe and happy places.

Thank you to the parents that have engaged with the programme so far. If you were not able to make the parent information meeting about this, the information is available [here](#).

We have heard positive feedback from staff about how the children have responded to the programme and are using the strategies they have learned. To maximise the potential benefits, My Happy Mind lessons are for *all* children and are timetabled for first thing on a Monday to promote a good start to the week. If you feel your child would benefit from additional personalised wellbeing or mental health support, do speak to a member of staff.

School Meal Monitoring

After parent feedback asking about the quality and choice of the school meals the LAC have carried out school meal monitoring at both schools. Governors were assured there was a good variety of healthy menu choices, joined the children to eat a school meal together and gathered pupil feedback. The meal served was considered to be of excellent quality in terms of presentation, taste and nutrition. The portion sizes were suitable for the age of pupils, and the food was served hot. Pupils were asked if they enjoy the meals and they gave a resounding yes! Pupils also expressed that they valued being able to choose their own meals.

May we take this opportunity to remind families that *all* children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to a free school meal every day. You do not need to apply for these and there are no conditions attached; simply select meal choices through Parent Pay or speak to our school administrators in the office.

Additionally, based on household income, some children may be entitled to a free school meal throughout their time in primary school and beyond. Further information can be found [here](#) or please speak to a member of staff. If you feel this would apply to your family, we would strongly encourage you to take up the offer as early as possible as it automatically means our schools receive a little more funding (a 'Pupil Premium'). At a time where there is exceptional pressure on school budgets, this funding makes a significant difference and as governors we hold school leaders to account for how this spending benefits our pupils. Information about how our schools spend this Pupil Premium and the impact that this has is published on our schools' websites.

Road Safety

Thank you to all families who park considerately when dropping off and collecting children from our sites. There has been a marked improvement in safety. English Bicknor were the proud recipients of new road safety signs and cones from FODDC which are very similar to those that have been used successfully at Aylburton for a number of years. There have been many positive comments from the school and the local community, and we would like to thank everyone for their support with ensuring the safety of our school community.

Communication

Thank you to the staff for all their efforts to ensure they are available to families, from informal catch-ups after school to the use of SeeSaw. We encourage families to use SeeSaw for all the weekly reminders, to see information about what children have been learning, and as a direct communication channel between teachers and families. If you need help setting up your SeeSaw account, please speak to a member of staff.

Parent evenings and My Plan meetings are an important time to be able to ask more in-depth questions about your child's progress, and we encourage you to take advantage of your time with the pupils' teachers.

We also grateful to staff who arranged and led additional parent information meetings so far this year on the My Happy Mind programme, Phonics and Early Reading, and Online Safety. More are planned for later this year so please look out for up-and-coming new ones in the Headteacher's newsletters and on SeeSaw.

National Year of Reading

2026 is the National Year of Reading that is a UK-wide initiative led by the Department of Education to boost reading for pleasure. Not only is reading the most vital skill children will develop in primary school as it unlocks access to all the other subjects, it has also proven benefits to wellbeing and mental health. LAC monitoring shows that there is a huge focus on reading in our schools, and we are always looking for volunteers to come in and read with and to children. Please speak to a member of staff if this is something you can help with.

Policy Updates

LAC governors have reviewed, refined and ratified several key policies this year to ensure they are compliant with revised Department for Education and Diocese of Gloucester requirements and fit our schools' needs and are achievable. This is important if they are to effectively guide the work of our schools. Throughout the year, LAC governors will monitor the implementation of these policies as part of fulfilling our brief of holding school leaders to account.

You can find all our school specific policies here: [English Bicknor](#) and [Aylburton](#). Severn Federation Academy Trust policies that apply to all schools in our Trust can be found [here](#).

Local Academy Committee Changes and Vacancies

Linda James will be retiring from her Foundation Governor role on 30th April 2026 after many years of service reaching back beyond the creation of the English Bicknor and Aylburton Local Academy Committee in the Severn Federation Academy Trust. Linda's excellent dedication, quiet wisdom and years of experience have brought valuable enrichment to the Governing board and we offer her our most heartfelt thanks on behalf of all the families, children, staff and governors she has served over the years. We will closely with our churches and the diocese to fill this vacancy: please do get in touch if you would like to be considered.

There is one Parent Governor role still vacant for an Aylburton parent. It is important that our committee is balanced and that the parent perspective is heard in our discussions, so we urge you to contact Katie our Chair (krolphACM@englishbicknor.gloucs.sch.uk), or speak with Mrs Isaac, if you would like an informal, no-obligation discussion about the role. Parent governors must be a parent of, or have parental/guardianship responsibility for, a pupil at Aylburton school at the time when he or she is elected, so even parents of Year 6 children may serve. Being a LAC member is a rewarding experience, giving you the opportunity to give back and make a difference. We are a supportive and welcoming committee and full training is provided.

With our thanks for all your ongoing support.

Mrs Katie Rolph (Chair), Mrs Emma Isaac, Mrs Linda James, Ms Becca Lacey, Miss Chloe Penfold, Mr David Walker, Mrs Laura Calcutt, and Mrs Annie Hughes