

'We are committed to provide a nurturing
stimulating environment
which empowers each child to realise their
potential'
'Your Child, Our Inspiration'



Governing Body Newsletter – Summer Term 2019

Hello, as this academic year draws to a close the Governing body would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of the work we have been doing over the course of 2018/19.

What Does the Governing Body Do?

The Governing Body works with the nursery staff team to provide the best possible education for the children who attend Whitecross by:

- Setting the strategic direction for the nursery school, including vision and values, and agreeing on school development plans and policies;
- Monitoring and evaluating the educational performance of the school and delivery of the vision and values of the nursery school;
- Ensuring the school is accountable to the children and parents it serves; to the local community; to those who fund and maintain it and to the staff it employs;
- Ensuring financial health, probity, and value for money.



The full Governing Body has met five times this year. There are two committees in place – Resources and Standards – each committee has met 3 times this year. We have also supported and attended various events throughout the year such as the Christmas concert, Summer Fayre, Parent information evenings and the Open day for prospective parents.

Governing Body Focus for 2018/19

Alongside our statutory duties, the Governing body had the following priorities for 2018/19;

- **To approve, support and monitor progress on the School Development plan for this academic year.** The priorities within the plan are agreed by the Governing body and the Nursery school Leadership team early in the year and progress is monitored through review of assessment data, parent and staff feedback, and governor monitoring visits to the school. The objectives of this year's plan have been displayed in the Nursery foyer and on our website.
- **To successfully navigate an imminent Ofsted Inspection.** The visit from the Ofsted Inspector early in the Autumn term recognised the outstanding work delivered every day by the dedicated and experienced team at Whitecross. What a fantastic start to this academic year!

Governing Body Focus during 2018/19 cont.

- **To support and monitor progress on the conversion of the garage into new teaching space. To review the impact of this new space on children's learning and staff morale.** The new "Park Room" conversion was completed at the end of the Autumn term and has been in regular use during the Nursery day for small groups of children and enabled additional activities to be carried out with the children. It has also been extremely valuable in providing on-site space for meetings with external support staff and visitors to the Nursery, recruitment interviews, and staff training. Final furnishings and storage solutions are currently being costed and a huge thanks to the Fundraising Committee for their hard work in raising funds for this, and to all our families who have so generously supported these events.

Committees

Our governing board have delegated certain aspects of our governance responsibilities to committees. It is decided which governors will join each committee by analysing governor's skills and experiences through a skills audit and assigning committee membership accordingly. Committee membership and the committee structure are reviewed each July in readiness for the next academic year. Below is a summary of the work carried out by the committees during 2018/19.

The Standards Committee have;

- Completed whole school anonymised data analysis after each key assessment period. This has enabled governors to monitor in-year progress and attainment and analyse this against the School Development plan priorities
- Reviewed and approved several school policies in line with our policy review cycle
- Reviewed website content to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

The Resources Committee have;

- Reviewed the Nursery's financial performance against budget, ensuring best value decisions are made in line with budget, e.g. replacement of staff laptops and the purchase of new Bluetooth speakers for use in the Nursery
- Reviewed and recommended the new 2019/20 budget and 3-year plan to the Governing board for approval
- Supported the recruitment process of a new full time School Business Manager
- Reviewed and approved several school policies in line with our policy review cycle.

Governor Monitoring Visits

One of the key functions of the governing board is to undertake strategic monitoring activity, the purpose of which is to triangulate information shared with governors by the senior leadership team and to ensure Governors have a good understanding of the school. The following visits took place during 2018/19;

- **Link Governor Visits.** We have link governors for the important areas of Safeguarding, Health & Safety, and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). These Governors made termly visits to school to discuss and review work across these areas with the staff team.
- **School Development Plan Monitoring Visits.** These are carried out twice per year for each priority on the school development plan, enabling governors to get a better understanding of progress against the school development plan priorities. Over the page is an article by one of our Parent Governors summarising the monitoring visits she undertook this year to review the implementation of Tapestry.

Governor Monitoring Visit – Tapestry Implementation

By Clare Cole, Parent Governor

The implementation of Tapestry is one of the objectives on this year's Nursery School Development Plan. The reasons for moving to Tapestry, from a paper learning journey, is centred on providing more timely snapshots of encounters within the nursery to parents and carers and reducing the significant workload for nursery staff in producing the manual records and planning nursery activities. Whilst achieving these objectives, it was essential that the use of Tapestry did not introduce additional barriers between the children and their keyworkers while notes of interactions were recorded, and it was important that the entry of these interactions onto the Tapestry system did not take longer than the previous method of data capture.

I carried out monitoring visits with Mrs Staves during the Autumn and Summer terms to monitor the implementation and early feedback of Tapestry.

Tapestry has been a significant change for the nursery staff, but it has been embraced fully by all. In prior years, a child's educational journey through the school was recorded through individual paper Learning Journeys. Early on, the nursery staff found that the methods previously used to record interactions with the children had changed – the prompt entry of these encounters into Tapestry meant that photographs rather than detailed notes of speech were sufficient to recall the learning, resulting in reduced barriers between staff and children, which has exceeded a key success criteria.

As the year has progressed, staff have become more familiar with the Tapestry system. This has led to quicker entry of encounters, recorded in full at the time they happen. This has also prompted a change in the structure of planning meetings, which has resulted in a saving of time. As each encounter is fully recorded when it happens, the previously seen workload in compiling the paper record at the end of the nursery year has been reduced as expected.

Another benefit of the digital recording of encounters has been the reduction in physical resources used (printing, cutting and sticking accessories and the learning journal book itself), which provides a cost benefit, and is generally good practice from an environmental perspective.

System set-up and obtaining parental permissions to ensure GDPR compliance took longer than anticipated during the Autumn term, however going forwards this will all be completed before children start nursery in the September, allowing for early insights into a child's first weeks at Whitecross.

Feedback received from parents has been very positive, with parents enjoying seeing what their children are doing at nursery throughout the year, some commenting and “liking” posts as they are released. Parents like accessing information about nursery life in a timely manner, allowing them to discuss encounters with their children whilst still fresh in their children's memories. The paper learning journey is, however, missed by some.

Next year the focus of monitoring visits will review the evolving use of Tapestry, particularly looking at the content of entries and the interaction between Whitecross and other settings using Tapestry.

And finally...

The Governing body would like to take this opportunity to wish all our families who will be leaving us at the end of this year the very best of luck as your children start the next stage of their educational journey, and we look forward to seeing our returning families next September.

Have a wonderful summer break!