

# 'Your Child, Our Inspiration'



## Governing Body Newsletter – Summer Term 2021

Hello, as another unusual academic year draws to a close the Whitecross Nursery Governing body would like to share with you some of the work we have been doing over the course of 2020/21.

### 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.



### Summary

This has been another busy and exceptional year, mainly due to the impact and implications of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Governing Body has carried out all meetings and duties virtually, in line with government guidance, including full board meetings, committee meetings, annual half day strategy review session and monitoring visits. We have also supported various activities within Nursery including, new starter induction days, staff recruitment, and Forest School training.

In addition to our statutory duties, our priorities this year have been focused on the following areas:

- Supporting and developing our new Headteacher, particularly in navigating the current pandemic.
- Ensuring we support the wellbeing of our staff, children and families through the pandemic and beyond.
- Completing a full review and refresh of our school vision and strategy to take us forwards through the next three years.

We have greatly missed the opportunities we would usually have throughout the year to meet the children and families and are looking forward to this resuming once Government restrictions are lifted and it is safe to do so.

## Governing Body Focus for 2020/21

- **To continue to support and develop our new Head.** Mrs FitzPatrick joined us as our Headteacher in April 2020 and the Governing Body's priority was to support her through her first full academic year by providing guidance, advice and access to training as required. Governors particularly recognised the additional and unique pressures that the pandemic has added to this role. The Chair of Governors and Head met weekly throughout the year and all Governors provided support as required on a variety of topics including marketing, safeguarding, SEND, Health & Safety, Finance, Mental Health, and HR.
- **To ensure we support the wellbeing of our staff, children and families in line with the School Development plan during the current crisis.** The Governing Body included a standing agenda item within each Governing Board to discuss the wellbeing of our staff, children and families. Anonymised feedback from staff and parents were reviewed and updates provided by the Head through her termly report to Governors. Children's wellbeing and engagement is something already included within our Standards Committee agendas, and this continued to be the case throughout the year. Our Mental Health Lead Governor completed virtual monitoring visits to enable more detailed discussion around this priority and continues to support the Head in this area. We will continue to ensure this important priority remains a focus for the Governing Body as we move into next year.
- **Complete a thorough review of the school vision and strategy following the recent changes within Nursery and other external factors.** Ensuring clarity of school vision and strategy is one of the core functions of the Governing Body and it was timely for us to complete a full review this year following changes within our Leadership team, changes to the educational environment in which we operate and the impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic. We held a virtual half day session with the Nursery Leadership Team to begin this review and a small working party then took this forward, producing a new vision and strategy for the Nursery to take us through the next three years. Input and feedback was sought from the full staff team, and we would like to thank the parent volunteers who also provided valuable feedback on our proposed vision. The Governing Body signed off the new strategy and vision in our June board meeting and this will be published on the website and shared with all our stakeholders in the coming weeks.

## Committees

Our Governing Body have delegated certain aspects of our governance responsibilities to committees. There are two committees in place – Resources and Standards – each committee has met three times this year, all virtually. Committee membership and the committee structure are reviewed each June/July in readiness for the next academic year. Below is a summary of the work carried out by the committees during 2020/21.

### **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 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.
- Supported HR procedures within school as required and in line with school policies.
- Reviewed and approved several school policies in line with our policy review cycle.

## **Governor Monitoring Visits**

One of the key functions of the Governing Body is to undertake strategic monitoring activity, the purpose of which is to validate information shared with governors by the senior leadership team and to ensure governors have a good understanding of the school. Visits have not been allowed in school this year, so the following activities have been carried out virtually;

- **Link Governor Visits.** We have link governors for the important areas of Safeguarding, Health & Safety, and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). These Governors carried out virtual termly visits to school to discuss and review work across these areas with the Head and staff team.
- **School Development Plan Monitoring Visits.** The focus for this year has been on supporting children and staff wellbeing and on the prime areas of learning within the Early Years Statutory Framework. Monitoring visits have supported these areas of focus and visit reports were presented at Governing Board meetings.

## **Premises, Resources and Staff**

The Governing Body reviewed and approved the following project to ensure best value for the Nursery;

- New doors for the purple room and replacement doors for the dome area to replace old and worn doors and improve access and egress between indoor and outdoor spaces.

We have also supported the recruitment process for our new part time teacher and our new part time school business manager.

## **And Finally...**

In our annual report last summer, we wrote "this year has been like no other for the Nursery" and these words are just as true a year on. We started the year welcoming our new families to Nursery but without the usual opportunities to meet, talk and get to know each other and have all had to find creative ways to work together to ensure the children continue to thrive, make progress, and enjoy their time at Whitecross. While this has not been easy, together we have achieved a huge amount, and we will be taking many of the learnings from the past couple of years forwards as we move into, hopefully, more 'normal' times.

The Governing Body would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff for their incredible resilience, professionalism, dedication and continued hard work during the past year. We would also like to thank all the children, parents and carers for their amazing support for Nursery. What a fantastic team!

We wish all our families who will be leaving us at the end of this term the very best of luck as your children start in their new schools, and we look forward to seeing our returning families next September.

Have a wonderful summer break!

Whitecross Nursery School Governors