

'Your Child, Our Inspiration'



Governing Body Newsletter – Summer Term 2022

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 2021/22.

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 for board meetings, four of which were held virtually due to ongoing restrictions and lockdown guidelines. Governors were thrilled to be able to meet in person for their final board meeting in July after 18 months of virtual meetings. In addition to this the Governing Body have held a strategic review session with the Nursery leadership team, which focused on progress against our high-level strategic objectives, ensuring these are still fit for purpose and will enable us to deliver our vision.

There are two committees in place – Resources and Standards – each committee has met three times this year, all virtually. We have also supported various activities within Nursery including, parent information evenings, Christmas performances, staff recruitment, new starter open days, and Forest School sessions.

We have greatly enjoyed the opportunities to meet many of our children and families after such a long period of restrictions and look forward to continuing this next year.

Governing Body Focus for 2021/22

Alongside our statutory duties, the Governing body had the following priorities for 2021/22;

- **Ensure the refreshed school vision and strategy is effectively launched, delivery of the strategic priorities are supported through the SDP, and ensure the strategic priorities and vision are considered in all Governing Body decision making.** This has been a key focus for us this year and the School Development plan was developed in line with our strategic objectives. The full governing body and nursery leadership team completed a specific strategic review session in May.
- **Ensure we continue to support the wellbeing of our staff, children and families in line with the School Development plan, particularly as we move forward from the pandemic.** 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 agenda and this continued to be the case throughout the year. Our Mental Health Lead Governor completed in person monitoring visits to enable more detailed discussion around this priority and governors attended a Mental Health conference run by Derby City.
- **All Governors to understand the latest Ofsted Inspection Framework for schools and what is expected of Governors during an inspection.** We are a well-informed governing body and work closely with the school leadership team to ensure nursery has a clear vision and strategic direction and is accountable to its stakeholders. Governors have completed training on the new Ofsted inspection framework for schools and Early Years to build on this and further improve our governance role, while also building governor confidence and understanding of Ofsted inspections and the role we play in these.
- **Develop a succession plan for all key Governor roles supported by clear training and recruitment plans.** We had a few experienced governors approaching the end of their term of office during 2022 so, the governing body, using skills audits, developed succession, training and recruitment plans to ensure these roles and any resulting skills gaps are filled. We announced up-coming vacancies to all existing and prospective parents in early July and have been delighted with the response. We are currently working through the recruitment process and look forward to hopefully welcoming new members in September.

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, terms of references, and the committee structure are reviewed each July in readiness for the next academic year.

Our Standards Committee focus on curriculum intent and its impact on all children's progress and attainment, SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability), equality and inclusion, and website content.

Our Resources Committee focus on budget monitoring, premises, staffing and personnel, and data protection.

Both committees have met once per term this year, with all meetings being done online.

Governor Monitoring Visits

One of the key functions of the governing board is to undertake strategic monitoring activity, the purpose of which is to ensure Governors have a good understanding of the school, build relationships between the governing body and staff team, and validate information shared with governors in board meetings. Visits have been held on-line up to March 2022 and governors were thrilled to be able to resume in-person visits from Spring 2022.

- **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 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, further developing our outdoor learning provision and delivery, and further developing our literacy curriculum. Monitoring visits have supported these areas of focus.

Premises, Resources and Staff

The Governing body reviewed and approved the following premises projects to ensure best value for the Nursery;

- Changes to internal layouts and new doors to provide better classroom space and quiet areas for the children, and changes to the Main office, reception area, and Headteacher's office to improve working conditions and make the entrance more accessible to parents and visitors.
- New flooring throughout Nursery, to be installed during the summer holidays.
- New heating boiler for the Sunshine and Garden rooms, to replace the broken boiler in time for autumn.

We have also supported the recruitment process for our new fulltime teacher, starting with us in September 2022.

And Finally...

The Governing body would like to say a huge thank you to three wonderful and much cherished members of staff who will be leaving us at the end of this term. Thank you Mrs Staves, Mrs Britland, and Mrs Frost for everything you have done for Whitecross children and families and we wish you all a very happy, healthy and enjoyable retirement.

We would also like to say a big thank you to Vikki Small and Clare Cole who will finish their terms as Governors in early September. Their contribution to the work of the governing body has been invaluable and we will miss you both.

Governors 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!