

'Your Child, Our Inspiration'



Governing Body Newsletter – Summer Term 2023

Hello, as we fast approach the end of this busy school year, the Whitecross Nursery School governing body would like to share with you some of the work we have been doing over the course of 2022/23.

What Does the Governing Body Do?

The governing body works with the nursery leadership and staff team to provide the best possible education for the children who attend Whitecross by:

- Ensuring a clear 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 ;
- Ensuring the financial health of the school, and value for money;
- 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; and that the voices of these key stakeholders are heard.



The full governing body has met five times this year for full board meetings, two of which were held virtually to support attendance. Governors agreed that from April 2023 all full board meetings will be held in person to aid discussion and decision making. In addition to this the governing body and nursery leadership team held their annual strategic review session, 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 and each committee has met three times this year. The Resources committee focuses on finance, premises and personnel matters, while our Standards committee reviews curriculum, attainment and progress matters.

In addition to these meetings all governors have enjoyed spending time in nursery monitoring different aspects of the school including safeguarding, inclusion, health and safety, wellbeing, and progress against the school development plan. We have also supported various events including, parent information evenings, Christmas performances, staff recruitment, and open days.

Governing Body Focus for 2022/23

Alongside our statutory duties, the Governing body had the following priorities for 2022/23;

- **Governor induction, training, and succession planning.** We welcomed several new governors to the board in September 2022 and would like to thank them for the contribution they have already made to the school in such a short space of time. We also said goodbye to two longstanding members of our board who have, between them, given over 17 years of service to the governing body. Our succession planning has ensured key governor roles continue to be covered, governor training plans are in place, and we have just launched our next round of recruitment to fill current vacancies.
- **Staff engagement and wellbeing.** The governing body has always sought to build positive working relationships with the wonderful staff team at Whitecross, and ensure they feel supported and appreciated. Our wellbeing link governor has been in to school this year to listen to all members of staff and has worked alongside the leadership team to develop action plans that will further support staff wellbeing into next year.
- **Parent/Carer engagement.** The governing body recognised that COVID led to a significant reduction in opportunities for governors to engage with, and seek the views of, our parents and families. This year, governors have attended school events, school trips, and open days to have the opportunity to meet with families. We ensure new parents receive an introduction to the governing body, including how to contact us, and we have reviewed and evaluated the responses to the parent surveys in governor meetings. We are building on this into next year and will ensure governor representation at all parent/family events and identify further opportunities to speak with our families and wider community. Further information about the governing body can be found on our website - [Whitecross Nursery School - Our Governing Body](#).

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 with the staff team, and validate information shared with governors in board meetings.

- **Link Governor Visits.** We have link governors for the important areas of Safeguarding, Health & Safety, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), and Wellbeing/Mental Health. These governors carried out termly visits to school to discuss and review work across these areas with the Headteacher and staff team.

- **School Development Plan Monitoring Visits.** Each year the governing body approves the school development plan and carries out monitoring visits to review progress against the plan. The focus for this year has been on the following priorities;
 - *Continued development and enhancement of outdoor learning* – we are proud of our extensive and beautiful outdoor learning areas and understand the benefits of outdoor learning on children's development and wellbeing. Work on how we continue to embed outdoor learning throughout our curriculum, including the use of Forest school provision, has been a priority this year.
 - *Adoption and delivery of a nationally approved approach to teaching phonics* - staff have enjoyed teaching, and the children have enjoyed learning, our new nationally approved phonics scheme, Monster Phonics.
 - *Further develop the teaching of maths in nursery* - work has started to review our maths planning and resources and further staff training is in place for September. We will be continuing to progress this priority into next year.

Governor Vacancies

The governing body are currently looking for new governors to join our friendly and welcoming team of volunteers. If you would like to find out more about this rewarding and important role please contact our Chair, Claire Devey, by email at chair@whitecross.derby.sch.uk or visit the governing body section on our school website [Whitecross Nursery School - Our Governing Body](#).

And finally...

The Governing body would like to say a huge thank you to all the wonderful parent and grandparent volunteers who have supported school in so many ways this year, from helping on a school trip to running the school library each week, your support and time is very much appreciated, we couldn't do it without you.

We would like to take the opportunity to say a big thank you to Mrs Walker-Smith who will sadly be leaving us at the end of this term to take on an exciting new challenge at Curzon school. Thank you for everything you have done for Whitecross children and families Mrs Walker-Smith, both in your role as Teaching Assistant and as our staff governor, we wish you all the very best in your new role.

We would also like to say a big thank you to our Safeguarding Governor, Jules Jennens, who will finish her second governor term in early September. Jules' contribution to the work of the governing body has been invaluable, and in particular her support and guidance in the important area of safeguarding within nursery. We are delighted to announce that Emma Nichols will be taking on the Safeguarding Governor role from September.

And finally...governors would like to extend their thanks to all the staff for their incredible professionalism and continued hard work during the past year, and all our families and children for helping to make Whitecross such a thriving, inclusive and happy 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 begin their adventures in new schools, and we look forward to seeing our returning families next September.

Have a wonderful summer break!