

## Governors' newsletter

Summer 2020



### Our vision

'Our school is a welcoming and inclusive community providing all children with high quality learning in a respectful and safe environment. Through inspirational teaching and a positive, encouraging atmosphere, we enable children to aspire and embrace lifelong learning in an ever-changing world.'

### *Happiness at the heart of learning*

Dear Parents and Carers,

We do hope that you and your families are safe and well. Life for everyone has changed significantly over the last few months with the burden of changes falling very differently depending on your circumstances. We hope that you are receiving the support that you need at this time.

### Government guidance for schools

As you know, schools have been particularly affected with very specific guidance issued by the government in March to close schools except for specific groups of pupils, followed by partial reopening for some pupils in June and we have just received the latest guidance on reopening for all pupils in September. Over this period, there have been a number of changes and updates to the guidance.

### How governors have been working with the school

Throughout this time, as school governors, we have worked very closely with Mrs Moloi to ensure that all the members of the Whitehall Junior School community have been well supported in adjusting to the new situation. Underpinning all of the decisions has been everyone's safety and welfare and we have been guided by our school vision and values and strategic goals.

### Governor meetings

At the beginning of the partial school closure, instead of holding a meeting, we used email to comment on and ask questions about Mrs Moloi's plan for the school. From this process, we gained a real insight into the detailed planning that was happening within the school and the collated responses provided us with a thorough understanding of and confidence in the approach being taken.

### Virtual meetings

Like many organisations, we have now moved our Governing Board meetings online using Google Meet. This has proved very successful and we have held **Full Governing Board, Pupils' Committee, Resources' Committee and Strategy Committee** meetings and a specific **Risk Assessment** meeting.

Aspects of our role, such as school visits, have not been able to take place but as you will see, members of the Governing Board have made various contributions during this time. As Chair of Governors, I have kept in regular contact with Mrs Moloi by phone and email which has been very useful for us both.

### Our strategic goals 2017-20

1. **Pupils achieve well across the curriculum in all year groups**
2. **There is highly effective teaching and learning and a broad and balanced curriculum**
3. **The school works in partnership with parents and carers to develop a safe, healthy and inclusive learning community**
4. **Leaders and governors ensure that the school is a well led, ambitious and innovative place to learn and work**

### School values

- **Bravery** (persevering when things are difficult, facing learning challenges)
- **Respect** (respect for ourselves and others, fair inclusion of everyone)
- **Integrity** (being honest and trustworthy)
- **Determination** (challenging ourselves to improve)
- **Generosity** (thoughtfulness, cooperation and emotional growth)
- **Excellence** (taking pride in everything we do)

*A bridge takes us to new places and overcomes obstacles.  
Together we build bridges.*



## Return to school in September

We are now working closely with Mrs Moloi and the school staff to ensure that everything is in place to welcome all pupils back to school in September. The governors would like to thank all members of the school community for their support during this time.

### Angela Doherty, Chair of Governors



#### Matthew Ralph: Co-opted Governor

One of the highlights of being a governor is undoubtedly coming into the school to speak with the pupils and their teachers, to see what they have achieved and to learn of new initiatives. Sadly, the last few months have meant that, for obvious reasons, this hasn't been possible. So, what have I been up to since schools closed? Well, for myself and all of the governors, there has never been a more important time to remain focused on school operations and preparing for the changes that were going to be required to the well-established efficiency of Whitehall Juniors.



#### WHITEHALL JUNIOR SCHOOL HEALTH & SAFETY



Meetings have continued via the now 'all so familiar remote meeting apps' and all governors have had to ensure they are up to speed with the latest rules, regulations and requirements that slowly but surely were being communicated from the government.

Additionally, I have taken the opportunity to update training in GDPR, Risk Assessments and Information Security so that as one of the governors responsible for Safeguarding within the school I am up-to-date with my training. Safeguarding our pupils has never been more important and the Senior Leadership Team supported by the governors has worked tirelessly to ensure that as some children return to school that they are safe and feel happy in an environment which is welcoming and familiar. For those that have already returned, it would appear this is very much the case and for those that are yet to return until September I am sure the preparation and implementation of additional changes will ensure they also can look forward to their return as everyone at Whitehall Juniors certainly does.

### Kieran Bassan, Parent Governor & Chair of Resources Committee



I am really glad that the school was able to provide the opportunity for Year 6 to go back for the end of the year. As well as being a reason to get back into a routine with their education, I thought it was important to get some closure to their time at the school, especially as, like my son, many of pupils have been going to school here since Reception and it has been a significant part of their lives.

The return to school has given the children a place to express themselves and discuss some of their thoughts and concerns with their peers, as well as getting back to a bit of education structure ahead of a big change when they go to high school. Overall, I think the school has done a great job of making it work within the guidelines and would like to thank all of the staff for their effort and support.

The Resources' Committee has the key role of working with the school to set the budget for the financial year and to monitor spending throughout the year. Budget setting this year was potentially more challenging as we said goodbye to Mrs Chipping and welcomed Mrs Tudorescu, as our new School Business Manager, just before the partial school closure, but I am pleased to say that the process went smoothly and the school has again maintained a balanced budget.

I would like to thank Mrs Tudorescu, in particular, for her efforts over the last few months with all of the uncertainty that has been around. The school remains in a good position for the future and continues to look for opportunities to improve the facilities and educational resources. As a Resources' Committee, we will also be monitoring the additional spending as a result of COVID-19 and any further funding we may receive.

### **Anu Short: Parent Governor**

During lockdown, many of you will have experienced your own challenges at home. With my husband and I still working full-time, home schooling has not been the easiest and we definitely have a new found appreciation for all teachers. Whilst we love the extra time we have together as a family, boundaries between home/school/work life have disappeared. The children desperately miss the structure of school and playing and interacting with their friends.



The communication via email and the teacher phone calls has been really appreciated. Attending all the governor meetings in lockdown, albeit virtually has given me a greater connection with the school. I have been amazed with the resilience and adaptability of Mrs Moloji and her team. The many proposals and plans ensuring the school was safe for all children and staff throughout this period have been painstakingly detailed and thought out. Whilst my son will not be returning until September, I have every confidence that when he does, the safety of all children and their 'happiness will be at the heart of everything' the school decide.

One of the things that was discussed in the Pupils' Committee meeting, following the death of George Floyd, is the importance of Diversity and Inclusion in everything we do. I sit on the D&I team at work so this is a subject really close to my heart. The governors and the staff are committed to ensuring that all communities at Whitehall Junior School are treated equally, despite their differences and that all children, carers and teachers feel like they belong. This will be an ongoing discussion on how we continue to learn from each other and celebrate our differences.

### **Kelly Barter: Co-opted Governor**



I have recently been appointed a Co-opted Governor. I have a role the Pupils' Committee and the Sports Ambassador. I was fortunate enough to come into the school for Governor's Day, a few weeks prior to the lockdown. I had the opportunity to meet and speak with parents, pupils and teachers. As a parent to two pupils at the school, it was interesting and insightful to speak with other parents to gain their feedback on how the school is performing and if there was anything which could be improved. All the feedback was reported to the board and suggestions put forward. It was also a great chance to have conversations with pupils and discover what they enjoy about the school.

Unfortunately, lockdown has changed all the focus for the school and we have had to concentrate in other areas. Although the governors haven't managed to link with their subject teachers and work with them during this time, we have been meeting virtually, reading the reports which Mrs Moloji has put together to ensure that the school is Covid-19 compliant. As a new governor, I have been attending virtual training courses and reading various different policies and previous meeting minutes so I can fully understand what it is to be a governor and how I can help the school. I am really looking forward to when things go back to normal so we can come into school again.

#### **Governor vacancy**

*We have one vacancy on the Governing Board. Ideally, we would like someone who can join our Resources' Committee which meets four times a year 8.00-10.00am in addition to the Full Governing Board meetings. If you would like to find out more about the role, please speak to Mrs Moloji or email: [governors@whitehalljunior.org](mailto:governors@whitehalljunior.org) and we will contact you.*

**Stay safe and enjoy the summer holidays.**