

## Governors' Newsletter

Autumn Term 2024



*Happiness at the heart of learning*

Dear Parents and Carers,

This is the first edition of the Governors' newsletter for the academic year 2024-25. We hope all the children and families who were welcomed to Whitehall Junior School this term, whether in Year 3 or other year groups, and new staff members too, have all settled in well to our school community



The Autumn Term is always a very busy term, and this year is no exception. By the end of term, as Governors, we will have held two Full Governing Board meetings as well as a Resources' Committee meeting (to discuss the school's finances and how it is used to support teaching and learning) and a Pupils' Committee meeting (to discuss how all children are progressing in all aspects of their schooling). Governors have also visited the school to meet with teachers and have also experienced some of the special events that take place each year. We reflect on some of these activities in the articles below.

**Angela Doherty, Co-opted Governor, Chair of Governors**

### **Our governors**

**Parent governors (2):** (chosen by the parents): Kieran Bassan (Chair of Resources' Committee), Vacancy (parent governor election in process)

**Staff governor (1):** (chosen by the school staff) Mr Jones

**Local Authority (LA) governor (1)** (role required in LA maintained schools) Jennifer Bull

**Co-opted members (7):** (chosen by the GB): Angela Doherty (Chair) Sally Davies, Manish Lath, Ashish Seksaria, Jane Guest (Chair of Pupils' Committee and Vice-Chair), 2 Vacancies (1 in the process of being filled).

**Headteacher:** Mrs Moloj

### **Quality of education visit**

#### **Reading and spelling**



I spent some time in school with Mrs Upfield, Mrs Cayless and Mrs Beceiro who filled me in on the progress the school is making, in relation to reading and spelling. We discussed the impact that various initiatives are having on learning. One great success has been the Spelling Shed spelling app that the children are using at home. Amazingly, class 6S came 2<sup>nd</sup> in the world for use of the app during October!

Reading is also a focus for the school and each class now has a pupil Reading Ambassador. The Ambassadors had to apply formally for the position and those appointed are very excited about their role. They will be key in helping run the library and will hopefully get involved in the book groups that are going to be running after the Christmas break.



It was lovely to hear how much is going on to support children in their learning and also to hear staff talk so passionately about their role in school.

**Jane Guest, Co-opted Governor, Vice-Chair, Chair of Pupils' Committee**

## Handwriting Training



*Our handwriting software enables us to model cursive handwriting around school which replicates the letter formation used in our scheme.*

I attended a very informative staff training event on handwriting led by Mrs Norman the English writing lead. I had no idea that research has shown that handwriting makes a significant contribution to achievement. It has been shown that students who can write fluently can achieve up to a grade higher at GCSE. Handwriting requires instruction, experience and practice and early on children, particularly boys can experience wrist pains. Warm-up activities can help alleviate some of the problems. Staff had the opportunity to engage in some of the warm-up activities which included crab walking, human wheelbarrows and many other games. It was an informative and enjoyable session.



## Meeting parents and parent governor election

I visited the school for a parents' evening and was on the doors with staff greeting parents and children as they arrived. I also wandered around chatting to parents and children. There was a lovely welcoming atmosphere and all the parents I spoke to said how happy they were with their children's experience of school. Several parents asked about the role of the governors, and a few went away to think about whether or not they'd be happy to become a parent governor.

***Thank you to the parents who have put themselves forward as candidates for the parent governor election. We look forward to welcoming a new parent governor to the Board next term. Please vote in the election before the end of term! Ballots close at 3pm on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> Dec 25.***

***Jane Guest, Co-opted Governor, Vice-Chair, Chair of Pupils' Committee***

## Keeping safe online

Keeping children and young people safe is a priority for all of us, not least parents, carers and schools, navigating a fast moving and changing world.

The digital and online realm was unimaginable when I was a child, yet now it is impossible to think of life without it. Young children can be seen tapping and swiping screens while still learning to walk! As we all try to keep up, and to embrace the huge opportunities it brings, we have to look out for and mitigate the inevitable and disappointing dangers, a growing aspect of safeguarding need.

I can only admire the leaders and staff of schools for their strenuous and continuing dedication to the vast area of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. At WJS, robust policies, processes, procedures, frameworks, training and responsibilities are in place across the school and school community and continuously evolving.

A particular focus this year has been on the safeguarding aspects in meeting the challenge of digital and online school life. To further improve our practice a whole school training day was held in November 2024 which also included a workshop for parents. As a result of the discussions and advice, Miss Hyland, who is leading on online safety, will be producing a regular newsletter for parents which includes lots of useful information and links. You will also be receiving links to short videos that we highly recommend that you watch. Please visit this page on the school's website for lots of additional information. [Whitehall Junior School - Online Safety](#)

Hard work has also gone into meeting the technical and digital standards including safeguarding aspects of broadband, networks, cyber security, cloud solutions, servers and data storage.

Well done, WJS, for working so hard to keep our children safe.

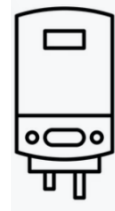
***Sally Davies, Co-opted Governor, Safeguarding Link Governor***



## **Keeping warm and dry – update from the Resources' Committee**



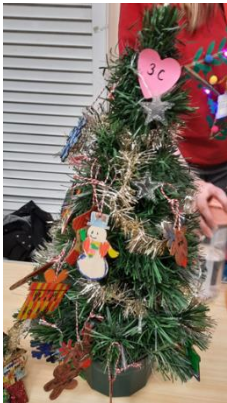
School Premises Update: We are pleased to announce that the recent roof repairs have been successfully completed, allowing two additional classrooms to be utilised for our pupils. The roofing work on the Riverside is now expected to be finished soon in the spring term. Additionally, we understand the challenges faced last winter due to the boiler breakdown. We're happy to report that the installation of a brand-new boiler was approved and completed, ensuring a reliable heating system for both pupils and staff throughout the colder months. Thank you for your patience as we work to enhance our learning environment!



**Ashish Seksaria, Co-opted Governor, member of the Resources' Committee**

## **Christmas at Whitehall! 'Happiness at the heart of learning'**

### **Christmas Market**



Whitehall launched the Christmas season on Friday 29 November with the annual Christmas Market, which, as always, was really well attended by children and families. This year, many of the stalls were located in the hall although a range of fun activities and the ever-popular burger stall were outside in the playground. Luckily, despite being pretty cold, it was a crisp, dry afternoon for everyone to enjoy.



Many of the items on sale had been produced by the children during Enterprise Week including some beautifully made Christmas decorations and decorated cups of hot chocolate ingredients. Queues formed at many of the stalls including regular favourites such as children's tattoos, the tombola stall and waffles with whipped cream and sprinkles.

Thank you to all the staff and parent volunteers who made the event such a success. It was wonderful to hear from Mrs Moloi that over £1600 was raised which will be used for enrichment activities across the school.

### **Year-group Christmas Carols**

The year-group Christmas Carol events that take place in the playground after school in the weeks before Christmas promote a wonderful festive spirit as well as showcasing the singing skills and teamwork of the pupils and staff in getting ready for the concerts. The large number of Year 5 parents and families that came to the event on Monday 9 December were treated to clear and beautiful performances of 'We Wish You a Merry Christmas, Ding Dong Merrily on High, Little Drummer Boy' and a finale of 'Good King Wencelas'. Attending was a really enjoyable and heart-warming experience.



### **Christmas Lunch**



It was wonderful to participate in mammoth task of serving nearly 400 Christmas lunches to pupils and staff. The tables were decorated with red tablecloths, mini-Christmas trees, crackers and cutlery in napkins. The children all filed to be served roast potatoes and turkey/Quorn by the catering staff with the whole staff team working together to add the vegetables and trimmings and to bring drinks and dessert to the table. The children really enjoyed the food, and it was great to see them enjoying the jokes and riddles from the crackers. A great team effort from all involved!

**Angela Doherty, Co-opted Governor, Chair of Governors**

**Wishing you and your families a safe and happy Christmas holiday and best wishes for 2025.**

