

## Governors' Newsletter

Spring Term 2023



### Happiness at the heart of learning

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to the Spring Term edition of the Governors' newsletter. Once again, it has been a very busy term at school for all the staff and pupils. As Governors, we have held our usual meetings and we have also been into school on a number of occasions to see the school in action. Just after the half-term break, we set aside two weeks to arrange meetings individually with members of staff who have responsibility for different aspects of the school and in March we held the Governors' Day during which we talked to staff, pupils and parents and listened to presentations from members of staff and looked at pupils' work. In the newsletter this term, we will share some of the comments from members of the Governing Board about their time in school.



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



### Thank you, Anu!

On behalf of the Governing Board, I would like to say a huge thank you to Anu Short, who has recently left the board, for her contribution as a school governor. Anu was our Vice-Chair, link governor for art, design technology and Pupil Premium and my co-editor of the newsletter! Anu's extensive business experience and strategic thinking were highly valued by the board. We wish her well for the future.

### Year group visits

Four Governors came into school to meet with the Year Leaders: Kelly met Miss Brown of Year 3, Mary met Mr Jones of Year 4, Angela met Miss Mattera of Year 5 and Manish met with Miss Costa of Year 6. During the visits to classrooms and our chats to the year leaders some of the things we saw and discussed were:

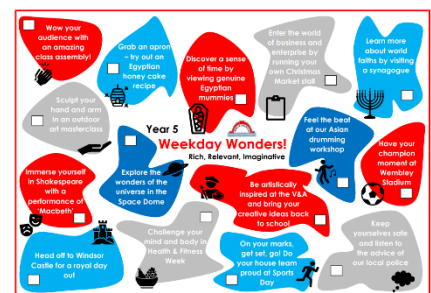
**Year 3:** How the new approach to teaching grammar using lots of visuals is *bringing grammar learning to life*

**Year 4:** Developments in reading and writing including *Writing Champions*, *Fortnightly Friday* *problem-solving tasks in maths* and encouraging the *pupils to be the best they can be*

**Year 5:** In two classes, pupils were completing *vector drawings as part of the computing curriculum* – converting a penguin to a parrot and one was completing the science unit on magnets; the benefits of the range of wider experiences and visits provided as part of the *Weekday Wonders programme*

**Year 6:** *Progress in writing*, including looking at *pupils' books* to see the progress they had made during Year 6

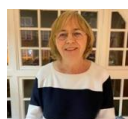
You may see some of these areas referred to again in some of the other articles as they are priorities in the school.



## Governor's Day: Friday 10 March 2023

Governors who attended: Angela, Kieran, Manish, Mary and Sally, give some of their thoughts on the day.

### First thing – meeting the children arriving at school



The 10<sup>th</sup> of March started as a typical early spring day, rainy and blustery. This did not deter several pupils from stopping to have a chat with me. The Year 6 pupils were very positive about their time at Whitehall Junior and are looking forward to starting their new schools in September. I then spoke to Year 4 pupils, who said that when they first returned to school after the pandemic, they did feel behind. However, they were now very positive about their progress.

Mary, Co-opted Governor



We started the day by greeting the children who were arriving to school to get their first-hand feedback on the school. I was impressed to see that they were very happy with the school and they did not suggest any changes to make it a better place. I was particularly impressed when some of them mentioned that they want to become a journalist or a doctor to treat cancer. It was very inspiring to see these children having such great vision to help humanity.

Manish, Co-opted Governor

### Assembly – Year 4 World Book Day assembly



The Year 4 assembly was an excellent experience, and I was very surprised how well the children had learnt all their lyrics to the **MC Grammar World Book Day rap!**

[The World Book Day Song by MC Grammar - YouTube](#)



Kieran, Parent Governor

4L's assembly was a class act and everyone present really enjoyed it. The pupils had worked hard and presented a great variety of acts, including a play, music, interaction with the audience and live interviews via a video link. I spoke to eight Year 4 parents whilst waiting for assembly to start. They were all very happy with their children's progress. The two parents who had ever had concerns said they had always been resolved –

Mary, Co-opted Governor

### Teacher presentations

After the break, we received several presentations from members of staff which demonstrated how the priorities in our school improvement plan are taking place in practice. These included:

**Leadership development** – Mr Jones outlined the *maths project* that he is completing as part of his *National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPSL)*. This includes the 'Fortnightly Friday' tasks seen in the Y4 visit. He has enjoyed working with other schools and was in no doubt that the course is helping him to develop as a teacher and school leader.

**Grammar teaching** - Mx Spacey-Mageean outlined the schools' *new approach to teaching grammar*. This was particularly impressive as they are in their second year as an Early Career Teacher (ECT). This presentation was very informative and engaging.

**Writing across the key stages**- We were delighted to welcome two members of staff from Whitehall Infant School to join Mrs Norman, our Writing Lead, in outlining the journey to teach writing from early years through to Year 6.



### Early Career Teachers (ECT)

**Training programme and teaching art**- The presentations by the four ECT teachers were so vibrant and positive. As an ex-teacher, I can remember how very difficult and tiring the first year of teaching is. However, Miss Treanor, Miss Groves, Mr Keegel and Miss Rosser were very upbeat about their initial year in school. All four agreed that the support from the staff at Whitehall Junior was exceptional and appreciated their colleagues going the extra mile on their behalf.

Mary, Co-opted Governor

Following the presentations on the art curriculum, children from all year groups brought their art sketch books to show us the work they had been doing. The pupils all spoke knowledgeably and confidently about their learning in art.

**Manish:** This was my first Governors’ Day as I have recently joined the board. A few things stuck with me:

- Very good trust and co-ordination amongst the teachers
- A very strong drive to create a better learning experience for the pupils
- Very thorough and detailed plans for new projects

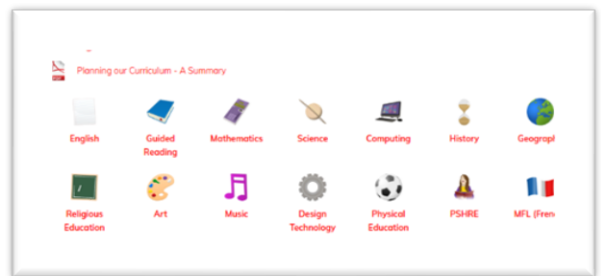
We then met over a lunch and had informal conversations with other teachers. The food was great and the interactions with the teachers even better!

### **Pupils’ Committee: Curriculum visits**

On the school website, there is a wealth of information about the school curriculum and how it is taught.

[Curriculum and Assessment | Whitehall Junior School](#)

As Governors, we are linked to the different subjects and have visited the school this term to meet with the teachers leading on the subjects.



Below is a summary of comments taken from some of the Governors’ visit reports.

**Computing:** At my meeting with Miss Hyland, we discussed the new *Teach Computing curriculum which is much more demanding than the previous curriculum*. Each year units are covered in: Computing systems and networks; Creating media – two themes in each year group; Programming A and Programming B; Data and information. The themes are revisited regularly to consolidate and build on prior learning. The vector drawing lesson seen in the Y5 visit was part of the *Creating media: Introduction to vector graphics* theme with pupils learning how to *create images in a drawing program by using layers and groups of objects*- Kieran, Parent and Computing Link Governor

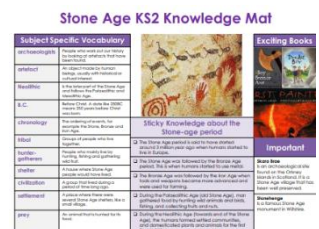


**Design Technology:** The curriculum covers 5 areas which are revisited each year: Nutrition, Textiles, Electrical and mechanical, Stiff materials, Mouldable materials. Projects include designing a torch, making an erupting volcano, creating an American flag and making a model bunker. Miss Brown provides detailed design booklets for each project to support teachers. *A key part of the process is evaluation so that pupils learn how to improve for next time and resilience if things do not go to plan.* – Angela, DT Link Governor

**English:** I discussed the *new approach to grammar* with Mrs Norman which is focused on helping children to improve their writing. I learned a new word ‘**prosody**’ in my discussions with Miss Mattera about reading. This means the patterns of stress and intonation in language which is very helpful when reading aloud. *A specific lesson on prosody has been introduced so that children can develop their skills and understanding of this area.* – Angela, English Link Governor



**History:** Miss Sandanadan explained that history is taught using a wide range of resources to develop pupils’ knowledge and understanding of historical events and facts. These include interactive games, videos, stories and drama. *Knowledge mats are used to introduce important vocabulary and knowledge that the children must remember.* – Mary, History Link Governor



**Music:** I linked up with music lead Mr Papadakis shortly after Years 4-6 had taken part in the 'Voice of a Million' concert at Wembley Arena – along with thousands of children across the country. This was again definitely the highlight of the music year for WJS. Mr Papadakis told me how learning the *truly global language of music also allows the children to be creative, to bond and work together and build their self-confidence* which spills over into all other areas of life and learning. I have attended a few events in school and experienced what a wonderfully musical school it is!  
*Sally, Music Link Governor*



**Physical Education (PE)** The new curriculum is broken down into *athletics, gym, dance and games with swimming also included in Year 5*. Miss Costa explained that support and training is provided for all staff to give them confidence in teaching the different aspects of the curriculum. *The school has participated in sports fixtures in cross-country, football and netball this year.* Pupils have been appointed as Sports Ambassadors and the school also has a Health and Fitness Week and Sports Day. – *Kelly, Parent and PE Link Governor*



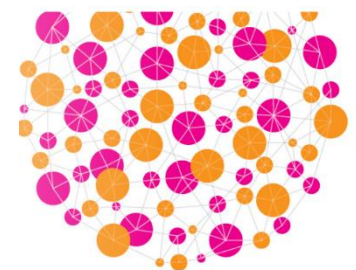
**Personal, Social, Health and Relationships Education (PSHRE)** The curriculum covers Health and Wellbeing, Living in the Wider World and Relationships. *Safeguarding is a golden thread throughout the scheme of work* as so many topics link to this; teaching pupils the skills to keep themselves safe in all areas of their lives.



**Religious Education (RE):** Unlike most subjects which are on the national curriculum, RE follows a locally agreed syllabus. The five main religions in the UK: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism are studied. *Mr Gohil has also introduced a Festival of the month for lesser-known beliefs and religions.* In February, this was the Lunar New Year. – *Angela, RE Link Governor*



**Science:** I met with Mr Mitchell whose science development plan this year is steering great progress in enhancing diversity in learning. The children have been excited to *research a wider range of scientists from across the world giving a more balanced view of scientific discovery and achievement* and inspiring children with different heritage to relate and to see themselves as future scientists. They are enjoying reading the new books about these scientists and will *extend this work for British Science Week*, producing something to share to win a fun practical science prize.



Mr Mitchell is also *developing even more ways to allow children to experience scientific ways of working through practical work* – because they love it and it makes the learning of concepts more meaningful and memorable and develops stronger practical skills. This has been greatly enhanced by the introduction of longer science sessions across the school – a great move by WJS.  
*Sally, Science Link Governor*

### **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and early reading**

As SEND link governor, I met with Mrs Huse, SEND Co-ordinator to discuss the support in place and progress of pupils with SEND. I also met with Mrs Sohanpal about the teaching of phonics in the school. Children attending phonics groups may not have passed the phonics test at Key Stage or may be new to speaking English. – *Mary, SEND Link Governor*

## **Sporting achievements!**

This term, we had a very happy Mr Jones as the boys football team have clicked and have started to play extremely well as a team, converting their chances in front of goal and getting some scores on the board! They had their first fixture win for 2 years 9 months! The team are also in the Cup and have progressed to the Quarter finals, the date of this we are eagerly awaiting to hear! –

*Kelly, Sports Link Governor*

A team of boys and girls competed this week in a cross-country event in Hillingdon against other schools in the area. Both our teams had some strong runners, some of whom still had the energy towards the end of the 2km run to sprint home and improve their finishing position. Well done to all and all the parents and teachers who came to support in the rain too! –

*Kelly, Sports Link Governor*



As a parent, I would like to say how proud I am of the netball team (including my daughter!) The progression and development they have shown in both their physical skills and teamwork over the year has been exceptional and something that all involved should also be very proud of. –

*Kieran, Parent Governor*

## **Resources' Committee**



In my role as Chair of the Resources' Committee, I am pleased to say that the school continues to manage its finances very well and are looking for further opportunities to improve the quality of education material and teaching tools available.



At the beginning of term, I met online with two of our newer governors, Manish and Jen, to give an overview of the work of the committee. Also, many thanks to Sally for completing two Health and Safety visits this term, one jointly with the Infant School. – *Kieran, Chair of Resources' Committee*

## **Health and Safety visit**

In January, I joined Miss Costa, Mr Heath and Mrs Tudorescu, along with a representative of Kirk and Kirk, who advise the school on Health and Safety on their termly walk around the school site. The school has a very thorough Health & Safety policy that is renewed annually at the Resources' Committee and there are a wide range of plans and risk assessments in place for all areas of the site, equipment, activities and out of school visits. *Sally – Co-opted Governor*

## **Other visits**

Two other important visits took place this term covering the areas of **Safeguarding** and **Equality and Diversity**.

### **Safeguarding:**

After our visit in the Autumn Term where we met with Mrs Moloi and Mrs Huse in their roles as Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSL, we came back in February to meet with a group of staff and a group of pupils with representatives from each year group. There was a high level of awareness from both groups about safeguarding. All children said that they felt safe in school and that there was someone they could talk to if they were worried about anything. Staff felt confident about the systems and policies in place and they had all received safeguarding training. –

*Angela, Safeguarding Lead Governor, Sally Safeguarding Link Governor*

## **Equality and Diversity**

In my meeting with Mrs Seymour, we discussed among other things, the new range of fiction and non-fiction texts that the school has purchased focusing on various aspects of equality and diversity. Mrs Seymour has introduced the books in an assembly to much excitement from the children. Each classroom will have a set of books available to read and borrow.



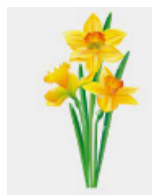
'Our approach to teaching diversity' which is on the curriculum page of the website gives further information on how the curriculum has been reviewed in relation to equality and diversity. Developments in science are referred to in the science link visit above and we saw examples in relation to art on Governors' Day.

*Angela, Link Governor for Equality and Diversity*

### ***Please consider joining us!***

***If you have enjoyed reading about the work of the governors this term, we hope you will consider becoming a school governor.*** It is a very interesting and rewarding role in which you can really make a positive contribution to the school community.

At present we have two governor vacancies, so if you would like to find out more about this voluntary role or know someone who may be interested, please speak to Mrs Moloji or email the Governing Board at: [governors@whitehalljunior.org](mailto:governors@whitehalljunior.org) to arrange an informal chat.



**Wishing you and your families a safe and happy Easter break!**