

Governors' Newsletter
Summer Term 2021



Happiness at the heart of learning



Dear Parents and Carers,

As we come to the end of a school year, like no other, I would like to thank all members of the Whitehall Junior School community for their contributions to ensuring that the school remained a safe place and that learning continued in all the different phases of the year.

As governors, we have received regular reports from Mrs Moloi and the leadership team about how the school has responded to the numerous expectations from the government. This has included a range of actions the school is taking to help pupils to catch up and to support their well-being.

We have been delighted to see the excellent attendance figures throughout the year and would like to thank you as parents for supporting the school and your children with this.

In this edition of this governors' newsletter, you will hear from some of our governors who have been in touch with the teachers leading their link subject areas. Thank you to the teachers and governors for making time in their busy schedules for this. We are also saying hello and goodbye to two governors.

We would like to say a huge thank you to Peter James, who has retired after serving as a governor for over 30 years at both of the Whitehall schools. This has included being the chair of governors at the Infant School and the chair of the Resources' Committee for many years at Whitehall Junior School.

We welcome Hitakshi Wadwa to the governing board to replace Peter. Hitakshi will join the Resources' Committee.

Angela Doherty, Chair of Governors

With grateful thanks for over 30 years as a governor



'I have always seen the role of a governor as being the schools 'critical friend'. We are there to ensure that the school runs well, the children are being well educated and that the money allocated is being spent wisely. To do this we have to ask the schools senior management team searching questions and challenge information that is presented to us to ensure it represents a fair and accurate picture of what is happening at the school. However, I believe that this should always be done in a constructive way and the staff should always be supported and assisted to improve the school wherever possible. After many years supporting the school I feel it is time to retire as a governor. I have always enjoyed being involved with the school and supported them whenever I could. I am happy to say that both schools currently have strong governing bodies and very good staff teams and I am confident that they will continue to improve and get better and I wish them all the luck for the future.'

Peter James – retiring LA governor

Introducing our new governor

'I have been a professional teacher for more than 5 years now. Having served in different areas of education in India, I have recently moved to the UK and want to share my experiences and knowledge for the continuous success of the school. For me, the future of students is of the utmost importance in my list of priorities, therefore I would be delighted to be given the opportunity to make a difference in education as well as the local community.'



Hitakshi Wadwa – new LA Governor

Subject link visits



Science

I was delighted to spend some time talking with subject co-ordinator, Mr Mitchell, for my first ever governor link meeting at WJS. I learned a lot about how science is going at the school - particularly this year, with the disruption of the pandemic.



Looking on the school website at the very challenging science curriculum, principles and vocabulary children need to grasp - right from Year 3 up - there is no time to waste!

For such a practical subject, it took a lot of creative teaching to keep our young scientists excited and engaged - even when working at home or desk-based. Using familiar equipment, such as torches, was just one example of how children still had fun exploring scientific concepts, e.g., light and shadow, in remote lessons from home. Year 6 consolidated a great foundation for their transition to high school - learning skills and practices they will need such as hypothesising, investigating and writing-up their findings.

Plans for the year ahead promise to continue to inspire and include - work with Brunel University, an exhibition of children's independent science projects and introduction to a bigger range of icons from the scientific world for all children to identify with and aspire to.

Sally Davies, Co-opted Governor

PE and Sports Day

One of the departments which had to make significant changes this year was the PE department. PE equipment was sectioned in bubbles just like the classes. The children got to enjoy, tennis, hockey, cricket, rounders and athletics. New arrangements had to be made for those in Year 5 to ensure they were able to go to swimming lessons, which were cancelled due to the closure of the leisure centre. Instead of taking place once a week, they were condensed down to every afternoon for two weeks. The children then benefitted from remembering the session from the previous day, which gave them confidence in swimming. This approach will be taken forward to the new Year 5s from September. I was lucky to see how the children enjoyed sports by attending the Year 5 Sports Day. They were very well behaved and cheering on their classmates in the events (roundhouse robin, 100 metres running races and hurdles) Well done to the winning House, Colne!



Kelly Barter, Parent Governor

Geography

I spoke to Ms Perez about geography this year. She agreed that the pupils were happy to return to school and that she was proud of the progress they have made. The pupils have thoroughly enjoyed the topic, 'All Around Us', as they were able to explore the area around the school. The pupils also enjoyed learning about and using Google Maps.

Mary Clancy – Chair of Pupils' Committee – Co-opted Governor

English

I met with Mrs Kelly and Mrs Norman to find out about how reading, writing and SPAG (spelling, punctuation and grammar) are being supported this term. Not surprisingly, when pupils were tested on their return to school following lockdown, many were not at the level they would have been if school had remained open. From analysing the test results, teachers are able to identify the most common areas in reading and writing that need to be worked on. These priority areas will also continue into next year. In addition, a former member of staff has been working with small groups of pupils on their writing. The pupils have found this approach really helpful and enjoyable. All pupils have also been taking part in a spelling bee. This is a fun and enjoyable way to learn spellings and something you can join in



with at home!

Angela Doherty, Co-opted Governor

Art & DT



I had the pleasure of catching up with Miss Lusher and Mr Hopkins for art and Miss Brown for DT, to discuss the impact of lockdown on creative subjects this year. Despite various topics covered whilst remote learning, the children had missed the practical aspect. So once back at school, they were excited to start on their new projects.



The teachers tapped into subjects that the children are passionate about and can relate to which included artwork and drawings inspired by Manga Anime and Disney street art. They also helped to improve skills, by breaking down how to draw, using maths and shapes. This methodology clearly worked as there was an improvement in the work produced.



The school has also invested in sketchbooks which are a brilliant addition for the curriculum as children can track their own progress and the books will stay with them throughout the years.

The children have also loved making Modroc casts which many of you would have heard about in Year 5. In DT they improved their sewing skills making flags to represent American states.

A huge well done to the teachers for making sure that they not only caught up on all aspects of the Art & DT curriculum, but the children have had so much fun in their learning.

Anu Short – Parent Governor

History

I met with Miss Sadanandan to talk through history and the challenging year that we have had. She is looking forward to next year where children can enjoy more interaction with other year groups. Once the pandemic is over, she would like to see trips resumed. History resources for staff that cover ethnic minority contributions to Britain are currently being developed. There are huge amounts of opportunity to explore diversity in British history next year.

James Cantwell - Co-opted Governor

The governors send their best wishes to Year 6 as they move on to high school and wish you all a safe and restful summer break.

You can find out more about the work of the Governing Board at:

<https://www.whitehalljunior.org/school-governors/>