

Governors' Day in School

Thursday 26
February 2015

Newsletter for Parents and Carers from Westgate Primary School Governors

To respond to any points
in this letter,
drop a letter in at
Reception or email
info@westgate.leeds.sch.uk,
with FAO Rob Wilks
in the subject line.

"Everyone helps each other - from very youngest children in Nursery helping their friends to put their shoes on to older children helping younger ones or their learning partner – and everyone helped us, as visitors. Proper Westgate Always behaviour!"

Pippa McPherson

"Our governing body gets the opportunity to see how our classroom partnerships work - getting the very best from all our pupils during every lesson."

Daniel Hackney

Dear Parents and Carers

The Governing Body spent another hugely rewarding day in school last Thursday.

We all had the opportunity to talk with various groups of pupils as well as visit the classrooms to see the learning taking place in a wide range of lessons. Mr Hackney summed up what the day was about in the day's assembly; it is our opportunity to see what the school is like on a working day and see the most important asset of all, our pupils.

It was no surprise to see the quality of teaching was outstanding throughout the day and the effort of all the staff to go that extra mile is evident all around the school. It is also no accident that everywhere we went there were smiling faces and confident young people wanting to talk to us.

The day is a very important part of what we do as a group, giving us direct feedback from the pupils and first hand experiences of many of the areas which we discuss and influence. These are some of our highlights.

Rob Wilks

Chair - Westgate Primary School Governors



Democracy in Action

One of the highlights of the Governors day in school is always going to a School Council meeting. The School Council at Westgate could teach our more senior forms of government a thing or two about democracy and behaviour whilst participating in public life. All members of the School Council are articulate and well researched on the topics under discussion and aware of what the pupils they represent were thinking on items on the agenda. Individual councillors were willing and able to speak passionately about how their year group would be affected without raising their voices and whilst recognising the viewpoints of others. The chair was well focused and in full control of the meeting, the meeting was not allowed to drift but under the time constraints of the meeting there was not enough time to discuss everything. A publicity officer was in place to make sure that School Council matters were fed back to everyone.

Jonathan Kirkland



Assessment for Learning

The Year 5 & 6 discussion group focused on Assessment for Learning, with frank and honest opinions being shared by all who were there. The maturity and conduct of the discussion was a pleasure to be a part of, with confident and articulate answers explained to us on all aspects of their school life. We later experienced in the classroom what had been described, confirming that the school has continued to be forward looking and the positive impact on learning and teaching is clear.

Rob Wilks



You can see the cogs whirring...

It was a privilege to be able to watch a numeracy lesson and see the enthusiasm the whole class had for learning. I especially liked the use of visual aids such as tiny bricks that could be split into 100s, 10s and units and to see the cogs whirring as the children got a grasp of the concept of subtraction. The idea of rows made it easier for the teacher to tell when a child might be struggling or losing concentration. The fact that they now work with a learning partner meant that confidence could be seen in working out the solution and coming up with the answer. Each child was given the opportunity to have their ideas and answers listened to. The whole lesson, pulling on the resources of the interactive whiteboard, made it fun as well as educational.



Alison Finlay (Staff Governor)

New Lunchtimes – a great success

I was lucky enough to be part of the discussion group on school dinners. There have been major changes to lunchtimes with the introduction of free school meals for ks1. There are now staggered lunchtimes and the whole school seemed very happy with this new arrangement. The discussion was very respectful and everyone from reception to year 6 contributed with wise and useful insight on the changes and areas which could possibly still be improved. The overall consensus was very much that the new format for food and playtime was a success!

Cathy Liddicott





"School Council clearly think about the whole school – one pupil voted against their own interests, in the interest of fairness."

Jonathan Kirkland



"Pupils were very clear on the difference between house points, stamps and the ladders in the classrooms."

Rob Wilks



"The discussion groups with pupils were fantastic. We could have gone on for hours - very bright, with such sophisticated ideas."

Sarah Shore



"The staff are great at working with such a broad range of abilities – the importance of the Teaching Assistants was very clear."

Andrew Ross

Mysteries unveiled!

It is great for the staff at Westgate to come into contact with the Governors. We can share what is happening in the classroom and show you how proud we are with the behaviour and learning that happens on a day to day basis here at Westgate. For some staff, it is great to put a name to a face. For the children, it is great to meet and dispel all those rumours about the mysterious group who meet regularly in school in the evenings and understand their role to make Westgate a success both now and in the future!

Daniel Hackney (Staff Governor)



Bite-size chunks

We observed maths and literacy teaching in Years 1 and 5 to see how children were taught core concepts. The teachers started with 'bite size chunks', using a variety of methods to ensure children understood basic points such as adding and subtracting pairs of numbers to make 10 and the use of colons, commas and speech marks in the correct part of a sentence. The children have a range of abilities, but through repetition, revision and applying the concepts to 'real life' examples and stories, we saw the children make significant progress in the space of a lesson. We were particularly struck by the confidence of children to ask questions and the support they provided to each other when working with their learning partners.

Sarah Shore



Maths and support

I had a fantastic day visiting several classes. A particular highlight for me was taking part in a maths lesson. The lesson cleverly developed the concepts the class had been working on all week. Use of number blocks clearly introduced the concepts visually to pupils and helped them understand how to apply the same concepts to solving problems on paper. It was also great to see how learning partners helped support each other and ensure that by the end of the lesson most of the class had "got it".

Andrew Ross



Using the VLE for very excellent learning!

I was particularly impressed with the children who demonstrated their use of the 'Learning Platform'. Children of all ages were able to 'log on', explain how to interact with their teacher and class members. Every child was very positive and enthusiastic about what they were doing and demonstrated competently how to use 'Scratch' and the 'Mathletics' programmes. Y1 pupils were also accessing and singing Spanish songs they had learned in class. They all showed confidence and knowledge of how to use the 'Learning Platform' and I could only be impressed with this new aspect of their learning.

Jane O' Kane



Respect, friendliness and fabulous behaviour

I was, as always, blown away by the exceptional behaviour of all the children. Older years offering to look after the younger students and offering to hold open for our teachers and nursery children... An offer one wouldn't always expect from our old child passing, but one that seemed absolutely natural at Westgate! Well done staff and pupils for instilling a school wide culture of respect, maturity and helpfulness at all times!

Cathy Liddicott



PE and grown up learning

PE and the benefits it brings across the entire school were clear. We saw great teaching from our Specialist PE Teacher and from our multi-talented teachers from Westgate. Whether working with Nursery to begin healthy habits or teaching how to warm up or preparing for a skipping festival, you could see the benefits and the children really enjoying their lesson. We often talk about how the Staff at Westgate learn from each other to improve and do the best for our children and this was obvious during the day."

Pippa McPherson



Impressive and engaged children

I was very impressed by the various activities that I saw and participated in. I thought that the children who were part of a discussion group about the introduction of new teaching methods and classroom management were impressively clear about what had changed and how beneficial it was for their learning. It was really wonderful to then see everything that they talked to us about demonstrated for real in the following lesson, with all children fully engaged with what they were doing.

Thea Pitman

