



GOVERNOR DAY IN SCHOOL

A Warm Welcome

The unusually warm weather of February was met with an even warmer welcome from the staff and pupils of our school, for the governors who were lucky enough to spend the last day of the month in their company. The Governor Day in school is a very important part of what we do as a governing body, checking that what we discuss is actually happening during an ordinary working day. It also allows us to look at where the school needs to move strategically. There are lots of exciting activities occurring throughout the year and whilst the governors visit classrooms on a regular basis, this gives us opportunity to spend more time with the children and meet them for in-depth discussions.

My day started with assembly, where we explored what makes a good school and a good school governor! There is a lot of pride in Westgate from all parties and it was nice to have a sea of friendly, attentive children who finished off with an apt rendition of 'Together'. I've been lucky enough to take part in a number of these days and every year there is something new to see and learn from. The foundation stage has seen some big changes, with the outdoor spaces providing a wealth of learning opportunities and challenges for the little ones, in lots of fun and exciting ways. This is complemented by some innovative approaches inside; who would imagine that a yoghurt pot with dried pasta in could be used to teach phonics!

There were lots of moments where we were all amazed at the ability of the pupils, one example being the art work they produce. All the classrooms have an amazing array of artwork displayed around the room and in the children's books. It was great fun trying to emulate Vincent Van Gough with year 1, pencil sketching Skipton Castle. Next time you have a chance to go and walk the walls, take the time to go and see the amazing creations around school yourself! We definitely have a school of happy children, inquisitive to learn and wanting to be the best that they can be, supported by a wonderful, committed body of teachers.

Rob Wilks, Chair of Governors

I Wonder What?

I spent another informative and enjoyable day in school visiting many classes and sharing a variety of lessons; phonics, grammar, reading, computing and topic work. In Y6 children were reading a text together. I was impressed with the way the inference within the passage was emphasised and explored during the lesson. Having read the text the children were asked to pose their own questions about what they'd like to know more about. Questions beginning with 'I wonder what,' 'What would happen if' are such examples. This way of thinking encouraged everyone to have a greater understanding of the passage. Thank you to both Staff and children for sharing their lessons with me.

Jane O'Kane, co-opted governor

A Hearty Lesson

This was my second Governors Day at Westgate and once again it was very enjoyable to spend time in such a happy, busy and inspiring school with high standards of behaviour and teaching evident from nursery upwards. I joined year 6 for an afternoon of science. They had been learning about the cardiovascular system. There were 2 animal hearts available to handle or observe for those children who wanted to. Year 6 were very enthusiastic and it was obvious they were keen to use their knowledge in a practical way. Everyone devised a series of different style scientific questions from simple facts to developing scientific hypotheses and constructing a game based on the heart. The whole classroom atmosphere was one of enjoyable learning and one that could spark our future scientists, researchers, engineers or health professionals.

Victoria Mirfield, parent governor

<p>British Values</p> <p>I was impressed by how much information the children had retained from their recent work on British Values. This can be a challenging topic but the pupils easily understood why we have laws both in society and at school, and were able to understand how their engagement with School Council chimed with the democratic values and processes in the UK. Even the youngest children were able to participate in the discussion at their level of understanding, and I thoroughly enjoyed taking the conversation a stage further with the KS2 children, exploring the fact that not all countries share our values. A really valuable, thought provoking addition to the curriculum.</p> <p>Susan Carson MBE, parent governor</p>	<p>View From the Chalk Face</p> <p>As staff and children, we're always happy to see Governors in school. We are able to share all the good things which are happening at Westgate: the pride we take in our written work; the way we behave in the classroom and towards each other; the opportunities we have to develop our artistic, design and music skills and to share in our progress during our learning journey here at Westgate. We hope you enjoyed your day at school and look forward to seeing you again as you make further visits during the year.</p> <p>Daniel Hackney, staff governor</p>
<p>Positive and Enjoyable</p> <p>This was my first visit to the school in my role as Governor and I enjoyed the chance to get to know the school and gain a deeper understanding of it's working day. It enabled me to experience first-hand the behaviour of the children both in class, in the playground and around school. Walking through the playground, the children approached me in a curious, polite and confident way. They gave me a very warm welcome. This approach continued throughout my visit and I was very impressed by the exemplary behaviour I witnessed. In the classrooms, the concentration and focus on show was a credit to both staff and pupils, with the children fully engaged with their set tasks. I was struck by the quality of the writing on show throughout the school years. In the Year 1 Art lesson, the children were studying the line drawing style of Van Gogh and using this to produce their own drawings of castles. These were amazingly creative and had clearly used and applied the new drawing skills they had learnt from looking at Van Gogh's drawings. I had a very positive and enjoyable day and am already looking forward to my next visit.</p> <p>Neil Richardson, parent governor</p>	<p>Feedback</p> <p>I thoroughly enjoyed the governors day in school, and seeing the children working hard in their lessons. For some of the time in school we were looking at the types of feedback that were used to enable the children to make progress in their learning. This included teacher written or verbal feedback, work returned without any marking for the children to look at and to check for their own mistakes, peer to peer editing, and asking your learning partner. In conversation with the children the older children said that they preferred verbal feedback from the teacher and the younger children enjoyed getting stamps in their planners and being moved up on the target display board when they made progress in their personal targets. We watched the children use green pens to edit their work. They understood why their work was not always marked and that self-marking helped them to correct and improve on what they had done.</p> <p>We were told by one child that 'It helps you to find your own mistakes, so that you are not relying on someone else to do the learning for you'.</p> <p>Anne Hodgson, co-opted governor</p>
<p>Impressive Eco-Club</p> <p>It was encouraging to see the children take so much care and pride in their writing in Year 3 and Year 6 English lessons. It was clear to see that real consideration was being given to not only their handwriting, but also the layout and correct use of grammar. The children have also really embraced the school's approach to feedback and self-evaluation; all the children were able to self-edit their own writing and correct errors from the previous day's work. There was a real sense of achievement when the children were able to identify errors and learn how to improve their own work. There was also a real sense of pride when the children were commended by their peers on the elements of their work that they enjoyed. I also had the pleasure of meeting the Eco Club and was impressed to hear them all talk so enthusiastically about the steps they and the school are taking to help protect the environment. I was really impressed with the ideas they had and the fact they were so motivated to help the planet that not only were they taking on the responsibility of educating their peers, but also their parents!</p> <p>Alice Jougin, co-opted governor</p>	