

GOVERNOR DAY IN SCHOOL



Westgate Governors' Annual Newsletter

March 2016

Inspiring Day

A wonderful day was had by all the governors of Westgate, welcomed into all areas of our fantastic school. We feel really privileged to be given this opportunity, allowing us to see the day to day running and how it fulfils the overall vision for the school. Every classroom was visited during the day and we were also invited to attend school council, speak to pupil panels, led the assembly and some governors enjoyed the very blustery playground.

The overall feel was one of very happy pupils who were keen to learn and felt a part of the Westgate community. It was lovely to join the children to eat lunch and chat to them, where healthy eating was the main topic. The hot dinners have recently seen a revamp and the standard of food was excellent. It was interesting to talk to those eating packed lunches who said this year's healthy lunchbox policy had made them change what they eat, got them to try new things and overall they thought it was better for them. This year we did give opportunity for parents to meet with us, which was a new innovation and we do realise that the timing of this is not ideal for working parents. However there will be lots of us at the forthcoming Easter fair to talk to and you can always contact us by email, addresses found on the school website. I hope you enjoy reading about some of our highlights from the day.

Rob Wilks - Chair of Governors

This year's Governors Day in school took place on the same day as Britain was being savaged by Storm Doris so we weren't expecting to be able to enjoy playtime outside but we reckoned without the Westgate spirit. There might be a few spots of rain in the strong breeze but this only leads to a bit more running around using up energy enabling them to concentrate more on the lessons when they get back. Those pupils who have been at school for a few years are used to governors in school and are keen to find out what the governors think of the school, when we say how good it is they are really proud and delighted. Every year the Governors Day in school shows the wonderful atmosphere there is in the school which is a credit to everyone involved

Jonathan Kirkland - local authority governor

I enjoyed seeing evidence of the recent work on growth mindsets across the school. In year 1 and year 5 there were lovely displays of the artwork from their joint growth mindset project, where year 5 had designed and delivered the activity for year 1. Throughout the school there were lots of examples of children being challenged in a positive way to stretch themselves. Not "I can't do this", but "I can't do this ... yet".

Andrew Ross – parent governor

It was a pleasure to meet with the highly valued Teaching Assistants who clearly play a vital and much needed role in supporting pupils when they need extra help. Their use of a variety of targeted interventions and bespoke designed resources helps to ensure that no pupil is left behind and that all pupils are supported to make required progress in their learning.

Sarah Mumford - co-opted governor

I was privileged to observe phonics sessions in EYFS. All children were very enthusiastic about their learning. They learned their sounds in a variety of ways, making 'silly soup', using relevant sound boxes, singing songs, playing games, using actions to reinforce their learning and understanding.

Jane O'Kane - co-opted governor

My visits to school always remind me how lucky we are that we and our children all contribute to such a wonderful school. The school is always calm and disciplined, even on a very windy day, which I learned makes all children want to run around more! It is obvious that the school ethos runs throughout the school from the governor's and headteacher down to the youngest child in nursery. I was particularly struck this year by the continuity of education in evidence across different year groups and Key Stages; displays in all classrooms use the same separated joined up letter formations, there are basic number bond reminders around the walls in addition to the current numeracy skills, and the fundamental grammatical terms all used as prompts when required. The same traditional-tale stories being discussed in Y1 had been reconstructed, reversed and re-written in Y5 using the baddie as the goodie, basic geographical principles learned in Y4 were required to support progressive learning in Y5 and again in Y6, and there was collaboration across the Key Stages in art as part of the development of growth mindset. This holistic approach is one of the things that make our school so good.

Susan Carson MBE – parent governor

Having had 3 children go through Westgate already, it was extremely interesting to see the changes that have been brought in with regard to Maths, times tables in particular, using the Rock Star Maths method. This seems to be a fantastic way for the kids to really hone their key skills in the basic and fundamental area of maths, which is their times tables. Mr Hackney explained how this new system works and that the children do a 3 minute session in special booklets every day on varied tables against a timer. The best part to see was how much the children were engaged in this activity and how excited they seemed to do the task! They can see and feel very real progress with this method and they all unanimously put their hands up when asked if they felt they had improved using this new system... the children's confidence was tangible and the element of self-evaluation witnessed, even competition against themselves (rather than against others), was wonderful. The children can see exactly how many answers they got right and exactly how long it took, each day is different and they can see their own progression very clearly. This is now used throughout the school and is proving extremely effective at really drilling in the basic key skills required to master all mathematics in the future. I wish I had had such a great system when I was at school, it would have made a real difference!

Cathy Liddicott – co-opted governor

I'd like to thank the governing body for the time and skill they give all year round and especially on Governor Day. As head teacher, I am always extremely proud to be part of such a great school, especially when I hear the feedback from the day. It is also great to hear from people who are not involved on an operational level, that they can clearly see the product of the development work, reflection and evaluation that we are continually undertaking in order to improve. It is only by working together with governors that we can truly say we are 'Striving for Excellence, Caring for Children'.

Helen Carpenter – Head Teacher

Governor's Day in school is a great opportunity for the children and staff to welcome our Governors into school and 'show off' many initiatives and examples of good practice which we are extremely proud of. We get a chance to share what happens every day in classrooms so that Governors don't have to rely on evening meetings to hear about what happens in our wonderful school each and every week.

Daniel Hackney – staff governor

I'm always impressed by the maturity and responsible attitudes of Westgate pupils however this Governors Day I was blown away by the peer mediators approach to their role in assisting other pupils to resolve their problems with one another. The mediators spoke with confidence and enthusiasm about their responsibilities and it is clear the new scheme has been a hit with pupils and staff alike. It was so lovely to see the Westgate Way being put into practice by the children and to see so many smiling faces around the school!

Alice Joughin – co-opted governor