

Your governors are:

Steve Mills - Head teacher

Sam Addison - Co-chair & co-opted governor

Wendie Ray - Co-chair & LA governor

Anna Pargeter - Vice chair & chair of resources committee

Laura Cole - Chair of curriculum committee & co-opted governor

Gill Cook - Co-opted governor

Debbie Nisbet - Parent governor

Debbie Wells - Parent governor

Alasdair Weir - Parent governor

Sam Atack - Parent governor

Heidi Burniston - Staff governor

Anna Beresford - Deputy head & associate governor

Christmas 2019 newsletter from the Governors of Whitehill Junior School



Dear Parents and Carers,

As governors, we are always impressed by the dedication shown to all children at Whitehill, the breadth of their learning and the opportunities made available to them. And of course, we are always impressed by the children themselves - their creativity, engagement and enthusiasm.

As governors, we have the privilege of being able to meet with staff and observe lessons, so we are able to give a true insight into the wonderful work that occurs on a daily basis. We'd like to share a little of this with you

The reports in this newsletter come from a number of the governors, and hopefully give you a taste of what we have learnt over the last 12 months or so at Whitehill.

It's hard to believe it's nearly Christmas already, where did that first term go? So, on top of what's been reported here, we've also seen some fantastic opportunities this term - celebrating 50 years of Whitehill, opening the Time Capsule, meeting Lee Cockerell (the former CEO of Walt Disney World), the Spitfire flypast, the Space sleepover ... the list goes on.

Whitehill gives every child so many opportunities to grow and develop, above and beyond the curriculum. So, on a final note, we wish to send out a huge thank you to all of the staff at Whitehill School and wish both them and yourselves and your children a fantastic Christmas.

Yours sincerely, Sam and Wendie (Co-chairs) and the whole Whitehill Governor team

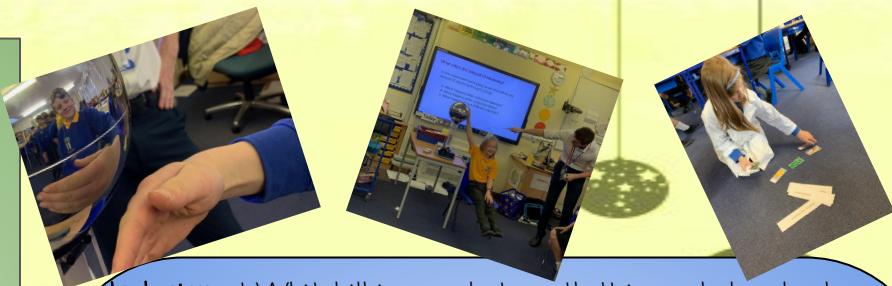
Science is brought to life in fun and inventive ways at Whitehill, so it's rewarding to see each year group engaging with science. In Year 3, pupils drew around each other and labelled bones, made skeletons and models of food chains to hang from the ceiling, and measured and plotted the growth of a sunflower. Year 4s never tire of squeezing bananas and cereal through tights to demonstrate peristalsis! Year 5s really enjoyed observing lifecycles - watching eggs hatch and chicks emerge, as well as creating artistic heart models to explore the circulatory system.

Demonstrating pollination with cheesy Cheetos in Year 6 went down well too (small pun intended!). There was also a whole school science project, 'The Sweet Grab Challenge', which proved conclusively with graphs and bar charts that bigger hands do grab more sweets. And, let's not forget the chance to explore science further in Code Club and Flying Club, in trips to the National Space Centre and the National History Museum, or indeed the Space Sleep-over!

Across the years, science is brought to life alongside the skills of maths, poetry, story writing, art, geography and more. The pupils told me how much they enjoyed science and the opportunities it gives them to explore, ask questions and work as a group.

Well done to all the teaching staff for inspiring such curiosity in the minds of Whitehill children. And to Mrs Little, as Science-Lead, for helping make it such an engaging and approachable subject. Whitehill's first principle for teaching and learning science is that 'Science should be enjoyable' - and that is clear to see when you visit and talk to the pupils. Our children are very lucky to have access to such a creative and involving way of exploring science.

Wendie Ray, Science Link Governor



Inclusion at Whitehill is a real strength. It is a whole school effort to ensure all children reach their potential and the amazing progress the children at Whitehill make is testament to everybody's hard work. Mrs McConnell Smith along with all the teachers and support staff work tirelessly to ensure each child is supported in the best way possible, whether it be extra learning support, adjustments in the classroom or small group work supporting mental health and emotional wellbeing. Each and every child is discussed termly in pupil progress meetings and thought is put into how best to support them. Parents are well supported too and there was good attendance at the excellent Highbury/Whitehill inaugural SEND coffee afternoon earlier in the year. Wellbeing is a key focus for this year and children are being taught how to care for themselves and contribute positively to their school and home life.

Myself and Anna P are also joint Pupil premium governors and have been focusing on understanding how the money the school is allocated for these children is spent. We have spent two productive sessions with the senior leadership team with a further visit organised for the Spring term. There is a useful document on the website if you would like to learn more.

Debbie Nisbet, SEND, PP and CLA link governor

The Governor **Finance Committee** meets termly to review school spending. School budget cuts have been in the news a lot recently and all schools are having to make difficult decisions with reducing budgets. There are long discussions in school on how to best use the money available to continue to give our children the best possible experience. At Whitehill the spend is closely linked to the school development plan and I have been impressed with how well tight budgets have been managed.

This year the biggest individual project was for the boiler and heating to be replaced. It was a huge undertaking with every part of the school affected. The new boiler is now in place and working well. This should make our heating much more efficient (and reliable) and should also bring a cost saving for the future. Internal redecoration works will be taking place over the coming term now the new heaters and pipes are in place.

Looking ahead we are planning to use some of the money provided by the Friends' Association on a jointly funded project to replace some of the older much loved play equipment on the school field.

Anna Pargeter - Finance Governor

Having become a parent governor at Whitehill early in the Spring term of this academic year, most of my time has been spent finding my feet. My main objective has been to understand how the school and governing board functions in order to determine how I can best support both. This has meant spending more time at the school than I had planned before becoming a governor, and this has turned out to be the best part of the role. It has been very warming and reassuring to see how well the school is run, how happy the children are to be there and how much they are developing. This is credit to the staff, children, parents, PTA and governors already involved in the day-to-day running of the school. I'm not sure I'll ever manage to retain all of the terminologies and TLAs of the education sector, but I still hope to play a beneficial part in the Maths Link and Health & Safety roles I have now taken on and look forward to supporting the school fully in the coming year.

Alasdair Weir, Parent Governor



I have spent time with Mrs Beresford to look at, and learn about, the new English and Maths **assessment** criteria. Discussing how they are being implemented in school gave a really good insight into the purpose and impact of assessment at Whitehill. The development of rigorous criteria and realistic expectations about assessment in each year group show that Whitehill has pupil learning and development at the centre of its core purpose. The discussions were very fruitful and support governor understanding of the assessment developments in the school.

In relation to visits for **safeguarding**, it is clear that this takes the highest priority at Whitehill and is implemented to an outstanding level to keep the children and staff at the school safe and nurtured.

Laura Cole, Safeguarding and Assessment governor



The school and governors are very grateful for the continued hard work that the **Friends of Highbury and Whitehill** put into raising much needed funds for the school, which is increasingly needed for essential items for learning and not the 'little extras'. The money really enhances our curriculum and brings learning to life. This year the school has spent the money on a class set of tablets to enhance learning and an outdoor PA system for use for sports day and other events. Going forward the money raised will be put towards replacing the well-loved but tired outdoor play equipment.



2019 SATS Results

There is far more to education at Whitehill than a series of end of Key Stage test results. That being said, the outcomes for pupils this year were once again exceptionally impressive and highlight the impact a broad and balanced curriculum can have.

It remains for us to wish the staff, children and families of Whitehill a fun and restful Christmas break with your families and if you're interested in becoming a governor in the future, please read our guide on the next two pages..

Who'd be a Governor?



- All schools are legally required to have a Governing Body - to ensure procedures are followed, to make sure that things are done properly, and that the school is run safely.
- Schools have a Governing Body to help keep them to the highest standards. We approve some of the decisions made by the Head Teacher and support and challenge the work going on in Whitehill. We aim to help Whitehill constantly improve its facilities and ensure that education for all is the best it can be.
- A Governing Body is made up of Staff Governors, Parent Governors, Co-opted Governors, Associate Governors and LA Governors. Each have different responsibilities but work in Committees which cover Resources (finance, premises and HR) and Curriculum.
- Achievement and safeguarding run through the very core of what we do - making sure every pupil feels safe to achieve their own profound individual growth.

What impact does the Governing Body have on Whitehill?

- The Governing Body helps to make our school environment the best it can be by supporting the Head Teacher and all teaching staff. Governors ensure that all children are happy, safe and that they all achieve their best potential. We also help decide where money should be spent - ensuring Whitehill has the best resources it possibly can, and that money is spent wisely. We also help to make decisions on hiring teachers and staff to help children.
- Each Governor focuses on specific subjects and the learning of different groups of pupils - to offer their support and to monitor what is happening in school. This makes sure that children have the best opportunities in which to learn.
- We hold the school accountable, which means we ensure that the Head Teacher and teaching staff are doing their jobs properly. We ask challenging questions, meet with teachers to understand what's going on, work on action plans and the School Development Plan and know all about the impact of learning in school.

What are the aims of the Governing Body?

Governing Bodies are required to have a strong focus on three core strategic functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Holding the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Whitehill Governors want our school to be the best it possibly can. We want children to be happy and safe in their learning environment and to have lots of opportunities which will help them to grow up to be good citizens, with a great confidence in their ability to learn and who have a strong understanding of the world around them.

How to be a Governor :

Governors need to be passionate about the school and want the best for the children in it; ask questions about what is being done and why; be able to work as part of a team; have lots of enthusiasm; to work democratically and to put children first all of the time.

There are no specific qualifications needed and there's training once you join, to make sure you have all the information you need to do the job. We sometimes do look for specific areas of experience, depending on who is currently on the Governing Body.

There are several ways in which you can become a Governor. Parent Governors are elected through a voting system - you might have seen our request for a new parent governor at the start of the term: we welcome Sam Attack to the team. If you are interested in being a Governor in the future, we'd love to hear from you.