

Whitehall Park School Governor's Newsletter

Report from Whitehall Park Governing Body : AUTUMN TERM 2017

Dear Whitehall Park School families and members of the wider Whitehall Park School community,

In February 2014, long before deciding to send my children to Whitehall Park School (WPS), I applied to become a community governor largely because of the compelling vision that Bellevue Place Education Trust (BPET) had developed of combining the best of the state and independent sectors in the new BPET free schools. Nearly four years have gone by since then, and we have made tremendous progress. With the endorsement of a very positive Ofsted inspection behind us, this is the right time to reconnect with that original vision and think about how it will impact us as we take Whitehall Park School forward.

Over the last three years working with the WPS leadership team and our BPET colleagues, I've developed a strong sense of what combining the best of the state and independent sectors can mean in practice. It means unapologetically focussing on every child achieving to the best of their ability, both to bring up those who need more support and extending those who have already moved past age-related expectations. It means differentiating the curriculum through Quality First Teaching to meet each pupil's individual needs and offering a broad and balanced curriculum that gives each child an opportunity to celebrate what they do well. We focus on finding the best in every individual child. It means putting an emphasis on the emotional development as well as academic development, and it means stretching that academic development to include learning how to learn as much as learning itself. It means treating clubs and extended schools as an opportunity to build on the curriculum in the core day, not simply provide childcare.

Starting the school and the build-up to our initial Ofsted necessarily meant focusing on really getting the basics right: our own curriculum, developed in-house; learning and, for reception, developing new assessment tools; building the building, and even more importantly building the team. While doing this, we have already made great strides towards making this vision a reality. We are planning individually for each pupil and running both differentiated groups and specific interventions to meet the needs of each individual pupil. We have built a curriculum that incorporates a wide range of subjects thematically, and we have begun the journey to become accredited as a Thinking School. We have developed an approach to home learning that enables parents and carers to connect with their children's learning and reflects our focus on every pupil achieving to the best of their ability. And we run our own extended schools programme, with a combination of internal staff and professional instructors.

I believe that we have gone a long way towards implementing our vision, but we have more to do as we move beyond the milestone of our first Ofsted and look towards the distant milestone of our first pupils moving to secondary school. A key part of combining the best of the state and independent sectors will be ensuring that our pupils are well prepared for the rounded skills that they will need for secondary school. This will include verbal and non-verbal reasoning lessons and practice papers for the assessment cycle of secondary school. We aim to ensure that they have received an education that enables them to take advantage of the wide variety of options that London has to offer. We believe that this strategy, of which the Thinking Schools adoption over the next three years will be a key part, will help provide a richer experience for all pupils, whatever secondary education they pursue.

We should all be justifiably proud of everything that we have achieved, and I look forward to how much more we will achieve in the coming years. In the meantime, please see an update about our recent work below.

Sincerely yours,

PAUL DOMJAN, CHAIR OF GOVERNING BODY

To learn more about the Thinking Schools programme, please see: <http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/research/centres/teachingthinkingdialogue/cedu/whatisathinkingschool/>

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Autumn Term Governing Body Update

Whitehall Park School is overseen by a Local Governing Body (LGB) which has a strong focus on three strategic functions:

- Ensuring the school is governed following the Trust & school's vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the Headteacher and senior leadership team to account for the educational performance of the school, its pupils and the performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school, ensuring value for money is achieved.

Governors meet as a full LGB twice a term, as well as in our smaller committees: finance and education. Children will also see us during our visits to the school both on our group learning walks and in our individual link governor roles, focussed on specific priority areas, such as the curriculum, parental engagement, health and safety, and safeguarding. The LGB last met in late September, and we concentrated on the following business:

- We reviewed the Home learning policy in the light of points raised by parents. The LGB expressed strong support for the policy as it benefits teaching and learning/educational outcomes and reflects the ethos and values of the school. This policy will next be reviewed in 2018 in line with the LGB's standard policy review schedule, and any relevant comments will be considered at the next review.
- The LGB are reviewing the extended school services provision and a an Extended Schools questionnaire will be sent to parents to assess with planning.
- The LGB discussed road safety on Hornsey Lane and will engage with the council and other relevant stakeholders.
- The LGB reviewed the School Development and Evaluation report for 17-18, which is our key working document for tracking progress against the school's goals.
- We received feedback on the school budget from our Finance Committee.
- We received our regular update on progress with the school site and the inevitable snagging issues associated with a new build.
- We noted reports back from external monitoring visits from Islington and Bellevue Education, which provides school evidence of how it is progressing year on year.
- There was an update on Governor scrutiny of key school policies in accordance with our yearly work plan. This work plan sets out planned business for the year, including a schedule of Governor Visits, Learning Walks, focus areas and policy reviews.

To help us improve as a Governing Body, we completed a self-evaluation exercise, the outcome of which we will review at or next meeting in November.

You can find full details of the Local Governing Body on the [school website](#) including our LGB structure, annual Governance report, governor biographies and photos.