



8th Edition

Governews

July 2017



Dear Parents and Carers

Welcome to this year's Governor Newsletter. Our aim is to produce one a year to keep you informed about what governors do and the current issues we are dealing with.

Being a governor isn't easy – the Department for Education and Ofsted hold governors to account and expect them to be responsible for many and varied aspects of school performance. Schools are under increasing financial pressures, Ofsted's regime is tougher than ever, what is expected of children at every stage is being "ramped up", the support from the Local Authority is much diminished and, in recent times, the direction of travel of central government has been unclear (two White Papers seem to have been abandoned).

Being a governor at West Jesmond, we face all these pressures but are helped in that we have a healthy budget, we achieved outstanding in our last Ofsted inspection, our teachers and leaders are in an excellent position to support our children to meet the new standards and, as a Teaching School, we are

already part of the new school improvement system which is taking over from Local Authorities. As governors we are grateful to the school leadership and staff for ensuring we are in this very strong position in these turbulent times and to our families and pupils for their support.

And I am grateful to my fellow governors for the massive amount of hard work they put in as part of the school leadership. We have a lot of meetings at WJPS and we have a full monitoring schedule involving us spending time in school. This year we have done a number of recruitment exercises too which governors have supported; this is a commitment in terms of time (taking two days of work is a big ask) and, again, I am very grateful. Governors don't get thanked enough – so I am doing it!

Currently we don't have any vacancies on the governing body, but, if you are interested in joining us in the future, please get in touch and someone will be happy to talk to you about what it involves.

Best wishes

Jane Edminson
Chair of Governors

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What's happening in...

Finance committee

It has been another busy year for the Finance Committee, we meet twice a term to look at the budget, decide how to allocate funds and to discuss issues relating to the buildings and health and safety. As with all schools the bulk of our funding is spent on staffing costs, but governors discuss and decide what else to spend, based on school priorities and in the event of a large spend being foreseen, such as ICT upgrade, money can be set aside for a period of time until it is needed.

We also keep a check on pupil numbers as this affects the amount of funding we receive, and Pupil Premium funding which is a separate income stream and which is spent on improving progress for those children who are eligible. Each year the school undertakes SFVS – Schools Financial Value Standard – a self-evaluation of how well we manage our finances.

Governors may identify that additional training is needed or that financial systems in school need updating. The Local Authority checks our evaluation, as an additional safeguard.

This year, as we are now approaching our second year of being a Teaching School, we are monitoring the additional funding the school receives, which is a very positive position to be in.

So far as premises are concerned, much of this is out of our hands as we are a PFI school, but governors get involved in discussions with the Facilities Management team and raise concerns about maintenance issues. Governors on this committee have a range of skills and experience in finance, law and business and are joined for meetings by the Executive Head Teacher and also Wendy Mar, School Business Manager.

Paul Simpson

Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee meets half termly with the Executive Headteacher. The committee aims to ensure that the best possible staffing and structures are in place throughout the school and that staff are being constantly supported, coached and developed in their roles.

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Over the past 2 years the committee has been involved with all sorts of matters relating to WJPS' staffing and organisation. The school continues to build expertise and capacity across the staff team and we have made some exciting appointments and shared the proud moments of others as they continue to develop and grow as teachers and leaders of the future.

We are wonderfully placed, as a Teaching School, to be able to support NQTs (Newly Qualified Teachers) and to provide an environment where experienced teachers can grow and take on more leadership responsibility. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the appointment of 3 NQTs last academic year and the development of our Assistant Head Team across the last few years.

You will have heard that Mrs McVittie was selected as the school's new Deputy Head, working with Mr Martin as Head of School and Mr Wallis-Clarke as Executive Head. I interviewed Mrs McVittie when she first joined West Jesmond, and it has been encouraging to see West Jesmond help, support and encourage her to grow as a teacher and into leadership

responsibilities. In order to continue to attract and recruit the best teachers the personnel committee is keen to encourage staff to grow and develop with us. For some, that will mean a move on and/or up into being the new leaders of the future. With this in mind, I also want to mention Mr McVittie and his appointment as a Deputy Head in our trust, again showing the development opportunities that West Jesmond encourages and fosters in its staff. Finally, with the moving on of Mr and Mrs McVittie into more senior leadership roles, we have just finished the recruitment of 2 new teachers who will join our school team as Assistant Heads. This is an exciting opportunity to work with new teachers who excel in their field of expertise as they join our staff.

And finally...

...as a parent and a governor I get to see 'both sides' of the recruitment process. I'm incredibly impressed with the rigour of the interviews at West Jesmond and having been involved in many of the new school appointments across the last 5 years, I can see the impact that great recruitment can have on a school and its pupils. So please do welcome the new faces that you

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will begin to see around school and embrace them as they help develop our school and grow our children into leaders of the future themselves!

Laura Robb

Curriculum Committee

We have had a busy year in curriculum committee this year – we meet half-termly and over the course of the year we have had presentations from a number of staff across the school about all areas of the curriculum - Maths, English and Science as well as PE and the arts. As the curriculum continually develops it is good for us to hear directly from the staff, particularly in specialist areas about the developments from specialist staff across the school and to see what this looks like indifferent year group and how staff are sharing information – both within West Jesmond and across the Trust for the benefit of the pupils.

We receive regular updates about the community groups who work with the schools – of which there are a huge range and we discuss

how the school can maximise the opportunities for the pupils by working with groups that can really benefit the pupils and link directly into the curriculum. Some of the most successful this year have been with the RSPB, with university students and with Cake Stories.

We have had two specific monitoring visits this year. In the spring term we had a whole school visit to look at depth of curriculum across the whole school. We visited all year groups and had the opportunity to see the West Jesmond's Got Talent Celebration Assembly. In the summer term we had a whole school visit to look at Maths mastery. We had a presentation from staff, watched a Maths lesson and then visited year groups across the school to see examples of maths mastery in practice.

Looking forward to next year you will be aware that the school has purchased I-pads for the children to use during the course of the day to access many areas of the curriculum and more are being purchased for next year. We will spend some time next year looking at the use of these the classrooms, seeing how they are used, in which parts of the curriculum so that we can

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ensure they are having the maximum impact for the pupils

Nicky Wise

Pupil Support Committee

The Pupil Support Committee is supported by Dominic Martin and meets every term and covers a wide range of issues. Over the last year we've discussed a wide range of subjects including protecting vulnerable pupils, supporting pupils with medical needs, schools attendance, after-school club, the school travel plan and many other topics linked to the School Development Plan Priorities.

However, many of our discussions have been on how we make sure all pupils are given support to reach their full potential. This could be by giving additional support from the SEND team or ensuring that pupils are given a deeper understanding of subjects through "mastery". Mastery adds weight and focus to a child's ability to apply their learning and it demonstrates how skilfully a child can apply their learning in more complex situations. There is evidence to show that mastery improves attainment and results.

A couple of members of the Committee have also worked closely with the Streets for People programme to improve the way children travel to school. The programme will soon be sharing its ideas and we'll keep parents informed about their recommendations.

Arlene Ainsley

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Introducing our new governors...

Lee Cranston



I joined the governing body at the start of this academic year as a co-opted governor, my background is working within the Finance function

of businesses of varying sectors within the North East.

My decision to apply to join the governing body was that having seen what friends and family involved in education do, that I in some way wanted to help towards the further development of the school.

Due to my background I hope that I can provide an alternative solution to problems or view on matters raised.

At present I am still within my induction period and learning all the education acronyms! I have therefore decided for the short term to be a member of the Finance Committee, but in the

future would potentially look to become involved in other areas such as Personnel or Curriculum.

From what I have seen so far, the school and all of its stakeholders are very much committed to its continued success and passionate about doing what is right for West Jesmond.

Ishy Bruce



My name is Ishy Bruce and I am one of two new parent governors. I decided to apply to become a governor as I have always been interested in what happens behind the scenes at the school and wanted to be a

part of helping the school move forward strategically. I have been a parent at the school since 2012, have seen quite a few changes and wanted to be involved with any future changes. An election took place in November 2016 as there were more than two applicants, it was a bit nerve wracking but also lovely to get so much

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support. I was delighted when I found out I had got one of the posts.

These last few months have been a steep learning curve, including learning lots of new acronyms and abbreviations. There have been many documents to read and meetings to attend but all have been interesting. I am one of two link governors for reception and regularly attend committee meetings for Personnel and Pupil Support.

I was also one of governors that was involved in the recruitment process of deputy head and one of the new assistant heads which was very enjoyable.

Being a new governor does involve being highly motivated and committed and I have come to realise that so much more goes on behind the scenes than one realises. I have enjoyed meeting and getting to know the other governors, members of staff and being part of a team that maintains a strategic approach to our school.

Laura Cordy



I was lucky enough to be voted in as one of two parent governors in November last year and am thoroughly enjoying the challenging and rewarding role.

When my daughter started in reception I knew I wanted to play a bigger role in helping the school, so when the opportunity came up to possibly become a parent governor I jumped at the chance and was fortunate to be voted in alongside Ishy.

Having been a staff governor in my previous teaching role I had a fair idea as to what the position entailed and the fact that I have had a year out of work this year has meant I have been able to put my all into my first year as a governor. The role is much bigger than can often be thought and it is important to be able to have the time, and inclination, to put in the hours but it is also such a rewarding role and I am enjoying every minute of it.

Everyone on the West Jesmond governing body has been really welcoming and supportive, allowing me to be part of so many aspects of

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school life from monitoring visits to being part of a team to appoint new members of staff. West Jesmond depends on everyone working together, staff, children, parents and of course governors and I know the continuing success of that will help our school to continue to be the best. I, personally, feel extremely honoured to be part of a school that is so caring and dedicated to our children, as a parent and as a governor.

Adam Goldwater



I am inspired by the possibilities offered by becoming part of the Board of governors and I'm looking forward to embracing the role. Over the last year two years I have been working closely with Dominic Martin to

develop a new relationship between the Great North Museum and West Jesmond Primary School. The collaboration has been made possible through the openness, expertise and

enthusiasm of the school. We have brought together our different perspectives to collaborate on maximising the learning power of museums - where child driven experiences are developed and enacted in partnership with schools.

I'm confident I'll find the challenge both very positive and very rewarding. I am encouraged by the fantastic positive ethos of West Jesmond Primary School and am excited by the opportunity of putting my professional skills as a museum educator to effective use in this context. I have enjoyed working closely with the staff at West Jesmond Primary School, having collaborated on projects with the ultimate aim of driving up standards, and it's been great meeting other governors, particularly parent governors who provide a deep insight into the life of the school. Acting as a governor should enable me to provide further critical challenge and support to the leadership team, furthering opportunities that aspire to impact upon education at the school, and therefore positively influence children's lives.

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Governors at work...

Vulnerable pupil link governor



This year there has been a clear focus on the needs of children who may be classed as vulnerable. Vulnerability has a broad definition but basically includes any circumstance which may affect how well a child attains at school. This can be a long term need such as special educational needs or disability or equally it could be a short term need due to a change in family circumstances. Any child in our school can be vulnerable and it may not be visible. Staff are working hard to meet the needs of all pupils and put in place extra support whether it be extra sessions to help with phonics, pastoral/supportive care or lunchtime and after school activities.

Linking in with vulnerability, there is a working group lead by Dominic Martin, focussing on mental health. Interested parents have met to discuss the issues which cause the greatest stress and anxiety for our primary aged school children. We all expect and hope to be in good physical health and most people wouldn't hesitate to see a health care professional when we are unwell. When it comes to our mental wellbeing, we can sometimes try to "struggle through" and not seek help or even know where to go for help. The group is hoping to get the views of parents via a parent survey and we would really value your input.

This year an existing member of staff has been appointed the new lead coordinator for children with special educational needs (SENCO). Cathy Hogan coordinates the provision for pupils with SEN and I have been working with her to gain an understanding of ways in which pupils access the curriculum.

Julia De Soyza -Parent Governor and Link Governor for Vulnerable Pupils

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