



Governor of the month report March 2015

Governor name: Adam Loveridge

The focus of my governor of the month visits was to observe and monitor the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage)

I met with Mrs Saville in February to plan the remit of the visits and to understand the relevant aspects of the school improvement plan, EYFS policy and supporting documentation. I was to focus on the children's learning behaviour, the star challenge and its use, the thoughts on the outside area and its benefits now and with the new structure.

What will my child learn in Reception Class?

The period from birth to the end of reception year is described as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It is broken down into seven areas of learning, each with its own Early Learning Goal. Each area of learning is of equal importance and is vital in developing well-rounded children who are confident, creative and independent learners.

There are three prime areas of learning which are fundamental to the child's development and support development in other areas. These areas of learning are:

- Personal Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Language and Communication

The remaining four areas of learning include specific skills and knowledge which are vital for children to participate successfully in society. They are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Each area of learning is divided into overlapping age bands and children will work through the developmental steps in order to reach their Early Learning Goal. Most children are expected to reach these goals by the end of their first year of school. However, some children will exceed these goals and others may still need to work towards some of the goals. It is important to remember that all children progress at their own rate.

During the Early Years Foundation Stage children further their understanding by playing, talking, observing, planning, questioning, experimenting, testing, repeating, reflecting and responding to adults and to each other. Their day will involve some teacher directed activities as well as lots of structured play activities. These well planned play activities are a key way in which children learn with enjoyment and challenge.

GOVERNOR VISIT: 9th March 2015

The children had been made aware of my visit and after getting their reading books and sitting down they were very excited and pleased to see me. Some of them independently introduced themselves and some of them were keen to tell me about many aspects of their life from when their birthdays were, where they were going for tea, who they were related to, what their pets were called, who dads car was being fixed....and so on and so on. I get the feeling there are no secrets in class R...

This was not a typical afternoon as some children from the village Pre School were visiting for a short time with their staff. This made for a very busy afternoon. It is a good way for the Pre-school to familiarise themselves with school and also for class R to accept visitors and share their time.

The topic of this free play afternoon was dinosaurs. This topic was chosen by the children. Tables were arranged into activities from drawing, writing, playing, making (clay fossils), outside was painting with dinosaur stamps (though the rain and wind blew most of it away) and in the corner of the room was a Dinosaur cave.

I was amazed by the large majority of children in their knowledge of dinosaurs and I believe they had found out facts at home as well.

Outside it was cold and wet and only a small number chose to go outside. It was difficult to retain their enthusiasm for the topic compared to inside, but with a more classroom feel and better protection from the elements this will change.

I openly asked "what are the Stars?" there could have been many answers but straight away they mentioned " oh its 1, 2, Wow" I enquired further and they all knew about the star challenge and how to get them and how to go for a WOW.

GOVERNOR VISIT: 17th March 2015

I met with the children for a structured morning that was to cover writing and maths.

Class 1 assembly. A lot of work really does go into assemblies, the children had thought about what they wanted to show (each had drawn wonderful pictures and written words about who they loved and why). The teacher and staff had worked hard in getting the children to project and enjoy the songs and remember all the words. I feel it does offer not only inspiration to others in the school certainly for the younger ones but also enjoyment and a sense of what to expect and aspire to.

Back in class the interactive white board was used to explain what letters we were forming and then some exciting warm up exercises following the man on the screen. Every aspect of what they do is to learn. The teacher will ask when selecting the white board menus, what number is this? What word is that? Why are we doing this exercise? They don't just get to the task but they find their way to it whilst learning... this is apparent in a lot of the teaching, always asking questions and everyone listening to the answers given by the whole class.

After break it was maths using number lines. The teacher explained the principle to all and again there were different tables with activities. The star challenge was visible on each table so children could choose a 1, two or Wow star challenge. "

Again many children were happy to try a 2 star or Wow star even though they appeared to be a little shy and reserved. I think one or two were more capable than they thought and the Star Challenge made them realise this. Many of them were keen to share their ideas and work and I noted that they are all willing to help one another in terms of learning. They may explain work, colours, why things work and also give direction in certain tasks.

GOVERNOR VISIT: 26th March 2015

I met with the children for a structured morning that was to cover writing and maths.

There was a bit of excitement as the new outside area was ready. I took the time to examine their work books which focused on writing only. It was clear that there was progress in letter formation for some and sentence writing for others.

As I expect with all classes there is a real scale of ability from those learning letters and words to those putting them into sentences. In the classroom each table had mixed abilities even at star challenge level. This meant that those with more ability were more than happy to assist those with less. Those with more ability could however still work independently and tasks were completed. Those with less ability in writing needed some guidance/direction but they were allowed to work independently. The class TA took a small group based on ability out to the quiet room for further support.

I worked with the TA and a small group of 4 for extra help on letter formation, again they had the ability it was just concentration and consistency that was required and the quiet room allowed for this.

This was the same format for Maths. I did notice in the work books that although there are some who struggle in getting the information down on paper they did show strong signs of investigation and understanding.

The learning behaviour of the children was very positive, they listened and they asked questions, everyone listened to each other, they offered solutions and comments and it was quite interactive at times which was excellent

Break was outside in the new area. The children were very excited by the coloured tables and could sit in groups to talk and share. A birthday celebration was held and we all sang and blew out the candles.

The new outside area offers so much space in terms of creating another classroom. As it is covered it can be used for lessons which I observed during the morning, several tables of children working. The new area now provides an outside classroom to keep the children focused on work but can still be adapted to provide a covered space for free play.

In its first morning it proved to be invaluable, it's a great space to teach outside and to learn outside.

From the 3 visits:

I have experienced the Star Challenge, how it works and what it means to the children. It allows the children to independently challenge themselves and creates a visual goal for them to reach. For many it is about achieving that star for others it's about attempting to go for it, both give them a sense of pride.

Starting this in EYFS will provide children with the confidence to attempt such challenges and to reach further to achieve these goals as they progress through school and beyond.

For the teachers it provides not only a tool to better understand an individual's learning behaviour but a visual and progressive method to access and challenge them as they develop.

The excitement that the star challenge offers to all the children of all abilities, the tools it provides the teachers with and that it is being used extensively across the whole school is wonderful.

The new outside area is a fantastic extension to the classroom, allowing more enjoyable free play, advanced learning and teaching all year round and a place for the school community to enjoy.

With two very experienced teachers + support staff in EYFS all with different teaching methods there is still an understanding and symmetry in what goes on from day to day. This not only offers stability to children, a continual learning of techniques and skills but also a wealth of ideas.

It is clear that EYFS is a very exciting, stimulating, challenging and overall enjoyable experience that will give the children confidence as they move forward.

I would like to thank ALL the staff for their time and a BIG thank you to the children for their enthusiasm, politeness and fun.

Kind Regards

Adam Loveridge
Parent Governor