

Letchmore Infants' and Nursery School

Governors' Focused Monitoring Visit Day: Summary Report

Wednesday 19th May, 2022

Members of the school's Governing Board visited for the day on 19th May to provide oversight and monitor progress on two key priorities from the School Improvement Plan: *Personal, Social and Mental Health of pupils and staff*, and *Leadership and Management*.

Governors were freely able to observe all year group classes at any time during the day, including playtimes, lunchtimes and PE lessons outside. We met with the senior leadership team (SLT) and subject leaders, as well as having in-situ discussions with teaching and support staff across the school. We reviewed the new "Letchmore Journey" draft plan, which combines the self-evaluation plan, School Improvement Plan and Three-Year Strategic plan.

Personal, Social and Mental Health of Pupils and Staff - key observations and learnings:

- Pupils were seen demonstrating the school values throughout the day, showing mutual kindness, respect and consideration of others.
- There was a happy atmosphere throughout the school – enthusiasm was everywhere!
- Children were engaged and impressively focused on their activities, even towards the end of the day.
- Teaching staff reported that the new focus on "planning in the moment" is enabling them to personalise the curriculum for pupils and that's resulting in greater depth and breadth of learning.
- The new "continuous provision" approach is enabling the children to explore and drive their learning in a safe, supported environment.
- We observed a Relax Kids session for a Year 2 class. The children engaged in discussions and activities relating to respecting other people's boundaries when it comes to hugging and expressing affection. It was a joyful session that taught important concepts in a low-key, fun and age-appropriate way.
- We visited the Nest, a new dedicated room providing a calm, safe place for children to access during the day. It's a comfy, nurturing space with resources on hand to help children regulate their behaviours, develop their emotional and social skills, and improve their mental health. The new school fish and guinea pig are located in this room, which are excellent additions that support the aims of this space.
- Leaders are ensuring that all staff view safeguarding as a shared responsibility. Staff reported having a good understanding of the school's processes for managing safeguarding concerns.
- The school is working hard to support vulnerable pupils and families. For example, the SLT were collecting food bank donations the week we visited, and we witnessed heart-warming generosity from children and families bringing in donations to support others in the school community.
- We saw how well classroom resources are being used to foster inclusivity and support cultural topics as part of the PSHRE curriculum.
- SLT are consistently monitoring and considering impacts on the workload, mental health and wellbeing of staff at the school. Staff said they feel comfortable raising issues with the SLT relating to their health and wellbeing, knowing that they will be listened to and supported.

- Staff highlighted that the physical space limitations of the school can create challenges, particularly when it comes to sharing space for lesson planning and staff wellbeing.
- The Shout Out board in the staff room is encouraging the sharing of positive feedback and recognition between colleagues, helping them to feel appreciated and valued by their peers. Plans are also in place for the school to mark National Thank a Teacher Day next week. The event last year provided teachers and support staff with a lot of heartfelt messages from parents, carers and pupils, which was hugely appreciated and had a positive impact on staff wellbeing.

Leadership and Management – key observations and learnings:

- The co-headship is working well, with defined responsibilities and flexible collaboration on maintaining high standards.
- We saw the SLT cultivating a cohesive team approach, so everyone is driving in the same direction. Teaching staff reported that they are clear on the strategic vision of the school and the operational priorities, and the part everyone plays in delivering those within their own roles.
- Leadership skills are being developed at all levels. Enhanced training provision is underway for middle leaders and support staff. SLT are fostering a culture of coaching and mentoring amongst staff.
- Subject leaders said they feel supported to drive their curriculum areas and “think outside the box” to bring their subjects to life for pupils. With Covid restrictions easing, work is in progress to enable off-site class visits and to bring more hands-on experiences into school (such as the upcoming farm visit days).

Recommendations and Next Steps:

- Implement parent open days for existing members of the school community to visit the school and see the learning environment in person.
- Link Governors to meet regularly with subject leads and offer monitoring support if needed, to help oversee how the subject curriculum is being taught across the school.
- The Relax Kids sessions and the National Schools Breakfast programme (morning bagels for the kids) are both bringing wellbeing benefits for the children. Explore options for continuing those provisions during the next academic year.
- Encourage a group of volunteer parents to regularly visit the classroom to read with pupils and help to further improve reading levels.
- Consider creating a standalone Staff Wellbeing policy.
- Long-term building expansion plans are intended to address challenges around planning space and wellbeing space for staff. Investigate options in the short-term to provide a quiet wellbeing room for staff.
- Investigate support staff sick pay options, with support from the Governing Board.
- Scope the options for a full dining room refresh (long-term) and other improvements to that environment (frequency of cleaning, new tables, etc).
- Investigate a food recycling provision for the school dining room to reduce waste, in line with the school’s Global Citizen mission and Ecology Club goals.

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