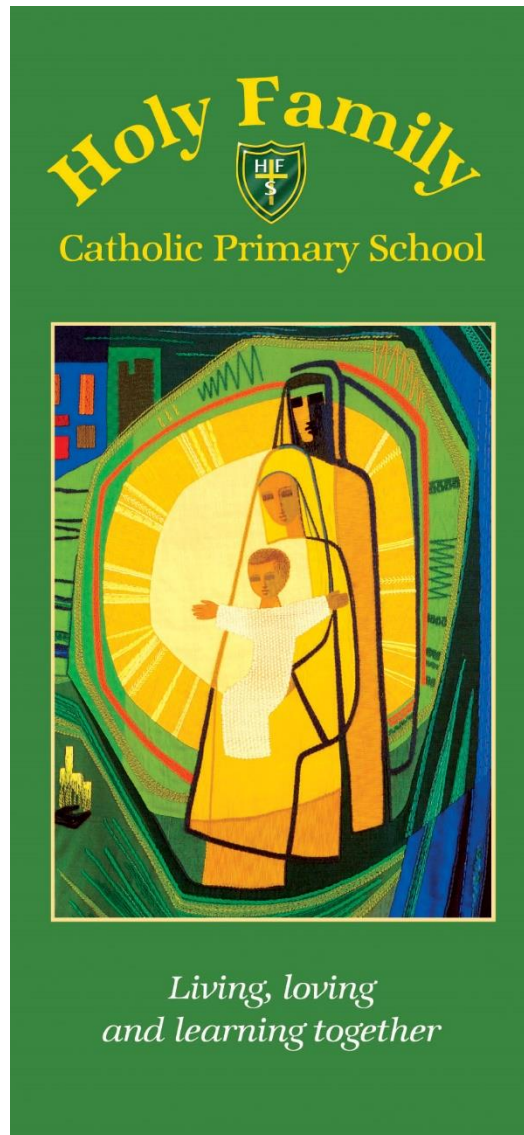


Holy Family Catholic Primary School

The Rosary Trust



Governor Open Day
10 June 2022



FOCUS

The focus of this year's governor open day is mainly for governors to see the breadth of the curriculum and how the children have returned to "normality" after the disruption of COVID19.

It will enable governors to collect as much evidence as they can about how the curriculum is incorporating catch up lessons to cover any pandemic learning losses. They should also take note of displays too as these celebrate the learning going on in the school. Each governor is asked to talk to children and staff and to take into account the priorities of the Self Evaluation Framework (SEF) when commenting.

A governor's role is to be part of the school day, not to make judgments or observations, but to increase collective knowledge and understanding of what goes on in a typical school day. These governor days are extremely beneficial in building positive relationships between governors, staff and the children themselves.

Governors participating in the day were:

Mrs Anne Wright
Mr Bob Wright
Mrs Helen Jones

Mrs Tricia Nicholls
Mrs Marcella Coleridge
Fr Nixon Gomes

FOREWORD

We have just had another of our successful Open Days for Governors and to be honest, I think we were looking forward to it more than the pupils. Quite frankly it is a golden opportunity for us governors to see a snapshot of a Day in the Life of Holy Family School that we wouldn't otherwise have been able to see and no two days are the same. You will see from the focus above that we were particularly looking at the richness and depth of the curriculum and how the children have returned to "normality" since COVID19. We found so much in support of this and you will be able to read below each of the governor's individual perceptions. I would like to thank all the staff and pupils for their valuable contributions towards making our day so special and for answering all our questions without hesitation and so freely.

A few Governors may have visited the same class and therefore what they have written may seem the same. However, each account is that Governor's personal perception of what they saw and felt.

ANNE WRIGHT – FOUNDATION GOVERNOR - CHAIR

The day started with a cup of coffee and chat amongst my team as to how we could ensure we covered as much of the classes as possible. With so much going on, it is difficult to do this but we believe we made the most of our day.



Year 3

Four of us were excited to be able to see the newly started “Forest School” led by Mrs Lonergan and ably assisted by her LSA, Mrs Marson.

Mrs Lonergan has been undergoing training to become a qualified Forest School tutor and her knowledge and enthusiasm shone through. Mrs Lonergan was teaching Year 3 pupils outside in their first taster session where they sat on logs and other objects – such as tyres - in a circle in a beautiful peaceful corner of the playground. The birds were singing and the sun shining and it was difficult not to feel at one with nature. The lesson was started by reciting a passage from the Bible by St Paul to the Corinthians, which is a reflection of what gifts and talents will be used and which are, “all given by the same Holy Spirit”. The children were split into three groups:

1. *The tree identifiers* – they were reminded that to identify a tree, it wasn’t necessary to remove leaves and the first rule of Forest School was “we take away our memories and only leave footprints”. This group was also reminded that trees were a gift from God.
2. *Knots* – this group were given a photograph of three types of knots (a bowline; fisherman’s knot and a figure of 8) with no narrative and were asked to practice recreating these knots with string provided. This group were reminded of one of the mantras of Forest School – “If at first you don’t succeed, keep trying”.
3. *Outdoor art with dried flowers* – this group were given flowers and leaves and asked to use a stone and a piece of canvas to create a piece of art.

After 20 minutes, each child was put into another group (to include one “Knot maker”) to build a den using canvas, logs, string and anything else they could find in the “store”. Each child must undertake a risk benefit e.g. which plants sting; which plants cut; am I walking through the undergrowth; am I walking around the undergrowth; will the wooden structure fall down. The brief clearly given is that the structure ***MUST BE SOMETHING TO SIT UNDER FOR SHELTER.***

Mrs Lonergan explained to me the benefits of what the children were doing and she gave an example of a child in another year who usually was distracted in class but displayed outstanding leadership skills whilst in Forest School. Another child who was prone to be bossy in the classroom, had learnt to stand back and let others take over. The rationale for putting up a den is to help them to learn to work together as a team in an informal setting. Forest School is held in all weathers, after a risk assessment has taken place with the only real threat being where high wind may present a challenge.

Forest School encompasses several elements from other curricula including:

- Maths (counting the rings on a tree and gauging how old it is);
- RE – the goodness of God’s creation;
- Good conflict resolution – working with different people to who you would normally mix with in class
- Building strong and stable relationships
- Builds personalities

There is little intervention by staff who watch to ensure safety, of course, but also to monitor how the children are coping. Since COVID some of the youngest children have struggled with their social skills due to enforced isolation and Forest School has particularly helped the shy and those less confident to find their voice.

Mrs Lonergan wrapped up the taster session by asking the children for their views and what they found most enjoyable:

“Everyone worked together and everyone volunteered”

“Very enjoyable”

“Great idea of making a tent”

“It was fun and the sticks kept falling out and we had to do it again” (this child had managed to find it amusing even though his den hadn’t worked)

“We decorated our den with nature found on the ground”.

It is clear that this group of children certainly enjoyed their introduction to nature and we look forward to watching Mrs Lonergan building on the **gifts and talents** of all the pupils throughout the school.

Year 6

In a visit to Year 6 we found half of the class paired with children from the Foundation class as Reading Partners. The foundation children choose a book for Year 6 to read to them and then they read a book to the same Year 6 partner. I spoke to a couple of the pairs who were very happy with this arrangement. Mrs Rackliff explained to me that the Year 6 pupil looks out for his/her foundation partner in the playground and around the school. In this way, the new foundation child has someone they can seek out if they feel lonely or just need some guidance. It was amazing seeing these Year 6 children taking care of the new pupils from the October.

The next part of the lesson was spent talking about cyber bullying and first of all, Mrs Rackliff wanted to know what the pupils’ understanding was of this. Most, if not all, were aware and were able to coherently given an example. She played a game of Chinese Whispers with them, dividing the class into two groups. It was quite extraordinary to hear the end results and she proved to the class how messages can be distorted. The message she gave was “Take care if you share; if in doubt, shout out”. She told me that, post COVID, her pupils had struggled with getting into a routine and settling down again, suffering with lack of concentration. However, they had recovered well and were now looking at transitional issues and moving on to Year 7 in their next school. Their mental health had improved since school routine had been re-established in their lives.

Lunch!

Next, I had a really tasty lunch of jacket potato with tuna and cheese, with a pot of ice cream served with a smile by Mrs Sheehan and Mrs Hennessy. A side salad was available and it was obvious the children were enjoying the food, especially the cheese swirls and fish fingers which were proving a big hit.

Music throughout the school

At various times we were able to observe music lessons being given by an independent teacher, partially paid for by the Friends of Holy Family School. The African drums in Year 4, and the sweet Xylophone music in Year 3 were absolutely stunning. All classes have 45 minutes of music lessons which have proved exceedingly good for pupils' wellbeing. If you hear a child enthusiastically shouting "*Jerk chicken is great*" they have obviously been learning the African drums as that is one of the aide memoire rhythms being taught.

Lack of time meant a quick visit to Year 4 with Mrs Rockall who were all discussing expanded noun phrases and Year 5 with Mrs Millward who were concentrating hard on mathematics – division by 10, 100 and 1000. Year 5's learning had been relatively unscathed by COVID but some social skills had suffered. However, on today's visit, everything was business as usual!

Support Staff

The key to a contented school is happy, well led staff. The governors have been focusing on the good mental wellbeing of both pupils and staff. Whilst it rests on the staff to directly ensure pupils' mental health is good, the governors have been ensuring the staff are looked after too.

Mr Fyfe is usually the one making sure pupils are physically fit and healthy. Throughout all of lockdown and COVID, Mr Fyfe was always on site ensuring the premises were kept thoroughly clean and as virus free as possible and getting any infected areas deep cleaned. He was the one making sure the gel pumps were full and the signs were clear for that one-way system that was put in place for safety reasons. But who looks after Mr Fyfe? That is where the head of the school comes into play. Mr Fyfe said he had no concerns and felt fully supported by Mrs Kelliher and the governors. His initial concern was for the children returning to school in September 2021 and what their fitness levels would be. However, he has worked hard with them all and once again physical activity has been of a high standard throughout the school.

The hard-working office team – Mrs Krikor and Mrs Durham, ably led by Mrs Buet have also been working hard throughout all of lockdown ensuring the new systems required by the Multi Academy Trust are in place. They are hoping to have a less stressful year now that the new systems have been embedded for the MAT. During the COVID lockdown, it must be remembered that staff at the school also had vulnerable families at home and if they had their own worries, they were never brought into the school and the children and their families were unaware of any of the staff's personal problems. In fact, they went out of their way to ensure HFS pupils and their families were supported in whatever way they could.

Mrs Kelliher is the glue that holds all the team together and she has worked hard to ensure her team are kept as stress-free as possible. As Chair, I ensure Mrs Kelliher is personally well supported and all the governors are now focusing on providing any additional help they can. This is a number one priority for us this year.

HELEN JONES – FOUNDATION GOVERNOR

We started the day with a discussion to set out the agenda and objectives of the Governors Day visit to the school. The post-covid resettling back into school life for the children was uppermost in our minds and our aims for the day, therefore we wanted to cover as much of the day's classes as possible without disrupting the pupils or staff.



Year 3 - Forest School taster session lead by Mrs Lonergan & assisted by Mrs Marson

Although I had heard of this new innovation I had not previously experienced Forest School in action so was very keen to be included in the group of Governors attending the lesson. It was held in a very peaceful setting outside in the morning sunshine. The children sat in the round on logs and old rubber tyres and all seemed perfectly happy and interested in what was to come. Mrs Lonergan started with a prayer, reading from St Paul and reflecting on the gifts and talents required to be used for learning and which were given by the Holy Spirit.

Mrs Lonergan outlined the aims of the Forest School and also introduced the “Speaking Stick” which when held would allow anyone who had something to say to stand before the group. However it would not be used in today’s lesson as there was too much to cover.

The children were split into three groups each focusing on different aspects. They would be taking charge of their own work and self-checking.

1. Tree identification – the long-term aim is to be able to identify different types of wood for tool making in later lessons.
2. Knot making – to be used for many different outdoor tasks. Initially they were given 3 to try, Bowline, Fisherman’s & Figure of 8. (Not an easy task but everyone put in a very good effort).
3. Outdoor Art – this covered dried flowers and flower pressing to create personalised art. It started with creating a picture on canvas using wild flower and a stone. Much fun was had by the budding artists.

The Teams were re-mixed and the session ended with building a den. Each team were supplied with sheets of canvas/plastic and string along with reminders to do risk assessments and work together to product a shelter which they could all fit into. I was very impressed with all the efforts and the self-assessments of the children who were able to identify “design errors” in their dens. Forest school reminded me of my time as a Girl Guide where we learnt so many wonderful things.

EY Foundation – Mrs Willsher & Mrs Small

On first visiting Foundation we found that it was “Reading Partner” time with Year 6. This happened once per week on Friday for 15-20 minutes. It was obvious that this time was enjoyed by all the participants. It was explained that not only did the Y6 pupils read to the Foundation children but they became their “buddies” in the playground as the young pupils got to know their reading partners and looked out for them around the school. This helped them to settle in more.

Year 4 - Music

To fill the time until Foundation had finished with their “Reading Partner” Mrs Coleridge and I had a fleeting visit to the hall where we encountered Y4 practising African Drums. Very impressive. All the pupils looked as though they were enjoying playing and followed the directions given.

EY Foundation

On returning to the Foundation class it was explained that the class was taught “In the moment” this means that the children, while fully supervised, were able to learn through free expression. I have never experienced this before and was amazed to see how effective it was. The children could play indoors or outdoors in the well-equipped play area, whatever the weather. There was so much going on that it was a treat to spend time there watching and talking to the children. The mud kitchen was well utilized by a group who were making “soup” and serving it to Mrs Coleridge (who was rather wet from the “cooks and waiters” spillages). I spent time watching a few girls who were “renovating” the play house. They spent time wheeling wheelbarrows across the play area and filling them with wood which they then took

back to the house. When I asked one of the girls what they were doing with all the wood she couldn't wait to show me the steps she had built at the entrance to the house and the new floor they were laying inside it. There was so much activity and imaginative play going on all around and not one unhappy face. All of the children I spoke to were happy and all got along together in their little activity groups.

Year 1 – Mrs Eardley

When we joined Y1 Mrs Eardley was teaching them a Sound & Sense poem to which they added sign language. Father Nixon had joined the class earlier and was well acquainted with the poem by the time we joined. All the class enjoyed in saying the words and doing the signs for each word. Once the whole poem was completed Mrs Eardley asked the class to identify the rhyming words like Nose and Rose, sand & hand, chips & lips all were very enthusiastic and eager to demonstrate their listening skills.

Each child was then given a piece of paper and coloured pencils and asked to draw the rhyming words. Needless to say there were many different types of noses, roses and hands, but everyone enjoyed doing it. By the time they had finished it was time for lunch.

I joined the other Governors for lunch and we queued with the children most of whom were excitedly looking forward to fishfingers and chips. I asked if they were good and the unanimous response was yes they were really good. I didn't get to confirm this opinion as I had ordered cheese whirls which were very tasty.

HB / HG/ DHB/ DHG

After lunch Mr Wright and I met with the Head Boy and Girl and Deputy Head Boy and Girl in the library for a chat. What a delightful group of young people; they were very interesting and spoke with enthusiasm in their responses to our questions.

Asked what was their favourite subject, the response was the new topics such as WW2 and Henry Moore; English Literature; English Language; Maths and Science.

As we were sitting in the library, I asked them whether it suited their needs. They explained that there were books for all age group and also a note book on the shelf where pupils could request books that were not readily available. No one had any adverse comments.

The lockdown was difficult for them as although they had online support they were away from the familiar and close support of their teachers. It was also hard being away from their friends. All preferred learning at school rather than at home.

The group went on to say that there was a very caring community in the Holy Family School although they were looking forward to new challenges in their new schools

When asked what was their reaction to being chosen for HB/HG/DHB/DHG? All said they were surprised to be chosen and delighted to be appointed and all agreed that they should be role models for the other pupils along with showing care and interest in them. When asked to self-assess their achievement in the role they all stated that although they had done well there was room for improvement. I felt certain that all four were very suited to the role and I am sure that they represented the Holy Family ethos perfectly.

Year 6 Self Defence class

The day finished with an overview of the 5 week Self Defence classes which were being run by Keiron and supervised by Mr Fyfe for Y6. The aim is to build confidence and techniques that will help to protect the pupils when faced with compromising situations by learning basic self-defence actions. They were starting with conflict avoidance and over the weeks would develop other skills.

Overall my impression was that everyone at the school was happy being back and were settling into normal class life. The Holy Family School is a very loving and caring environment, this is evident from my conversations and observations throughout the day.

Thank you to all staff and pupils who made us so welcome.

TRICIA NICHOLLS – FOUNDATION GOVERNOR

The day started with a meeting with my fellow governors to confirm our timetable for the day.

Year 4: Mrs Rockall, class teacher and Mrs O’Shea, LSA.



Mrs Rockall introduced me to the class, and I asked the children if they knew what a governor was. There were some interesting suggestions and my favourite one was that a governor worked for the government! The children were doing ‘Morning Maths’ and I spoke to a small group who explained to me that some of them would be working through their times tables whilst others were doing their morning maths. The children were able to explain clearly what they would be doing during the day and pointed out the class visual timetable on the board which they liked as it showed them exactly what they would be doing. They were very confident in explaining their morning routine. They marked their own morning maths work and were chosen to contribute answers by Mrs Rockall. The next activity was a times tables test followed by a spelling test. They marked their own work and gave their scores to Mrs Rockall.

A small group of children had been working outside of the classroom with Mrs O’Shea and returned to their class. All the children were very excited about the next activity as it involved their half-termly raffle which was a reward system for reading regularly to an adult. A child explained to me that they had to have their reading record book signed by an adult after they had read five times in a week and they would then be given a raffle ticket. Each time they completed this process they were given a ticket. Some children had accumulated several tickets. Every half-term all the tickets were placed in a raffle draw. There was a great deal of excitement as the tickets were drawn and lots of chocolate prizes were won! The enthusiasm was a joy to behold. What a wonderful way to motivate the children to read to an adult.

Mrs Rockall chose a group of six pupils, consisting of three boys and three girls, to speak to me outside of the classroom about their learning and their well-being. They informed me that their favourite subjects were maths, science, history and PE. Some of them enjoyed imaginative writing but not grammar. During lockdown they had been able to access online lessons. They were especially enthusiastic about Times Tables and said that they were confident about them. They reported that they were all very happy in school and enjoyed taking part in the range of activities available to them, as well as enjoying holding posts of responsibility in the School Council, Eco Council and Worship Council. Some had represented the school at cross country competitions and others at ‘Mighty Oaks’, a public speaking competition. They enjoyed school clubs and participated in clubs, such as football with Mr Fyfe and the nature club. Clubs they would like to see introduced again included: chess, gymnastics, board games and cooking. It was a pleasure to speak to the children as they were friendly, polite, and enthusiastic about school life.

Year 2: Mrs Scott, class teacher and deputy head teacher.

My next visit was to year 2. The children were outside, working in pairs and were taking turns giving instructions and being a ‘human robot’ receiving instructions. They were giving

instructions regarding directions and were recording their findings onto their sheets. When they returned to class, two children were chosen by Mrs Scott to come over to me to explain what they had been doing in computing. They were able to explain confidently that they had been creating instructions. I was impressed that they used vocabulary such as algorithms with such confidence. They explained that they had used Bee-Bots (small educational robots) in class and had thoroughly enjoyed using them. They showed me their computing folders and were pleased with the work they had produced during year two. It was a pleasure to see the children in the class so engaged in their learning.

Year 3: Mrs Lonergan, class teacher and Mrs Marson, LSA.

The next class I visited was year 3 who were doing a practical music lesson. The session was being led by Mrs Ruddock, from Essex Music Hub, who was teaching the children how to play chime bars which are percussion instruments similar to glockenspiels. Each child had their own instrument and were following the instructions from the interactive white board. The children showed that they had remembered key vocabulary when asked to recap on the following terminology: pitch, pulse, rhythm, tempo, chord and texture. They were also able to identify musical instruments from pictures and from listening to a piece of music. They played through songs they had been learning since September. When I spoke to some of the children, they said that they enjoyed it very much and that the sessions went by very quickly. It was lovely to see how much they were enjoying the lesson and were all so fully engaged.

After the session had ended two children stayed behind for a few minutes to talk to me about their overall learning. They showed me their independent writing books and were keen for me to see how much they had progressed during the year. They were able to speak confidently about how they had improved their writing. They commented that they were very happy in their class and had particularly enjoyed their recent trip to Colchester Castle.

Lunch

I enjoyed a lovely lunch. Thank you to Mrs Buet for kindly ordering it and to the kitchen staff.

Year 5 Mrs Milward and Mrs Crane.

I asked Mrs Crane if I could speak to a group of children about their learning and well-being and she chose a group of six pupils consisting of three boys and three girls to speak to me. They informed me that they liked history, DT, geography, maths and PE. They enjoyed reading and class discussions but had found writing more difficult, especially at the start of the year. They all felt that they had made progress in their writing and were writing at greater length. When asked what helped them to learn they were unanimous that their teachers helped them and LSAs.

They remarked that they were happy in class and despite being a little apprehensive about moving into year six, they were looking forward to having posts of responsibility, such as office duties. If they had any worries or were unhappy, they would speak to their parents, teacher or LSA. Some of them had participated in school clubs such as Irish dancing, and football. Four of them had attended Eleven Plus sessions. During lockdown they had been able to access online learning but were happy to be back in school with their friends. It was lovely to be able to speak to such polite and cheerful children who were able to answer my questions so confidently.

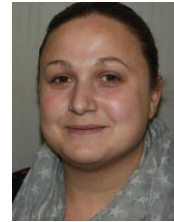
Conclusion.

Despite being in school regularly throughout the year working with year six pupils in their writing and therefore knowing much about the school, I am able to say with great confidence

that the variety, breadth and quality of the work that I saw was very impressive. It is evident that the children are extremely happy in their learning and feel safe in school.

Thank you to all the staff and children who made my visit such an enjoyable experience

MARCELLA COLERIDGE – FOUNDATION GOVERNOR



I always look forward to our Governor visits because it is so nice to see the school come to life. I am always made to feel very welcome by the staff and the children with this visit being no exception.

We started the day in the staff room as a team to discuss how we can see as much of the school between us and as I was only able to stay for half the day, I was keen to get started.

Year 3

My first stop was to visit Year 3 who were having their forest school lesson. It was a beautiful day so nice to see the class being able to use the amazing outdoor space the school has. This also gives the teachers a chance to see different strengths from the children. Mrs Lonergan explained that she has worked with all the year groups doing forest school and she is really enjoying seeing some of the quieter students really shine in a different learning environment.

I joined in with some of the children making knots and I struggled with one of them but the children encouraged me and showed me what to do step by step. The children were then put into small groups and did some den building. It was really interesting to watch the children all work together and the communication was amazing. The final Dens were all different and all amazing, I was very impressed.

Years 2 and 4 - Music

During the morning I was also able to see the music teacher work with Year 2 and Year 4. I am so glad I was able to see this as the money for this comes from the fundraising the Friends of Holy Family School raise, and as I am also Chair of FOHFS it was great to see the money being spent and enjoyed so well by the children. I saw Year 2 learning to follow a beat and learn when to play their instruments and when to hold them still. All of the children were so engaged in the lesson and focused on the task at hand. They learnt about Dynamics and practiced using a traffic light system. When the red light was shown they played loudly, then amber was a little softer and green was very quiet. The children picked this up very quickly. They then learnt about Rhythm and they moved their bodies to the music. I only briefly saw Year 4 however, they were using the drums and were leaning to play to a rhythm. They were also shown to play the drums with the correct hand positioning, they were encouraged to play the drums not just bang them. I am so pleased I was able to see these lessons and how much the children enjoyed them.

EY Foundation

The second part of my morning started in Foundation. The children were outside when I arrived with some children applying their sun cream while other were fully engaged in activities. As I sat and watched them it was lovely to see how independent the children have become since I last visited. I sat at the table by the mud kitchen and before long I was having

tea, pancakes and petal soup made for me. The children were using their imaginations and the conversations between them were flowing beautifully. I also saw some great teamwork. When the children had ran out of water they went to the water butt and filled up their buckets themselves so they could continue to play. I then wondered round towards the playhouse and found 3 young ladies using the building blocks to make flooring. One of them was using the wheel barrow to transport the building blocks whilst the other 2 were working together to lay the floor. They were proud to show me what they were doing. I really enjoyed my time with Foundation. All the children were so happy and engaged in their activities but made me feel very welcome. It was difficult to leave them because I was enjoying my visit.

Year 1

My last stop was to see Year 1 and I arrived while they were practicing a poem. The children were learning the poem and adding actions to it. They were then identifying the rhyming words within the poem. The children were all given a chance to share their thoughts and put their hand up nicely to ask questions. It may have only been a short visit to the classroom however I saw the children so engaged and encouraging each other when they were sharing their ideas.

I absolutely loved my visit to school and to have the chance to see the school in action. I wish I could have stayed longer. After a challenging couple of years it is so nice to see the children all back at school and enjoying learning again. The fantastic use of the outdoor spaces around the school is a great resource to teachers to be able to take the children's learning out of the classroom and I saw lots of examples of this. I am very proud to be part of such a wonderful school and always enjoy spending time with the staff and children.

BOB WRIGHT – GOVERNOR

After discussing over coffee with my fellow governors the agenda for the day, four of us set off to visit "Forest School" led by Mrs Lonergan. They were seated comfortably in a circle in the wildlife area whilst Mrs Lonergan explained to them the difference between Forest School and Outdoor Learning. Children would get to choose tasks themselves in Forest School and either work in groups or on their own i.e. make a den. She also explained to the governors that some of the children also attend Nature Club during the week and one girl's pride of joy was a Bug Hotel, which was on display. The class was split into three groups as Mrs Wright has previously explained in detail. Mrs Lonergan explained to the children how to age a tree by counting the rings inside. Whilst they were undertaking their tasks, I discussed with Mrs Lonergan from my own experience of how a tree could be aged without being chopped down. When the group reconvened, she asked me to relay this to the children. I was able to tell them that a tree could be aged by measuring the circumference and looking up documented average charts for that type of tree. It was agreed that going forward, the trees would be measured each year and recorded. This introduced an element of maths into the task.



Mrs Marson was teaching the children how to tie knots as per the diagram. Not all were able to achieve the task first time but when they tried and tried again, the look of joy on their faces when they accomplished it was a joy to behold.

I observed the different groups as they set about their task of building a den. Some seemed to jump in enthusiastically whilst others stood back and needed some encouragement to participate. When they noticed others getting on with their den, they took inspiration from this. It is obvious that building a den is a very popular task and the variations were diverse and skill sets were at different levels. One child told me that she didn't think their den was very good

and that they could do better! When asked, they all said they liked working as a team and trying out new ideas. Whilst both indoor and outdoor environments are required for good learning, it is obvious that being outside has a beneficial impact on the mental well being of children who through physical activity in the fresh air can thrive.

Year 6 / Foundation

Year 6 and Foundation children were matched as pairs of Reading Partners. This was not only to assist Foundation children to read, but also to give new children to the school an older pupil to look up to and the older pupil to look out for the younger child. The happiness in the room was tangible and each pair were obviously enjoying the experience.

Year 4 – Music Lesson

Year 4 were in the hall having a music lesson from an outside contractor using the African drums. Reciting word patterns helped them to achieve the rhythms necessary to make a good drumming sound i.e. “Blue Skies and Sun; I like Jamaica”. It was quite amazing that pupils could remember from previous lessons the word patterns that they needed to use. Teaching staff used an iPad to record part of the lesson in order to show pupils their progress and as an assessment tool.

Lunch

We joined the children in the hall and queued up to be served a delicious lunch of fish fingers, chips, beans and salad. The dining room has a happy, friendly atmosphere where all staff work efficiently to ensure children are fed in a timely manner. All the children seemed to enjoy their food.

Year 6

With Mrs Wright, I sat through a lesson on Cyber Bullying, which is very relevant to this age of child. When asked, they engaged animatedly with Mrs Rackliff on what it meant to them and they were able to give examples. A game of Chinese Whispers demonstrated a simple message can be misheard and changed from a positive to a negative statement, with no malice intended.

Year 3

Passing by Year 3’s classroom, it was hard not to stop and listen to the beautiful music where they were learning to play the xylophone. This had been achieved in just a few lessons and the standard of music being taught was very high. I am looking forward to seeing the video diary of their progression from the first lesson to the end.

Year 5

We called in to Year 5 who were deeply in concentration doing maths calculations. We spoke to the teacher, Mrs Millward, who confirmed they were all working at a high level and were progressing well.

Head girl, head boy, deputy head girl and deputy head boy

With Mrs Jones we had an informal conversation with these four pupils who had gone through a selection process and had been chosen for the roles. All four were pleasantly surprised to have achieved this accolade and were 100% enthusiastic in carrying out their task of role

models to the other pupils. They believed they were doing a “reasonable” job but realised there was room for improvement. This demonstrates that they are willing to continually learn and improve. Their enthusiasm was infectious and their attitude made it very easy to talk to them all. Their maturity will give them a good standing at senior school next term. They all stated that they preferred learning at school rather than the enforced COVID staying at home. This was because they felt they could achieve better in a group by learning and supporting each other in class. They all agreed that that everyone of the staff were very supportive and caring and they enjoyed coming to school. I left this discussion feeling that the school was nurturing children not just with a good education but with a caring and well-balanced outlook on life. This small group had been an inspiration to talk to.

Year 6 self defence

We joined Keiron and Mr Fyfe on the playground for the first lesson being given to Year 6 of self-defence classes. This was hopefully going to be sponsored by Friends of Holy Family School on a regular annual basis.

Keiron went through different scenarios and conflict avoidance rather than practising self-defence moves straight away.

FR NIXON GOMES

During my visit to the school, the Year 1 pupils were enjoying a nice day out in the open. Later, it was time to return to the classroom. Mrs Eardley guided the children to the next activity which was reading poetry together. This activity was full of fun, active participation and the children enjoyed exploring new words with rhyming sentences.



The cohorts were happy to explore and identify actions to words with meanings.

Later they were led to seating in groups where cohorts drew figures and coloured them. The entire poem was finally rehearsed with word and actions. When we finished the activity, it was time for a lunch break. I was warmly welcomed in the classroom and thoroughly enjoyed reading poetry. Well done Mrs Eardley/ Mrs Stanford and Year 1 team.

CONCLUSION

Our remit had been to see for ourselves how the curriculum was being used and adjusted to ensure children caught up with any gaps in their learning during COVID. It is obvious that the staff have worked hard to ensure education loss is at a minimum and, in fact, most children are flourishing once again in the calm, learning environment. There is no evidence that pupil mental health is an issue and the headteacher is working hard to ensure her whole staff team are also kept well balanced and, as much as possible, stress-free during this catch-up period.

I would like to thank all the staff at HFS for allowing the governors the freedom to roam in and out of their work space without any hesitation – including Mr Fyfe’s personal time and the office staff. No-one was out of bounds! They all work so hard as a team to ensure your children are kept safe and feel secure in a learning environment whilst providing a support network to their own colleagues. I would also like to thank all my fellow governors who support me so well and work so hard behind the scenes to support the staff. It is our commitment to continue to do this.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE SCHOOL

