

Roberttown CE (vc) J&I School Governor School Visit Record

Name:Liz Bolt		Date:9.3.21
Purpose of visit: Early Years virtual visit		
Structure/Timetable of the visit: Meet with Mrs Horner		
Key Staff to see:		
Position	Name	
Reception teacher	Mrs Horner	
Key Questions/Issues for Governors to explore: What impact has Covid had on the early years in school? What are the current and future focusses?		

Governor's Observations/Evaluation

Mrs Horner and I spent time discussing how she had managed the challenging practicalities of teaching children both in school and remotely during this last lockdown. She said it was a balancing act, but it had been possible to do three 15 minutes sessions online with the children each day, with the phonics session being for the whole class, and also the story/discussion session being for the whole class at times; maths was delivered in split sessions. This had seemed to work well and the children and staff managed the routine very well once everyone got used to it. Mrs Horner felt it had been very important for the children to come together at least once in the day in order for them to feel part of the class. Mrs Horner also followed up with parents any children that had not been online as expected.

One of the challenges with the remote learning had been supporting parents to understand what was being taught and how; Mrs Horner had helped parents to understand that the learning was being delivered through play, and not through worksheets. Parents had been encouraged to send in photographs of their children's constructions, for example.

Mrs Horner felt that one of the biggest impacts on children during the lockdowns had been the loss of structure to their day, the routines associated with the rhythm of a school and they were missing their friends. Some children were confused as to why some of them were in school and others were not. She also felt that children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) had been impacted quite widely. Children had not had enough time in school to learn and establish their skills in self-regulation, to want to be independent and persevere with challenges, to negotiate with their peers, some of the essential building blocks for learning. As the children came into school in September after the long lockdown between March and June 2020, it was evident that they had missed the social experiences and maturation that occurs in the last term of their development before they enter school. This latest additional extended period away from their friends has continued to impact their PSED. There was some evidence that some children's language and communication skills had benefitted from more one to one time at home, but this is by no means the case for every child.

Children have also missed sensory play and experiences (sand, dough, etc) and the many opportunities for learning that these activities bring, such as maths and science concepts and language development. The loss of wider experiences such as trips and events have also narrowed children's experience and knowledge of the world. It is not going to be possible to make up lost ground by the end of the summer term.

We discussed how relationships with parents had been impacted by the new ways of working and Mrs Horner felt that she was missing the informal interactions with parents at the beginning and end of the school days which can be very useful in supporting children and understanding their needs and she is looking forward to resuming these when it is possible.

We talked about what opportunities Covid may have brought and Mrs Horner felt that it was an opportunity to focus on what really matters for children; children need to have time together, to re-establish as a class group and members of the school community, to learn the vital skills described earlier in terms of PSED so that when these are secure then children will be better able close academic gaps. She felt that new ways of using technology may also be useful in the future.

Mrs Horner told me about Evidence Me, the online learning journal that is being used to capture observations of children's work which is also shared with and accessed by parents. She feels that there has not been enough time using it to see its full potential, but it is certainly time-saving when creating portfolios and parents like it as they can log in to see their child's work and also contribute to the journal.

The Early Years Foundation Stage framework has been revised and this comes into effect in September 2021 and Mrs Horner is expecting that she will be going on some training. She is currently doing some Nuffield speech and language training.

Workload is always an issue for all teachers and Mrs Horner felt that one of the strengths of Roberttown school is the shared sense of everyone working together, being in a team that supports each other. She feels that, going forward, the school has an opportunity reflect on the learning environment and curriculum, and that the school ethos of always putting the child first will bring creative thinking to helping support children with their individual needs, whatever these may be.

My thanks to Mrs Horner for taking the time to talk to me today.

Culture observed in the school

Any Key Issues Arising for the Governing Body:

These very young children have missed a lot of vital experiences during the lockdown periods, particularly those that have not been able to be in the school building. It remains to be seen what impact this is going to have on their later personal development and their attainment and achievement. As part of our monitoring processes, we must be mindful of these difficult days for some considerable time to come.

We must also remain aware of the possible longer term impacts on the school staff team; this time has been difficult and challenging in so many ways, and probably a very different experience for each person.

Despite all the challenges that Covid has brought, there are no doubt opportunities to be welcomed and new ways of doing things that would not have been possible before this; we should explore these and take advantage of them where they make a positive difference for all those in our school community.

Action Following Governing Body Meeting:

Signed: ...Liz Bolt.....Governor