

Summer Term 2019

This term in school...

Welcome to my Headteacher's Letter. Sent home termly it will let you know what's happening in school: at a leadership level, for the whole school and in the classroom.

As we approach the end of the year, I would like to use this term's letter to share staffing information for September 2019. The children will be informed this afternoon (1.7.18) who their teacher will be next year. The children will be meeting their new teacher on Thursday 4th July.

This is my sixth year as headteacher of Amherst and we have worked hard to recruit and retain some exceptional teachers. I am able to inform you of one new appointment. Miss Laura Apps will be joining us in September. We are delighted to welcome Miss Apps back to Amherst as she completed her teacher training here, through the Schools Direct programme in 2017/18. She has since completed her NQT year at Hayes Primary School in Bromley. Miss Apps will be entering her second year of teaching and will be an excellent addition to our team.

Miss Apps attended Sevenoaks School and then studied Combined Honours in Arts (History and Economics) at Durham University. Before training to become a teacher at Amherst, she worked in PR for five years. She is a keen sportswoman playing netball, running and cycling.

We have one internal change this year. Mrs Siddorns (Thurs and Fri) will teach with Miss Foinette (Mon – Wed) in Year 4. Mrs Fox will provide PPA cover.

Staffing structure for 2019/20

Year 3

Miss Apps - Year Group Leader – teaching Butterfly Class

Mrs Wheeler – teaching Ladybird Class

Miss Steptowe – teaching Honey Bee Class

Year 4

Mr Clarke - Year Group Leader - teaching 3S

Miss Foinette (Mon – Wed) and Mrs Siddorns (Thurs and Fri) – teaching 3A

Miss Wonnacott – teaching 3W

Year 5

Mrs Barratt - Year Group Leader – teaching 4W

Miss Jones (Assistant Headteacher) – teaching 4C

Miss Holland – teaching 4F

Year 6

Miss Parish - Year Group Leader – teaching 5H

Mr Barratt – teaching 5J

Miss Apps – teaching 5B

PPA cover and paired teaching will be provided by Mrs Carver (Mon – Wed). PPA cover will also be provided across the school by Mrs Wisdom (two days), Mrs Fox (two days) and Mrs Rawlins (one day). Mrs Lester will begin her maternity leave in September. Miss Huntley is currently still on maternity leave.

Many of you will not be aware that Mrs Sims (School Business Manager) and Mrs King (Finance Officer) will be leaving Amherst at the end of the year. Mrs Sims has been with us for two years and has made a fantastic contribution. She is relocating to Norfolk and we wish her well. Mrs King joined Amherst in 2012 and has been a key member of our admin team. She has successfully managed many transitions within the office and her support and expertise has been greatly valued. Mrs King is taking the opportunity to travel with her husband, something they didn't do as students! We will miss them both very much.

I am delighted to announce that we have appointed Mrs Karen Wicks as our new business manager. She has worked at Lady Boswell's as their business manager for the last nine years. As mentioned in a previous newsletter

we have also appointed Mrs Temi Ogunniyi as Admin Officer who started in June. We look forward to both becoming established members of our admin team. Mrs Skein will continue work in the office and has been promoted to Finance Officer.

Although not mentioned in the staffing structure there are many other people that contribute to your child's learning experience at Amherst. We have a team of sixteen teaching assistants (line managed by Mrs Holmes our Inclusion Manager) who provide 1:1 support, group support and support within the classrooms. We are fortunate to have such a skilled and committed team and their efforts must not go unnoticed. An excellent teacher working with an excellent teaching assistant is a very powerful combination. Beyond the classroom, we have other adults that are all contributing to your child's development, on a daily basis, in many other ways. These include Midday Supervisors, the School Kitchen team, the Office/Admin team, Mr Hucks and the Site Management team, our IT support team, Breakfast Club and After School Club and the governing body. It is a pleasure to be able to lead over sixty committed individuals each day that care deeply about our children and feel proud to work at Amherst. Your child's four year journey is a team effort.

As I reflect at the end of another highly successful year, I find each year has a theme. This theme evolves as the year develops and I am unaware in September of what that theme will be. This year's theme has to be one of high achievement. Highlights of achievement this year have been:

- Successful Ofsted inspection in January – recommended for a Section 5 inspection within 12-18 months in recognition of many areas of excellence. An opportunity for the school to change grading.
- Songs of Praise Young Choir of the Year – incredible achievement to be recognised as one of the top three choirs in the country.
- Sporting achievements – too long a list to name every event! Many school teams represented in county, regional and even national finals and regularly winning Sevenoaks area festivals in a wide range of sports.
- Chess – school teams and individuals winning competitions and competing at such a high standard.
- High academic achievements – high quality teaching and learning enabling an exciting curriculum led by strong teacher subject knowledge.
- Continuing to maintain the right balance of high academic expectations alongside a rich and varied learning experience. Well rounded pupils need far more than just English and maths!
- Continuing to manage a wide range of pupils' needs. There are many pupil pathways to achieve the same outcome.
- Strong emphasis on our school values led PSHE curriculum – it has such a positive impact on the culture of our school.
- Creating and maintaining positive relationships with children and parents – good relationships are at the center of every successful school.

Yet again, it is a period of change within education. A new Ofsted framework will be in place from September 2019. I normally don't spend too much time focusing on the Ofsted framework, trusting that doing what we believe in will match Ofsted's view of what a successful school should be like. This approach also ensures we deliver a learning experience that is bespoke to Amherst children, living in Sevenoaks, rather than slavishly following every national agenda. However, this new framework is quite good! It places emphasis on a rich and varied curriculum and the importance of extra-curricular. Schools having strong ownership of their curriculum, ensuring its design and intent matches the needs of their pupils. A focus on ensuring schools do not narrow their curriculum, spending too much time on English and maths (teaching to the test). Recognising the need for learning to enter children's long-term memory rather than just quick chunks of learning not placed in any context.

I feel confident that Amherst is well placed to perform successfully under the new framework when we are next inspected. Many areas of school life that Amherst have always considered essential, are now being recognised as good practice. I will continue to do what we believe in, as it provides integrity and honesty when justifying our approach to teaching and learning. It is also good to try to remain one-step ahead!

Finally, I would encourage you to be kind to yourself as a parent. Parenting is hard, even when it is going well. We are all trying to do the best we can for our children whilst juggling such busy lives. We will all make mistakes. Our children only get their childhood once, give them opportunities to relax and have fun alongside all the achieving. Try joining in with them when they are having fun rather than telling them to wait a minute!

I wish you all a wonderful summer break when it arrives and hope to see many of you at the performances of 'Mary Poppins', 'The Summer BBQ' and Sports Day.