

Summer Term 2020

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 2020. Welcome to new Year 3 parents who will be reading my Headteacher's Letter for the first time.

As I come to end of my seventh year as headteacher at Amherst, I reflect on it being like no other in my career. None of us could imagine when the academic year began in September how life would change due to the pandemic. So many areas of life that we took for granted have changed. The impact on families who have suffered illness or bereavement due to the virus. In tough times, I always try to count my blessings and consider myself lucky when comparing my experience with others. I have encountered immense disruption and challenges through my job but the core elements of my life that really matter are still in place.

I have been so proud of how the whole Amherst community (children, staff, parents and governors) have adapted and coped with the challenges that this situation has presented.

Children have had to understand how to learn in a different style through Google Classroom. They have had to adapt to minimal social interaction with their peer group, which has been so tough. Not being able to be with your friends has been one of the hardest elements for all children. Regarding learning, children will have had such a variable experience. Some children may have thrived under home schooling with less distractions and 1:1 support. For some children the experience will have been very different and a gap in learning will have developed with their peer group. For most, it will be somewhere in the middle. As I have communicated previously, in the Reid household we have good days and bad days.

Staff have adapted to so many different ways of working. Whether it is creating and managing Google Classroom to teaching the Key Worker classes on a rota. The Year 6 team (TAs and teachers) responded brilliantly to enable all day every day provision to 93% of the children. This has included three HLTAs teaching full time. Admin staff have provided a mixture of working remotely from home and in school to ensure the school continues to run smoothly. Midday supervisors have provided lunchtime cover to enable teachers to have a lunchbreak throughout. The cleaning team have adapted to wearing protective equipment and the increased responsibility of how crucial their role is during this period. I cannot thank staff enough for their support, commitment and enthusiasm to make the best of a difficult situation.

Governors have had to adapt their role to Zoom meetings and the challenges of helping run the school remotely. A huge responsibility has been placed on the governing body to ensure that the actions taken by the school follow DfE guidance and provide a safe environment for children and staff. The governing body have continued to manage the difficult balance of holding the school to account but also offering support and encouragement.

Finally you as **parents**. Be proud of what you have achieved so far. Thank you for all you have done and continue to do during this period of school closure. I know it continues to be a blend of immense reward, frustration and at times despair! I am sure we all agree that the best place for children is in school. Remember you have done the best you can under such difficult circumstances. You will all have faced such a range of demands on your time, work commitments and your own resilience. There will be many positives that will have been experienced by your child and family amongst the negatives. Children are adaptable and any gaps in learning I believe will be caught up once they are back at school. Our focus will be ensuring that children are where they should be by July 2021 not the end of September 2020.

As I normally would in this summer term letter, I would like to share the staffing structure for next year and which teacher will teach your child. I am fortunate to retain the same excellent teaching team.

Staffing structure for 2020/21

Year 3

Miss Apps - Year Group Leader – teaching Hedgehog Class

Mrs Wheeler – teaching Fox Class

Miss Steptowe – teaching Badger Class

Year 4

Mr Clarke - Year Group Leader - teaching 3A

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

Miss Wonnacott – teaching 3W

Year 5

Mrs Barratt - Year Group Leader – teaching 4SF

Miss Jones (Assistant Headteacher) – teaching 4C

Miss Holland – teaching 4W

Year 6

Miss Parish - Year Group Leader – teaching 5B

Mr Barratt – teaching 5J

Mrs Davies – teaching 5H

Paired teaching or catch up programmes will be provided by Mrs Carver (Mon – Wed) and Miss Huntley (Thurs – Fri). 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 provide PPA and Assistant Headteacher release time for 5J one day a week.

At Amherst, we are well placed to run catch programmes from September for all, not just disadvantaged and vulnerable children. For many years we have utilised the paired teaching model. Paired teaching provides two teachers supporting a class to enable the teacher to lead or the paired teacher to lead. This provides 1:1 or group support by their own class teacher or the paired teacher.

For the last seven years we have provided 1:1 tuition to all our Pupil Premium children. It is no coincidence that the models the DfE and Education Endowment Trust are recommending are ones in place already at Amherst. Our approach has always been to ensure strategies deployed are research based.

Current indicators are that all children will be returning to school in September, which is excellent news. We are still waiting for further information from the DfE regarding the restrictions and protective measures that will need to be in place. Once we have these we will need time to think, plan and then communicate with you.

I hope the restrictions are minimal and that we have all children in, all day, every day. We are preparing a contingency plan if that is not the case to maximise every child being in school every day even if it is not for the full day.

We are entering a confusing time for parents, staff and children where the easing of restrictions at the beginning of July in wider society, may feel contradictory compared to the restrictions schools are operating under. This whole process has been full of contradictions! Quite rightly, the focus has shifted to September but we still have the last three weeks of term to experience at home and school.

The last day of the summer term will be Tuesday 21st July. I hope there is a chance for your family to have some form of summer holiday. We will continue to keep you informed of any changes but let us travel hopefully that we will all be back together in September.

Best wishes

Mr Reid