

Spring 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.

I would like to start this term's letter with an update on the Grand Designs Project. If you are not aware this project is split into two phases. Phase 1 to create a new building that will enable us to expand our Breakfast and After School Clubs and an additional multi-purpose space to be used during the school day. Phase 2 is to replace the Year 3 temporary classrooms through obtaining a successful DfE Conditions and Improvement Fund grant.

After our successful launch event on Wednesday 13th November good progress has been made. Having explored a range of options, we have commissioned Carmen Austin architects who are now completing the design so we can move to submitting a planning application. Regarding fundraising, the PTA are providing fantastic support by organising a range of new and existing events. A significant difference at the Christmas Bazaar was the increase in matched funding. We received twenty-three matched funding offers for the Bazaar compared to seven in total for all events last year. The value of those additional matched funds is potentially approx. £20,000. Please explore if your employer offers a matched funding scheme as it makes such a difference. Including last year's PTA funds raised, donations to the school and this year's fund raising, we have currently raised approx. £107,000. Despite this being a large sum there is still much to do! Our original target was to raise £150,000. Early quotes are indicating that Phase 1 is more likely to cost closer to £200,000.

Thank you to Suse Goodwin and the PTA team who are working hard to enable us to achieve our target. Thank you also to you as parents for attending the events and donating so generously. A good example was the recent Quiz Night, which was well attended and had a great atmosphere. Thank you to Mr and Mrs Smith (3W) for organising the event. I wasn't going to mention that the staff team won but as you can see I couldn't resist. At least you can be reassured that your children are being taught by specialists in identifying cartoon characters, sport and film theme tunes! The PTA will continue to inform you of further forthcoming fundraising events. If you wish to make a donation please do this via www.schoolgateway.com.

On Thursday 6th February myself, Miss Jones (Assistant Headteacher and PSHE Leader), Miss Foinette (Computing Leader), Miss Wonnacott (Computing Leader) and Mrs Newman (specialist Computing teacher) completed a working party day focused on Online Safety. Our objective was to ensure we have a curriculum that teaches the children online safety from Years 3-6 in an engaging and relevant style. A key resource we have used is ProjectEvolve. It provides objectives and resources that create a curriculum that delivers our intentions. We want all children to leave Amherst having had four years of progressive online safety education that prepares them for secondary school. We want to be proactive rather than reactive. Our aspirational objective is that we will avoid the repetitive scenario of children being given their own digital devices (particualy in Years 5/6 in preparation for secondary school) but not equipped to make good choices and manage the impact on their mental, emotional and physical health.

I have copied below further information about ProjectEVOLVE www.projectevolve.co.uk. Hopefully you will agree that the eight strands chosen are exactly what our children need to be learning and exploring. By increasing their subject knowledge and awareness they will hopefully interact confidently and safely online. A key area we will also promote is the need for children to look out for each other online. Research shows that a child's peer group will be the first to notice a negative change in online behaviour rather than parents. We need to teach our children that they have a responsibility to keep each other safe and seek adult help when needed. Even if this means sharing a concern about a friend.

Regarding children bringing mobile phones to school, we have noticed a dramatic increase in Year 6 children bringing their phones to the office. Please could you check and reinforce that your child should **only** be bringing a phone to school if they are walking to school. Children should not have any devices in school that can connect to the internet or have a camera. This includes watches.

Thank you to everyone (two hundred and ten) who completed our annual parent questionnaire in December 2019. Please see the end of this letter for the outcomes. As a leadership team we reflect on the outcomes and identify any areas that we can improve. Thank you for the written feedback as that helps explain a response and gives us more information than just a tick. The outcomes were generally very positive and I am pleased that in most areas of school life we are getting it right. I am aware that your child's experience of Amherst is a personal one and each individual's views and feelings are important even if the majority feel something different.

Thank you to all parents who attended our reading afternoon on Friday 14th February. Approx. eighty people attended and the children thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to hear favourite childhood stories. I'm sure many have been inspired to go on and read the books themselves. On the theme of reading, we look forward to welcoming author Jeremy Strong to Amherst on Wednesday 4th March and celebrating World Book Day on 5th March.

I hope you and your children have a successful and happy Term 4.

Best Wishes

Andrew Reid

ProjectEVOLVE principles

UK Safer Internet Centre had worked with the UKCIS Education group to create the framework "Education for a Connected World" released by UKCIS and UK government in February 2018. This was a radical refocus on what our expectations and the outcomes should be for children and young people when educating and supporting their lives online.

The framework is challenging, relevant and detailed with over 330 statements covering an age range from 3 years old right up to 18.

Eight strands cover all aspects of online life:

- **Self Image and Identity:** shaping online identities and how media impacts on gender and stereotypes
- **Managing Online Relationships:** relationships and behaviours that may lead to harm and how positive online interaction can empower and amplify voice.
- **Online Reputation:** strategies to manage personal digital content effectively and capitalise on technology's capacity to create effective positive profiles
- **Online Bullying:** strategies for effective reporting and intervention and bullying and other aggressive behaviour relates to legislation
- **Managing Online Information:** offers strategies for effective searching, critical evaluation and ethical publishing
- **Health, Wellbeing and Lifestyle:** understanding negative behaviours and issues amplified and sustained by online technologies and the strategies for dealing with them
- **Privacy and Security:** behavioural and technical strategies to limit impact on privacy and protect data and systems against compromise.
- **Copyright and Ownership:** protecting personal content and crediting the rights of others as well as addressing potential consequences of illegal access, download and distribution.

Whole School Parent Questionnaire outcomes December 2019

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
1. My child is happy at this school.	171 (81.5%)	36 (17%)	1 (0.5%)		2 (1%)
2. My child feels safe at this school.	182 (87%)	28 (13%)			
3. My child makes good progress at this school.	167 (80%)	42 (19.5%)	1 (0.5%)		
4. My child is well looked after at this school.	178 (85%)	32 (15%)			
5. My child is taught well at this school.	173 (82%)	37 (18%)			
6. My child receives appropriate homework for their age.	130 (62%)	74 (35%)	4 (2%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)
7. This school makes sure its pupils are well behaved.	161 (77%)	45 (21%)	3 (1.5%)	1 (0.5%)	
8. This school deals effectively with bullying.	109 (52%)	65 (31%)	5 (2.5%)	1 (0.5%)	30 (14%)
9. This school is well led and managed.	190 (90%)	20 (10%)			
10. This school responds well to any concerns I raise.	155 (74%)	46 (22%)	1 (0.5%)		8 (3.5%)
11. I receive valuable information from the school about my child's progress.	130 (62%)	75 (35.5%)	5 (2.5%)		
12. Would you recommend this school to another parent?	187 (89%)	21 (10%)			2 (1%)