



# Amherst School

Headteacher • Mr A B Reid

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8 July 2021

Dear Staff and Parents

I'm Louise Austin and I'm writing to you as the new Chair of Governors at Amherst, as well as a fellow parent and former pupil. First, and most importantly, I'd like to extend a huge thank you to each and every member of staff at Amherst. This year has presented continual challenges and you have all stepped up to provide our children with the best Amherst experience possible within the ever-changing rules and guidelines.

As a parent it's been strange to be so physically removed from school life this year; I have missed walking the corridors and seeing the beautiful displays of writing and artwork, attending tear-jerking performances and buzzing fundraisers as well as absorbing the atmosphere at open afternoons and parents' evenings. But out of sight has not meant out of mind; I can see daily how happy the children are to be back in school and their excitement at dressing up for themed days, filming the year 6 production and heading off site for trips. As well as these welcome and exciting steps towards normality, I'd like to take a moment to appreciate the extra effort that is ongoing to run the school in bubbles; this has meant a huge amount of additional work to run staggered lunch sittings, to operate breakfast and after school clubs in zones in the hall, to coordinate the use of equipment so that each year group can still enjoy a full sports and ICT curriculum, as well as providing an excellent remote learning offering and key worker provision during lockdowns. Amherst staff have gone many extra miles this year, often working additional hours and in new and challenging roles; your dedication is humbling. Even as life outside of school opens up, we appreciate your continued efforts to keep our children and the wider Amherst community safe.

I have big shoes to fill by stepping into this role; David Hale has chaired the board of Governors for over 11 years and it has been an honour to work alongside him and Emily Grier, our Vice-Chair, while I've been getting up to speed. He has given Amherst many hours of voluntary service over many years and has kindly agreed to remain on the Board, so I am delighted we will still have access to his expertise. Before writing this, I asked David what he considers his biggest contribution to the school over his long tenure and, without hesitation, his answer was the Board's appointment of Mr Reid as Headteacher. It is a legacy he is rightly proud of, and we are very lucky at Amherst that our school is in such a safe pair of hands. Mr Reid's openness, positivity and dedication have been an inspiration in a year that has tested the resilience of schools like no other. The children are at the heart of every decision he makes and I am grateful, both as a Governor and a parent, for the energy he pours into Amherst and for his unwavering enthusiasm for school life, even while making Plans B, C, D and E.

Although we haven't been able to celebrate our usual annual milestones together, our PTA has pulled out all the stops both to raise funds for the school and to help us have fun as a community. In a period when many PTAs have scaled back their operations in the light of restrictions, our Committee has continued to innovate and organise with good humour and boundless energy. The wider Amherst community has helped make these events a reality, giving generously of your time and money to support the school. You have kept our community spirit alive when we've been unable to gather in person and you've been incredibly generous in response to fundraising for the Grand Designs project. Through this period of uncertainty, your willingness to adapt and contribute has really paid off and the funds raised will help the school for many years to come.

So many people make Amherst special and I am grateful for you all. I hope you find time over the summer to relax and recuperate.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise Austin', written in a cursive style.

Louise Austin

(Class of '94)