

Spring Term 2021

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 is to create a new building that will enable us to support our Breakfast and After School Clubs and provide an additional multi-purpose space to be used during the school day. Phase 2 is to replace the Year 3 classrooms.

Despite the challenges presented by COVID restrictions, the PTA have continued to do a magnificent job creating virtual events and fund raising opportunities. Thank you to all of you as parents for attending those events and being so generous in your financial support.

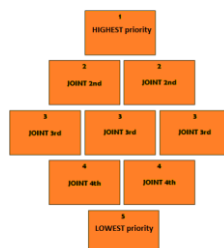
Over the last two years the PTA has raised an incredible £132,000 to put towards the building of Phase 1, which will cost approx. £200,000. With a final fund raising effort and use of historic donations, which have been saved for such a project, I feel confident the cost of the project will be met. It is highly unusually for a junior school community to be able to self-fund a project of this scale. It is testament to the strength of our community and your commitment to want to improve the school environment for current and future children.

A planning application has been submitted and we are hopeful that the build will commence this academic year with a suggested approx. build time of four months. Please see the end of this letter for drawings (completed by architect Carmen Austin) of this exciting new building development.

COVID has created challenges in all industries not just education. My leadership skills and experience have been put to the test many times. I continue to look for new opportunities to develop as a leader ensuring I am the best Headteacher I can be for Amherst School.

An element of my development that I greatly enjoy and value is attending group coaching sessions with other headteachers. For the last five years I have been part of a coaching programme called Headspace. We meet five times a year and have continued to do so virtually throughout the pandemic. The sessions have been of immense value through such a challenging period. The opportunity to share worries and concerns with a like-minded peer group who truly understand the demands of leading a school has been fantastic. Our coach John is highly skilled at coaching/questioning us to be reflective and enable clarity on some of those difficult decisions that need to be taken. We are often given tasks to complete between sessions and the latest one I have included below. It might be helpful for you to complete yourself if you feel now is a good time to reflect on recent experiences and changes to our lives.

Read the following caring for statements. What are you spending most time "caring for" at the moment? How has this changed in the last year? Arrange the statements in a diamond, 1 at top, then a row of 2, then a row of 3, then a row of 2 and then a row of 1. At the top place the one you are spending most time on, at the bottom least time.



- **Caring for own time and interests**
- **Caring for work**
- **Caring for family**
- **Caring for health/fitness**
- **Caring for friendships**
- **Caring for love/partner**
- **Caring for 'other' (insert one personal to you)**
- **Caring for 'other' (insert one personal to you)**

This technique can be a useful strategy to be honest with yourself about how your time is currently being spent. Taking the time to reflect can give you the opportunity to check your time is being used in the right areas for you and your family to be happy and successful.

As restrictions hopefully begin to ease I look forward to the opportunities that it will bring for the children. I must admit there is a part of me that is fearful of how busy our lives are suddenly going to become again. Juggling the demands of winter and summer sports crammed into one short season could be challenging!

Children and staff have worked so hard since being back at school from 8th March. Don't be surprised if your child's emotions have been up and down recently. They have been required to manage many changes. They are tired from being back in school even if they won't admit it!

We are holding Zoom parent consultations the second and third weeks back after the Easter holidays. This will give your child's teacher the opportunity to discuss with you how your child has settled since returning to school and areas to focus on if there are any gaps in their learning.

I am looking forward to a great summer term, but first, I hope you all have a wonderful Easter break.

Please remember we return to school on Monday 19th April.

Best Wishes

Andrew Reid