

Autumn Term 2022

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.

Now in my tenth year (which I can't quite believe!) as Headteacher of Amherst it is a chance to reflect on the achievements of last year and focus on the development priorities for this year.

Firstly, welcome to all new children and families in Year 3 and other year groups. I hope your first months at Amherst have been a positive experience. The Buddy system in Year 3 continues to be a success and helped aid transition into Year 3, especially on the first morning. We also try to ensure that the Buddy system continues beyond just the first day.

Last year in May for the first time in three years, due to the pandemic, our Year 6 pupils completed their SATs exams. These are national tests completed by all children across the country assessing their ability in reading, writing, maths, grammar, punctuation and spelling. The children performed brilliantly, achieving significantly above the national average in all areas. Amherst school is placed in the top 20% nationally for attainment in all areas and for progress in reading and maths.

To achieve such high attainment and progress measures is a strong indicator of high quality teaching and learning. The progress measures I am particularly proud of as this is the direct impact of our excellent teaching team. Historically, it has been very hard to achieve a writing progress measure above 0 (which is the national average). We have worked so hard over the last nine years to gradually increase this measure. A progress measure of 1 in writing is our highest ever!

Writing continues to be assessed by teachers in each individual school rather than a written exam. For a child to be at the Expected Standard in reading, maths and GPS they needed to score 100 + with the maximum score being 120. For a child to be assessed as achieving a High Score they needed to score 110+.

Well done and thank you to all the children and teaching team for their hard work. This cohort had Years 4 and 5 disrupted by school closures. The national picture has been for standards to fall in writing and maths. Amherst has managed to buck the national trend which we are immensely proud of.

Subject		School	National
Reading, Writing & Maths Combined %	Expected Standard	89	59
	Higher standard	26	7
Reading %	Expected Standard+	92	74
	High score (110+)	58	27
Writing %	Expected Standard+	90	69
	Greater Depth	34	14
Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling %	Expected Standard+	91	72
	High score (110+)	62	25

Subject		School	National
Maths %	Expected Standard+	92	71
	High score (110+)	62	21
Reading average Scaled score		110	105
GPS average scaled score		111	105
Maths average scaled score		110	104
Reading progress score (confidence interval in brackets)		1.9 (0.6 to 3.3)	
Writing progress score (confidence interval in brackets)		1.0 (-0.2 to 2.3)	
Mathematics progress score (confidence interval in brackets)		2.1 (0.9 to 3.3)	

Kent Test

Seventy-nine Year 6 children sat the Kent Test (11+) on Thursday 8th September. Sixty-four (68% of the year group) passed the test. Well done to all children, teachers and parents. It is a team effort.

School Improvement Plan

At the beginning of every year, schools write a School Improvement Plan. I would like to share with you the three key priorities on our plan for this year:

1. To review and improve medium term planning in foundation subjects to ensure content selected to teach is precise and clear progression from Years 3 to 6 is achieved.
2. Use of four key questions/skills/knowledge in each foundation subject unit to help assess children's retrieval and retention of skills and knowledge taught.
3. To improve the outdoor environment to enhance the children's experience and development during playtime, lunchtime and curriculum time.

The SIP has 19 priorities in total. Some are recurring priorities, which have become standing items such as: *High expectations of pupil progress in all year groups.* And: *To ensure all teaching and learning is Good or better.*

Child of St Kilda

The most recent whole school book project has been a huge success. Corridor, classroom and hall displays for each year group are due to go up by the end of this week. It is one of my favourite times of the year as the children's artwork and writing starts to appear on the walls. The children are always so keen to see what the other year groups have done. This level of engagement and pride is one of the major benefits of a whole school project. I look forward to sharing pictures with you shortly. Next time you are in school please take the chance to look at the displays.

I continue to try to teach a different class each Friday morning. It enables me to get to know the children better and get a feel for how their class is progressing. The children get to know me as a teacher and a person, which helps develop positive relationships.

Year 4 Christmas show rehearsals have begun this week and I have been listening to the choir and school practising Christmas carols. I look forward to seeing many of you at the Year 4 Christmas Variety Show performances, Christmas Bazaar (Saturday 3rd December) and the Carol Service (Monday 12th December) at St. Mary's.

If you ever feel the need to come and speak to me, please don't hesitate to contact the office. If I am available, I am always happy to chat immediately and if not, make an appointment.

Best Wishes

Andrew Reid