

## Autumn Term 2023

### *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 eleventh year 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.

In May 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 (GPS). The children performed brilliantly, achieving significantly above the national average in all areas.

To achieve such high attainment and progress measures (progress made between Year 2 SATs and Year 6 SATs) is a strong indicator of high-quality teaching and learning. The progress measure is judged against the national average which is 0. You can have both positive and negative progress measures. If your progress measure is positive it is above the national average.

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 3 and 4 disrupted by school closures so it is especially pleasing to see this group of children still performing significantly above the national average.

Subject		School	National
Reading, Writing & Maths %	Expected Standard	81	59
	Higher standard	20	8
Reading %	Expected Standard+	90	73
	High score (110+)	50	29
Writing %	Expected Standard+	86	71
	Greater Depth	24	13
GPS %	Expected Standard+	88	72
	High score (110+)	40	30
Maths %	Expected Standard+	89	73
	High score (110+)	56	24

Subject		School	National
Reading average Scaled score		109	105
GPS average scaled score		108	105
Maths average scaled score		109	104
Reading progress score		1.1	0.0
Writing progress score		0.5	0.0
Mathematics progress score		2.2	0.0

### **Kent Test**

Eighty-one Year 6 children sat the Kent Test (11+) on Thursday 8th September. Fifty-seven (59% of the whole year group) passed the test. The expectation is that 25% of all children would pass 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.

These three key priorities are the same as last year as we are half way through a two-year project to improve our foundation subjects' curriculum. So far, we have successfully reviewed and created improved curriculums in History, Geography, Art, SPaG (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar) and PSHE. Our planning process has involved each year group leader and relevant subject leader working together for two days, per subject, out of class. This has ensured a high-quality outcome and excellent collaborative working across all four groups. Our curriculum flows lesson by lesson from Year 3 to Year 6. Thank you to the leadership team who have worked so hard on this project. 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*.

### **Christmas Bazaar Fund Raising**

I am looking forward to Saturday's Christmas Bazaar which always a wonderfully festive event. If you have not been to an Amherst Christmas Bazaar before then you are in for a treat. This year's funds will be going towards our project to improve the outdoor environment for the children to use at playtime and lunchtime. We have a working party in place, who met in September, consisting of representatives from the PTA, governing body and school staff. We are using the same project manager who was so effective in enabling the creation of the Jubilee building. As detailed in last week's newsletter, please explore if you are eligible to access matched funding through your employer. When fund raising for the Jubilee building the PTA raised an amazing £150,000 of which £75,000 was donated through match funding. It really does make a huge difference.

**The Dam**

The most recent whole school book project has been a huge success. Corridor, classroom and hall displays for each year group are being finished as I write this letter. 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.

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 Show performances, Christmas Bazaar (Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> December) and the Carol Service (Monday 11<sup>th</sup> 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