

Spring Term 2024

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.

The children and staff have been working hard to complete our whole school book project on *Moth*. The projects were introduced many years ago to raise standards in writing and create a sense of excitement. Both objectives were achieved and the artwork created has become an important part of the projects too. As often happens in education areas of need go in cycles. Raising standards in writing is once again a key area for schools to focus on. The whole school book projects create the opportunity for children to draft their writing and then complete it again for the displays. This process is key for children to become more proficient writers. It is rare that your first attempt is your best.

I wanted to provide an update regarding the work we have been completing revising our curriculum over the last eighteen months. Since November 2022 our year group leaders (Year 3 Miss Wonnacott, Year 4 Mr Clarke, Year 5 Mrs Archer and Year 6 Mr Barratt) have been collaborating with subject leaders to rewrite and improve our curriculum in History, Geography, PSHE, Punctuation and Grammar, Art, and Design and Technology.

Our curriculum journey began in the summer term 2022, when as a leadership team we had to decide which subjects needed reviewing and what areas in each subject needed improving. A clear focus of this project was to create a curriculum that flowed from lesson one in Year 3 to the final lesson in Year 6 for that subject. We wanted to have one document (what schools call a medium-term plan) for each subject that contained all the necessary information for class teachers to follow. Important vocabulary was identified for each unit and how that vocabulary builds over four years. Four key questions were created for each unit with the intention that children would be able to answer them once the sequence of lessons have been experienced. These questions provide the opportunity for teachers to check children's understanding of the concepts taught.

Each subject has taken approximately two days to complete. This has involved the four year groups leaders and subject leader working together out of class. It has been fantastic to observe the high level of collaboration by five experienced and skilled colleagues utilising their knowledge of teaching and learning. They have been passionate about creating a curriculum that is interesting to teach and engaging for children to experience, with a bit of fun in there too! I am fortunate to have such a strong leadership team and capable staff to delegate to. The quality of the curriculum that has been produced is excellent. It has been a rare chance to enable professionals to have time to carefully consider what we are teaching (following the National Curriculum) and in what order.

I always considered this to be a four year project and we are now entering the second phase. As we start delivering the revised curriculum we can assess the impact on the children and what it is like to teach. A school's curriculum is never finished and is an ever developing document. As teacher's provide feedback, lessons will need to be adapted and continually refined. The true test will be when a child has completed all four years. This is why schools need to be stable after a significant change so impact can be measured.

A well sequenced curriculum is one small part of enabling every child to make good progress and enjoy coming to school. Positive relationships between children and adults is vital to enable children to feel valued and cared for. The wide range of clubs on offer are a key ingredient too. I'm sure there are many days when a child is excited to come to school because of a particular club they are attending that day. We all need things to look forward to each day.

I would like to finish by sharing an amusing anecdote from this term. As you will be aware, we have had some electrical issues since January which have at times been quite disruptive and created a certain level of stress. On one such occasion I was on my way to attend a course when I had a phone call from Miss Jones explaining that we had an electrical issue once more. I changed direction and headed straight to school but I was not wearing my usual suit and tie. A moment of lightness occurred as I was walking around school that morning when a Year 5 child said 'I like your outfit Mr Reid'. It made me smile and was a much needed moment of humour! As an update, UK Power Network and NPower are carrying out work during the Easter holidays which will hopefully provide a permanent fix to the issue.

Thank you for continued support to improve children's attendance. The national picture is still one of great concern with the latest figures showing that one in five children have attendance of less than 90% which is classified as persistently absent. It is pleasing that at Amherst our whole school attendance figure has been improving by 1% each of the last two years. We are

getting closer to the pre Covid levels of 96-97%. Hopefully the Easter holidays will provide a break from the current bugs and viruses that are affecting children and staff.

I look forward to seeing many of you at Open Afternoon on Friday 15th March (tomorrow) and then parents' evening the following week. If I don't see you before the end of term I hope you all have a wonderful break over Easter.

Best Wishes

Andrew Reid