

Summer 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.

Welcome to new Year 3 parents who will be reading my Headteacher's letter for the first time. As we approach the end of the year, I would like to use this term's letter to share staffing information for September 2024.

As I come to end of my eleventh year as headteacher at Amherst, I reflect on what has been another highly successful year. Our vision is to *Inspire Every Pupil* and I have observed many examples this year of children being highly engaged and enjoying their learning.

I am fortunate Amherst has such a strong positive culture of achievement for all which has been present for many years and something I inherited and have worked hard to sustain.

I would like to use this letter as an opportunity to promote the importance of reading in a child's early life. It is no coincidence that I have yet to find a high achieving pupil that doesn't read regularly or not have a love of reading. Reading habits start from birth. It is a common misconception for some parents that reading starts when your child begins school and has to start to learn to read. You may be lucky and have one of those children who almost taught themselves to read independently. Again, I am yet to met very many of those.

Early reading involves a baby and then toddler being read to by their parents. This is the groundwork and foundation enabling a child to become interested in books. It grows their vocabulary from an early age and models reading. I have a growing concern that these early reading habits are being lost or the value of them under estimated. It takes time every day and as busy parents it can be low on the priority list especially if your child doesn't initially seem that interested. Perseverance is needed. Sadly, more often now a child will have spent far more time on a screen than having early reading experiences. Screens can be great pacifiers for young children but this will be the habit that is created rather than other areas such as reading. For some children it takes years to develop positive reading habits. A small group of children will always have a specific educational need that will have an impact on their ability to read. It will be even harder for those children to develop positive reading habits as their early experiences of reading could be one of failure.

It can be hard to develop and sustain reading for pleasure. You may introduce your child to book after book which they start but don't finish. They struggle to have the resilience or desire to finish the books they begin. So often a flashy cover gets them interested but the words themselves don't seem to sustain that interest. Don't give up! My personal experience as a parent of three children has been so varied regarding reading. My oldest child (Year 9) always wanted to read and it was not an area we had to work particularly hard on. For my daughter, reading for pleasure has only really occurred recently in Year 7. My youngest child is in Year 4 and shows signs of reading for pleasure independently but it is not there yet.

So, my message is:

Remember how important reading is for every child and that it is a long journey to develop reading for pleasure. Stick at it, as it will only bring positive outcomes.

I would like to share the staffing structure for next year and which teacher will teach your child.

Staffing structure for 2024/25

Year 3

3B – Mr Barratt - Year Group Leader – teaching Kestrel Class

3WH – Mrs Wheeler (Mon – Wed) and Miss Huntley (Thurs and Fri) – teaching Eagle Class

3CL - Mrs Carver (Mon – Wed) and Mrs Lester (Thurs and Fri) – teaching Falcon Class

Year 4

4C - Mr Clarke - Year Group Leader - teaching 3CL

4SF - Miss Foinette (Mon – Wed) and Mrs Siddorns (Thurs and Fri) – teaching 3W

4T - Miss Harvey (will be Mrs Thomas from September) – teaching 3H

Year 5

5A - Mrs Archer - Year Group Leader – teaching 4C

5J - Miss Jones (Assistant Headteacher) – teaching 4S

5HR – Mr Hafford-Robson – teaching 4SF

Year 6

6MW – Miss Wonnacott - Year Group Leader – teaching 5A

6A - Miss Apps (Mon, Tues, Wed and Fri) and Mrs Fox (Thursday) – teaching 5J

6W – Miss Watson – teaching 5HR

Inclusion Manager

Mrs Billing – Mon, Tues, Thurs and Fri

PPA cover will be provided by Mrs Davies, Mrs Fox, Mrs Carver and Mrs Barratt.

Recruitment and retention are a challenge so I am pleased to have such a strong teaching team in place. Staffing is always a key priority, as your child's teacher is the person who will have the most impact on their social, emotional and academic progress.

We have several staff who are leaving and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their hard work.

As some of you may be aware Mrs Talliss (reception desk) has been absent for a long period of time due to illness. She has made the difficult decision to leave Amherst. Mrs Talliss joined the Amherst team in September 2006. She has been an integral part of our admin team supporting so many children, parents and staff over the years. She even used to come on our Year 6 residential trip each year. Her hard work and dedication over 18 years is admirable.

Congratulations to Miss Cable and Mr Taylor who have both secured teaching posts having spent the last few years training. Both have been brilliant teaching assistants and will be greatly missed. Good luck to both of them as they begin their teaching careers.

Congratulations to Mrs Mais who has been training to become a teacher with 6B this year. She too has secured a teaching post for September and we wish her every success.

We are also saying goodbye to Miss Rogers and Mrs Ekambaram (both teaching assistants) who will be moving on to a change of career in September. Thank you to both of them for all their hard work and the wonderful support they have provided to many children.

Mrs Roy (catering manager) will be leaving at the end of this term. She joined us in November 2020 and has helped sustain and improve our wonderful school kitchen. We wish Mrs Roy every luck in her new job.

I am delighted to be able to announce that we have appointed Miss Smith (current assistant cook) to the role of catering manager. I'm sure she will be a fantastic replacement for Mrs Roy and I look forward to eating many more delicious lunches in the future!

I am also pleased to announce that we have appointed Mrs Hansford (reception desk) as a permanent replacement for Mrs Talliss. Mrs Hansford has done a super job covering Mrs Talliss absence.

Thank you to all staff – teachers, teaching assistants, kitchen, midday team, breakfast club, after school club, office/reception and premises/cleaning team who are vital to the children's success and smooth running of the school. I would also like to thank music teachers, sports coaches and volunteers that have helped contribute to our superb educational offer.

I look forward to seeing many of you when attending this year's summer production 'Lion King'. The children having been working so hard and can't wait to perform. The PTA Summer BBQ on Saturday 6th July and Sports Day on Monday 22nd July will be other highlights to look forward to.

If I do not see you before the end of term, I hope you all have a wonderful summer holiday.

Best wishes

Mr Reid