

Spring Term 2025

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 began writing this term's letter by reading the first headteacher's letter I wrote in the spring term 2014. This was at the end of my second seasonal term as the new headteacher of Amherst. The letter focused on recent sporting success, fundraising for the NSPCC, a new Marking policy and the purchase of 32 laptops. My first cohort of Year 6 children will now be in their early twenties. One of the most satisfying elements of being a headteacher at the same school for a longer period of time, is hearing about the successes and achievements of past pupils. It is always a timely reminder of the impact we have on children during these crucial formative years.

Tuesday night's Music Festival was a good example of the positive impact we can have on children. Developing an interest in music by either learning an instrument or singing in the choir can have a lifelong influence. The experiences gained help develop the wiring of a child's brain and emotional responses. It is good for the soul. It increases our self-esteem and gives us the possession of something that can become a great source of happiness. Learning a musical instrument requires commitment and hard work. There will be many times when you don't want to practice. But when you have the opportunity to play with others or perform to an audience it all becomes worth it.

As a child I played the trumpet from Year 4, which led to me studying Music at university. I don't think I practised voluntarily until I was about 14 years old! Therefore, I am incredibly grateful to my parents who made me practise and ignored my arguments when I didn't want to play. I felt like I was the only one in my friendship group who had to learn an instrument because that was what my family did. Looking back as an adult, I can see that this actually gave me a strong identity and deep down I was proud to be a member of the Reid family. My parents stood up for what they believed in. My mother did not have the opportunity to learn an instrument as a child or adult and was determined this was something all her children would experience.

As I progressed with practice and good teaching I was 'encouraged' to then audition and join groups such as orchestras and brass bands. This led to being part of the Hampshire County Youth Orchestra for many years culminating in becoming the principal trumpet in my final year at 17. I had the opportunity to tour America at 16 and then New Zealand at 18. I remember those tours vividly and they had a long-lasting positive impact on me in so many different ways.

It is not just music that can provide these opportunities, sport is very similar too. What is important is that every child finds something they are good at. This needs to be nurtured, supported and encouraged. The traits of resilience and high self-esteem then have a greater chance of being protected during those tricky teenage years.

The children and staff worked hard to complete our whole school book project on *A River*. 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.

Since January 2024 I have been working to complete the ILM Level 5 Coaching and Mentoring qualification. On Thursday last week I found out that I had successfully qualified. The course involved coaching three clients for six hours each, the associated paperwork, Saturday workshops and a 12,000-word assignment. The skills gained are very transferable to being a headteacher where most of my time is spent managing relationships and hopefully helping everyone achieve their full potential. I would like to thank the governing body who have supported me in completing this qualification.

The end of term is approaching fast, and I can't quite believe tomorrow will see the beginning of the Easter holidays. I hope you all get the chance to have a break whether going away or staying at home. The good weather looks set to continue, which is great news.

I will finish with a quote from my first headteacher's letter which is still very relevant.

I believe and glory in the uniqueness of every child and every man and woman. I believe that it is that uniqueness that above all needs to be cherished, protected, nourished and helped to grow and flower and come to fruition. Our job is to discern and to promote this uniqueness.

I believe that everyone should be successful. I believe, therefore, in the giving and accepting of praise. Praise and appreciation are necessary to us all. I believe that if all is well with the human element in our environment we are prepared to make the sustained effort that is necessary to ensure success.

I believe in work. I believe in play. On the whole I see no distinction. Let us not be afraid of work! Play – games – poetry – music – movement – all the Arts, are unnecessary yet absolutely essential. They make possible the impossible and reconcile the irreconcilable.

Robin Tanner Artist, Teacher and School Inspector 1904 - 1988

Best Wishes

Andrew Reid