

## Autumn 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.*

Now in my twelfth 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.

For our 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 2024 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.

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.

Subject		School	National
Reading, Writing & Maths %	Expected Standard	80	61
	Higher standard	25	8
Reading %	Expected Standard+	88	74
	High score (110+)	48	28
Writing %	Expected Standard+	86	72
	Greater Depth	30	13
GPS %	Expected Standard+	82	72
	High score (110+)	46	32
Maths %	Expected Standard+	85	73
	High score (110+)	46	24
Reading average scaled score		108	105
GPS average scaled score		108	105
Maths average scaled score		108	104

## **Kent Test**

Seventy-eight Year 6 children sat the Kent Test (11+) on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September. Fifty children (64%) 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 introduce and embed Circle Time as a tool to teach children the social and emotional skills to develop and maintain positive relationships with their peers.
2. Subject leaders in English, History, Geography, Art, DT, Science and PSHE to monitor the impact of the curriculum changes.
3. To upgrade the IT hardware across the school to ensure it is compatible with Windows 11 by October 2025.

I am excited and so pleased that our first priority this year is the introduction of Circle Time. This is a weekly activity led by the class teacher which over time will help classes bond and develop positive relationships. This will lead to higher levels of mutual respect and increased self-esteem. Both of these factors will help children 'get along' better and maintain a positive outlook. Miss Jones led two excellent staff training sessions in September which have empowered staff to deliver the Circle Time activities with confidence and enthusiasm. Please ask your child about Circle Time, which hopefully they are enjoying.

We have worked hard over the last two years to review and improve our curriculum so one of the key priorities this year is to monitor the impact and pupil outcomes it produces.

Upgrading our IT infrastructure is much needed and will have a positive impact on all children and staff. It may not be the most exciting school improvement priority but a vital one to ensure high quality teaching and learning can continue.

The SIP has 17 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**

Thank you to the PTA committee and class reps for all their hard work to enable Saturday's Christmas Bazaar to be such a success. Thank you to all parents that attended and gave their generous support. Despite the wet and windy weather (which resulted in the BBQ being done from Mr Brine's garden!) the event ran smoothly and was well attended. It had a wonderful Christmassy atmosphere and will have helped generate much needed funds. I always enjoy meeting ex-pupils who come to the Bazaar and speak so fondly of their time at Amherst, although this does make me feel rather old! There was a significant increase in the number of parents that were able to access match funding through their employer for this event. This will make a dramatic difference to the overall total raised. This year's funds will be going towards the IT hardware upgrade, with 40 new pupil laptops having already arrived.

An update regarding the playground project which previous year's funds were raised for. Due to planning restraints involved in the original design we have now split the project into two phases. Phase 1 has been agreed and will involve the replacement/additional small wooden huts, teepee style shelters to go on the field and a 'Sandy Lodge' which is a new structure with sandpit. We are awaiting on the contractor to agree an installation date. Phase 2 will be additional equipment which is yet to be finalised.

### **Archipelago – An Atlas of Imagined Islands**

The most recent whole school book project has been a huge success. Corridor, classroom and hall displays for each year group are now finished. The children are always so keen to see what the other year groups have done. There is a gallery on the school website if you have not had a chance to look at the amazing work the children have produced. These projects create a fantastic sense of whole school cohesion and celebration.

Year 4 completed a wonderful Christmas performance yesterday afternoon. What a showcase of talent that including singing, dancing, gymnastics and acting. I can't wait for tonight's final performance at 6.00pm. I look forward to seeing many of you at the Carol Service (Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December 6.00pm) 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