

Summer Term 2018

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.

As we approach the end of the year I would like to use this term's letter to share staffing information for September 2018. The children will be informed this afternoon (2.7.18) who their teacher will be next year. The children will be meeting their new teacher on Thursday 5th July.

I am in the rare position of not having to inform you of any staffing changes for September! This is my fifth year as headteacher of Amherst (tenth year as a headteacher) and we have worked hard to recruit and retain some exceptional teachers. I am delighted that we retain the current teaching team.

We have some internal movement between year groups for next year. Miss Wonnacott is to move from Year 5 to Year 4. Miss Holland is moving from Year 4 to Year 5.

Staffing structure for 2018/19

Year 3

Miss Apps - Year Group Leader – teaching Robin Class

Mrs Wheeler – teaching Owl Class

Miss Steptowe – teaching Woodpecker Class

Year 4

Mr Clarke - Year Group Leader - teaching 3S

Miss Foinette and Mrs Fox – teaching 3W

Miss Wonnacott – teaching 3A

Year 5

Mrs Barratt - Year Group Leader – teaching 4F

Miss Jones (Assistant Headteacher) – teaching 4AH

Miss Holland – teaching 4C

Year 6

Miss Parish - Year Group Leader – teaching 5W

Miss Huntley – teaching 5J

Mr Barratt – teaching 5B

Although not mentioned in the staffing structure there are many other people that contribute to your child's learning and experience at Amherst. We have a team of sixteen teaching assistants (line managed by Mrs Holmes our Inclusion Manager) who provide 1:1 support, group support and support within the classrooms. We are fortunate to have such a skilled and committed team and their efforts must not go unnoticed. An excellent teacher working with an excellent teaching assistant is a very powerful combination. Beyond the classroom we have other adults that are all contributing to your child's development, on a daily basis, in many other ways. These include: Midday Supervisors, the School Kitchen team, the Office/Admin team, Mr Hucks and the Site Management team, our IT support team, Breakfast Club and After School Club and the governing body. It is a pleasure to be able to lead over sixty committed individuals each day that care deeply about our children and feel proud to work at Amherst. Your child's four year journey is a team effort.

As I reflect at the end of this academic year, an area I am particularly pleased with is the continuing positive impact of our six school values. We have had our values for nearly four years but this is the first year that we embedded them as part of our PSHE curriculum. Miss Huntley and Miss Jones wrote a bespoke PSHE curriculum linking one value to each term. During that term I also lead assemblies based on the chosen value. This results in the value being discussed and examples given of it in action weekly during each term. There is also a simple school rule that is attached to each value. Our six values now have a far higher status amongst children and staff. I have no hard evidence of their impact but I do believe they provide the context for creating such a positive culture. We are fortunate that many of our children are provided with strong values at home. If this is not present or differ greatly, then our school values are vital in providing common ground for all children. It is so important that children begin to develop their conscience. A strong conscience enables them to make good choices when

they are on their own, a crucial skill for when they leave Amherst and begin secondary school. Our six values are: Trust, Cooperation, Fairness, Politeness, Kindness and Determination. It is interesting to note that every year, when we complete our pupil survey, Kindness is always selected as the most important value by the children.

Another area that has been highly successful this year is the use of Paired Teaching. We have experimented with providing each year group, for one term during the year, an additional teacher for two days a week. Miss Carver has completed that role and has done an excellent job. Paired Teaching enables the class teacher to have an additional teacher to provide support. The model we have developed gives the teacher complete freedom to decide how Miss Carver is deployed. She can be used to lead the class and the teacher is then available to work with an individual pupil or small group. Or, Miss Carver may work with individuals or groups within the class and across the year group. The key to its success is that the model is flexible and dynamic, responding to the needs of the children daily rather than planning too far in advance. Paired Teaching was created due the response given by teachers at Amherst when asked what they needed to help improve pupil progress. The answer was time. They all felt that they understood what support a child needed but did not always have the time to give it when juggling the needs of all pupils. Paired Teaching also enabled pupil conferencing which helps build stronger relationships between pupils and teachers. We will be continuing Paired Teaching next year and hopefully increasing it from two days a week to three.

As you are aware we recorded a CD of the children singing last week. Songs were sung by the whole school, individual year groups and Amherst Choir. I was immensely proud of the quality of singing and the children's focus and determination to sing to such a high standard. The company completing the recording commented that the quality of singing was exceptional. At this point I feel I need to mention Mr Clarke! Mr Clarke has completed his fourth year at Amherst and during that time, the progression in the quality of music and singing has been phenomenal. His commitment and dedication to encourage all children to experience the pleasure of high quality singing and music is extraordinary. It is so unusual for a state primary school to have such a strong music leader. Thank you also to Mrs Stanger, who accompanies Amherst Choir on the piano, and gives up so much time to support rehearsals and performances. Research has shown that high achieving successful schools always have a strong emphasis on the arts as well as the academic. The CD is a wonderful way to celebrate four years of hard work and I encourage as many of you as possible to purchase a copy as it will be outstanding. We are very lucky indeed!

It has also been a highly successful year regarding sporting achievements. We have had a record number of Amherst teams representing Sevenoaks and Malling at the Kent School Games. I was particularly pleased with our Gold medal for Year 5/6 hockey! This year the weekly newsletter seemed to always feature an Amherst team or individual achieving sporting success. Thank you to all the staff, parents and external coaches that have supported teams and clubs this year. Like music, the children gain so much from experiencing a strong sporting culture whether it is through a high quality PE curriculum or being selected to represent Amherst in a school team. We are trying to create well rounded individuals, sport and music are a crucial part of that development. A particular thank you to Mrs Wheeler, who is our PE leader, for giving up so much time to support sport at Amherst.

Finally, it has been a year with moments of sadness. We are so grateful how supportive parents were regarding Mrs Clifton and Mrs Vowles. As mentioned in Friday's newsletter, we encourage you to attend the annual cricket match on Tuesday 24th July at 6.00pm at Holmesdale CC. This match (Year 6 parents' team vs Mr Reid's team) will now be named the 'Rose Clifton Memorial Match'. Mrs Clifton loved cricket and I miss our daily chats when a test match was on. She also used to keep me updated with the score!

I wish you all a wonderful summer break when it arrives and hope to see many of you at the performances of 'Beauty and the Beast', 'The Summer BBQ' and Sports Day.

Mr Reid