



WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Headteacher: Dr Victoria Carr, BA Hons QTS, MA, NPQH, MA, EdD.

21 October 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

The last month has been so busy and full of exciting learning opportunities for us all.

In Reception, all of the staff have completed the Government's 'Reception Baseline Assessment' with children eligible to be assessed – this was a huge undertaking and I completed the return so we are signed off. Personally I disagree with it, and feel it adds absolutely nothing to the experience of the child, but we have done it. More importantly, the children have since been learning about the numbers 1, 2 and 3! The main focus last week was on the 'threeness' of 3 (which makes me smile as a concept) and comparing 3 to 1 and 2. They have partitioned and combined the numbers using lots of different objects. They have also talked about the orders of the numbers. Lots of children can 'count' and say numbers in order when they arrive at school but knowing number properties and being able to manipulate them is just as important in early maths development. They have been super busy with phonics and I know that Mrs Williams is as pleased as I am to see the rate of progress – long may this continue and many thanks to you all for your continued support! Another very exciting development, and one hindered by supply issues, is the revamp of the outdoor environment, the majority of which is taking place next week! ☺ I cannot wait, despite the fact my favourite object (the Pirate Ship) can't be installed for a few weeks yet, it will be worth the wait.

Last week our children were part of the 2021 Virgin Money Giving Mini London Marathon in schools! Poor Miss Roberts, I signed us up for this because one of our parents alerted me to it, and I do love to get our children active. They all participated in completing the 2.6-mile challenge, and Charlotte Purdue, GB athlete, a huge advocate of this initiative, was talking about how she got into running (she shares some of her running tips here: <https://uk.virginmoney.com/brighter-money/why-this-years-virgin-money-london-marathon-matters-more-than-ever/>) Now that we have completed our event, and made a note of the number of children who took part, we will be sent a pin badge for each one in November. I am super proud of all of our children, and once again all of you for your support – you raised £700!

KS2 have started swimming and we have had our first trips out of school, to the STEM festival at the Waterways Museum, a huge success despite teething issues with Covid-19 and also resuming visits after a long 18 months. We have also had school discos back on the calendar, and although more difficult to organise for us all in light of restrictions related to Covid-19, the vast majority of staff gave their time willingly to be able to support the initiative (Y6 staff staying in school until 2030hrs! after 2 late parents' evenings). Enrichment clubs are back in full swing; as are guitar and violin lessons; judo; football; themed lunches; early career training for new teachers (and Mrs O'Hara their mentor) and many other things. In other news,



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members of our Pastoral Team, Mrs Cotton and Mrs Morphet, have been attending TAFs, conducting reviews and liaising with many outside agencies to support our vulnerable learners, including appointing 2 TAs to support children with additional needs; Miss Skillen attended The Traveller Forum and EAL training; and several staff have been involved in their own professional development at universities and colleges in the North West doing Master's degrees, undergraduate degrees, ELSA training and so on. If your child is in Y6 then you will have applied for a place in secondary school! Finally, this week we have had our 'settling in' parents evenings which have been great.

In a further attempt to support our most vulnerable families after half term will commence a new initiative in relation to trips and visits. It is our intention to pay for 50% of all trips and visits for those who qualify for Pupil Premium funding from the government.

If you feel that you may qualify for Pupil Premium funding, or if you want to know if you are eligible for it, then please see the information on our website here: <http://www.woodlands.cheshire.sch.uk/page/pupil-premium/3024>

Last week we also welcomed our School Improvement Partner, Steve Palin, into school. I ask him to come and challenge me on a regular basis and test out my views and our evidence about the work that goes on in school. He works across over 40 schools and his judgment is spot on. Although common sense tells him that our school is a very good environment and our curriculum is great – the new Ofsted framework makes absolutely no allowances for Covid-19. If we were inspected in the near future then there is a risk that we would remain RI. This is due to the fact that the school has a peculiar history prior to me arriving (!), a year of hard graft when I did arrive that saw a huge upturn in standards across every aspect, and 2 years of disruption since. Although we have had 2 successful and positive monitoring visits (providing the areas for improvement ourselves to inspectors when asked by them as we are continually striving for excellence) we do not have the evidence in books over time, and children do not have 2/3/4/5/6 successive years of excellent teaching that they have built on to be able to articulate this to inspectors when questioned. Therefore I have judged our school is GOOD in all areas except one - I cannot do so on the **current** criteria for 'Quality of Education' as we do not have the concrete evidence in subjects like music, art, history etc. – yet. If we are inspected in the second half of the spring or in the summer term then this will likely change and with the growing body of evidence we have, and sustained attendance of the children through trying to manage the continual Covid-19 disruption we will indeed have the requisite evidence. It is perhaps pertinent to say that there will be few schools, very few, who would have the evidence required at this stage but that is irrelevant!

To that end, in the final week of November I have asked our Associate School Improvement Advisor (Moirra Atkins) to come in with a range of other ASIAs to conduct a Teaching and Learning review for us completely independently. Moirra is a



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very experienced Headteacher, ASIA and also a lead Ofsted inspector so I am very keen to have her cast a critical eye over what we do and make any suggestions about how we can further adapt and enhance our practice as a school. There is no let up and no complacency, nor will there be.

We have welcomed Rev Jackie back for a cuppa and to do assembly for us (the blindfolded sandwich making was a hoot!) and it was just delightful to see her again. She hadn't changed a bit over the summer and has missed us all as much as we have missed her but she is enjoying her new job and the challenges it presents. Other governors have been very proactive investigating a complaint, meeting about school developments and policy updates, and refreshing their profiles as we have welcomed 2 new parent governors, and appointed 2 new co-chairs: Chris Marchant and Dave Hardick.

We have some exciting news to share about our staff! Firstly, well done to Mrs Liversey, she submits her project to complete the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers on Friday. I am super proud of her growth and development in the last 3 years and am also delighted that although she will be qualified to apply for headships, she has promised me she is happy to stay here and continue to work alongside me as we work so well together. She will be in charge for 3 weeks after the holiday when I am on a training course and I am sure she will be as excellent as ever she is! Secondly, Mrs Edwards, who has been off school terribly unwell throughout her pregnancy and caused us all a lot of worry about her and the baby, had her beautiful baby boy, and little brother to Tommi, Baby Huw last weekend! Mum and new baby are home and doing brilliantly and we are thrilled for them all, a lovely family of 4. Last but not least, Miss Hallmark went and finally (3rd time lucky) got herself hitched last weekend and is now Mrs Barratt- we all wish her and her new husband every happiness and a long and love filled life together. Phew! It's all going on here 😊

Finally, may we all wish you the very best half term – enjoy the time resting and recuperating with your children after their first full half term back. I know there have been children hospitalised with Covid-19, children suffering long Covid-19, and ongoing fears about children taking Covid-19 home to vulnerable family members but we have all done it and I am relieved that the vast majority of you, despite the disruption, are supportive of our efforts. We have another packed half term and a lot of plans for the final part of 2021 so pace yourselves and stay well!

Victoria

Headteacher
Woodlands Primary School