

WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

HEADTEACHER'S BLOG – 18/09/20

Not such a long blog this week! We have been knee deep in preparation for so many things! Normal stuff like the annual preparation of the school development plan, and the self-evaluation framework (SDP and SEF) have been on the back burner again as we deal with the ever spiralling C-19 implications... a few late nights, and super early 5am starts, and I have squared away the majority of these documents thankfully! We have also been finalising basic phonics assessments so that we know where children are and can then start focussed teaching of phonics ASAP (provided we don't have a local lockdown or bubbles isolating!). We continue with the assessments of gaps for maths and literacy and have appointed 2 teachers to begin to implement 'catch up' in the next week. The online expectation of the government is also on target to be met, so all in all, we are working at double time intensity and on reduced staff and with additional pressure. Thank you to all the parents who have been so understanding and patient with us in the office and so on, it really is appreciated.

Many parents completed the SATs questionnaire we sent out – although we shared the results recently, it was fascinating to have in black and white what we suspected...

105 parents completed the survey and the results are as follows:

Question 1:

Now that everyone is returning to school, which of the following do you think is important

Children's physical health **84%**

- Children's mental well-being **95%**
- A welcoming and safe school environment **95%**
- Children seeing their friends again **84%**
- A curriculum that takes into account what pupils have missed and provides ample opportunities to catch up **92%**
- Preparing for SATs and other formal tests **14%**
- Other **4%**

Question 2:

Do you believe a rich, broad and stimulating curriculum is more important than preparing for SATs or other formal tests in 2021?

- Yes: **87%**
- No: **7%**
- Don't know: **6%**

Question 3:

School life has been disrupted since March 2020 and all pupils are at different stages in their learning. Which of the following do you think is the best way to find out where the learning gaps are and how schools can bridge them?

- A personalised assessment by your child's teacher, including some informal tests, starting this term: **94%**
- SATs and other formal government tests taken under exam conditions in the Summer term (Autumn term for year 2 pupils sitting the Phonics Check): **6%**
- Don't know: **0%**

Question 4:

Should SATs and other formal tests be cancelled in the school year 2020 - 2021 to allow children to spend that time catching up on learning?

- Yes: **84%**
- No: **9%**
- Don't know: **7%**

I will continue to campaign for no SATs this year, we have better things to focus on and literally, there is no end in sight to the disruption of C-19.

On that topic, we have had lots of children having to isolate with symptoms until they are able to be tested, lots of you who have had work disrupted as you isolate, lots of you under pressure to find a test and so on. We have nothing but sympathy as many staff are exactly the same. We are lucky to have such a good relationship with S4YC who literally come to our aid at the drop of a hat, and have come up trumps again to make sure we are operating safely in terms of ratios of adults to children, and also our children have the 1:1 support they need as we must cover staff in a range of roles across school who are in the same predicament as you. The way children have to stagger entering school, not play across age groups, queue, eat lunch in classrooms etc is not reflective of the way we want to run school, a place I love to be, and really does increase workload for us as staff, reduce the fun we can have, and all round cause us to be fed up.

It came as a total shock, therefore, to hear from a parent about a whatsapp group (set up mainly by parents that have never used S4YC services) which had been discussing how after school club is like a prison where children are locked in a room and not allowed to do anything!!! As you can imagine I find this deeply upsetting as I know that S4YC staff put 100% into club and this couldn't be further from the truth (at the moment they are actually treating club like a 5* hotel and giving children anything they ask for because the staff know how rubbish the bubble system is for the children!). Without being able to show these parents what they do first hand it is difficult to change the perception of S4YC but I can assure you, if I did not think the provision they give was excellent then I would have no hesitation in saying so, and challenging them. Luckily there are no complaints from the parents or children that do use the service so I remain positive and focus on that, as I must when I am made aware of similar toxic whatsapp conversations, or Facebook posts, about school stuff, about which only ever a very limited amount of information is known or allowed to be shared. We really are all much more professional and dedicated than the odd one or two people give us credit for and would never treat children like they were in a prison.

I was also scandalised to hear yesterday afternoon, from a parent coming to pick up and also the Amazon delivery man, that someone in Broadland Road in their camper van had been shouting and swearing at parents coming to pick up children, those with push chairs etc. and this person almost had a fight with the delivery man when he challenged this behaviour. I cannot help what people do or how they behave but it always upsets me when adults think that it is ok to be aggressive, shout and swear where there are children present, it is never good and often leaves everyone very upset. Equally, we have lots of local residents who have been extremely agitated at the parking on Eddisbury Road, on the volume of children and parents on pavements etc and they have complained to me, which is always tricky as I cannot stop parents parking on zig-zag lines, or across driveways, believing themselves entitled to do so as they are 'only dropping off'. You could all really help us with this, as I have dripped on about for ages. Our local PCSO will be out and about next week to support us, and if we all do our bit then everyone could be happier!

Mental health is a big concern for me at the moment, both for children and staff (not to mention my concerns for all of you in terms of having to isolate etc and try to get tests!). We are trying to have a laugh in school, as ever, and smile our way through the ongoing issues, and it is lovely that so many of you smile with us! Don't forget where we are if you are needing help! Have a super weekend 😊