

WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL: HEADTEACHER'S BLOG – 09/10/20

At the end of another super busy week at Woodlands there is a buzz around school...

We got 3 free laptops, we **may** have some funding from a grant bid or two to help us with our project for the medical room,

Don't shoot me down BUT Christmas is on its way! Because of Covid, everything will take much longer to prepare and we want you all to enjoy the usual festivities – how lucky are we that our PTA, and the talented and committed bunch they are, met on Monday night and came up with a super plan for a Woodies DVD that will be 'Covid-proof' and also allow the children to do nativities, carol singing and celebrating and let you be a part of that (remotely). Standby for further information over the coming weeks but I am now EXCITED!!! I **really really really** want an outdoor tree this year so that all of us standing outside for hours a day can enjoy the twinkly lights.... If Santa is listening (or if anyone knows anyone who can donate us a huge tree for the outside of school.....) PTA boxes on either side of the road for Christmas Cards are there every morning and afternoon (you literally cannot miss them!) so don't forget to be creative and get your orders in ASAP 😊

I have been inspired by Mrs Moss when discussing the PTA Christmas DVD...! Staff will be doing a nativity of their own this year(they don't know it yet) ... I was planning to be the back end of the donkey that carried Mary to Bethlehem (suits my skill set), but Mrs Cotton thinks I will make a better Angel Gabriel, Mrs Liversey plans to be Mary..., I will be allocating other staff roles in the coming weeks but Mrs Cotton has (needless to say) bagged the role of 'STAR' (Say nothing!).

School photos were a huge hit this week, children were calling it 'the photo shoot' I did laugh – feedback once you have your photos would be appreciated, as we have launched a new way of working with this and I am keen to know if it has been in improvement!

I have had such a wonderful week and have been busy with appraisal meetings for staff. This is such a pleasure, to talk about career development and challenge, the future and what they have done well in the last year, I don't know – it's a privilege and a pleasure.

Thank you to everyone who reached out and offered support about this weekend, I will be a bit of a broken woman next week as I come to terms with my son leaving home. It is a bittersweet feeling and has come about oh so quickly. 17 years ago I was the size of a small cottage and wondering what he would look like, sound like, grow to love and enjoy, where his life would lead him and whether I would be up to the job of being his mum. Since then, we have moved country, survived divorce, become accustomed to his severe dyslexia, he has mastered his first day at primary school, his first day at secondary school, his first little job, his first girlfriend, his first 'non-event' exams (no GCSEs due to a pandemic), Army selection, and here he is, on the cusp of adulthood. As for whether I have done a good job? Who knows, the proof will be in the pudding in the years to come, but for now, I am both heart broken and also proud as he has the confidence to strike out on his own. Parenthood is so full of these moments of letting go and accepting, I am still as rubbish and emotional as I ever was!

A couple of important little notes –

1. **PLEASE in the interests of safety, and to help us adhere to the Risk Assessments we have had to put in place DO NOT LET CHILDREN GO ON EQUIPMENT when you are waiting on the yard before school starts and ends for classrooms to open.** We have let everyone onto the yards now to wait, but this involves a responsibility on you to make sure children adhere to the rules, or we will have to revert back to the old system of waiting outside.
2. Thank you one and all for accessing Google Classroom. We have been refining the quizzes as we have realised that there are a few hiccups in there ... and on that topic...
3. Thanks to everyone who has already submitted a return for Parent's Evening- today is the deadline so please make sure you have booked. Staff will be getting onto stage 2 of this next week and will be emailing to invite you to a 'Teams' meeting. **DON'T DELETE THIS EMAIL! It will have the link on it 😊**

4. **Year 6 parents all need to make sure they have applied for a secondary school place.** If you are reading this and are confused – email the admin team who can advise you. We currently have about 18 parents who have yet to apply....
5. I want to draw your attention to the following resources, which are on our website, about 'PREVENT'. This is a national initiative, a few years old now, designed to minimise extremist, and often criminal, behaviour. It falls under our umbrella of 'Safeguarding', so it is something we take seriously. At its most benign level it involves things like racism, which is why we do not tolerate any kind of racist comment in school, for example. But it is much wider reaching. If you have any questions about this, don't hesitate to contact us.

http://www.woodlands.cheshire.sch.uk/serve_file/281357

http://www.woodlands.cheshire.sch.uk/serve_file/436168

It is World Mental Health Day tomorrow, and at a time like this I think we will all agree that this is high on the agenda! Our lovely SENDCo Mrs M has directed staff to the activities you can find on this link, but there is no harm in you all doing some with the children if you feel it would benefit them (or you!).

There is a bit of a stir also this week about what is happening to the outdoor classrooms all will be revealed after half term.... But I can confirm that it is not a secret military base, nor is it Area 51 coming to Ellesmere Port, it isn't for Halloween, or for animals to shelter in, and I won't be moving in either...

I know I have sent out a flurry of emails this week. As is the norm, behind the scenes there is a LOT going on, so thank you to everyone who has sent in words of encouragement and gratitude, or stopped us on the gate and simply said that we are doing a great job – it is much appreciated as I am sure the majority can understand! The main ways you can help us are with supporting us in reinforcing the behaviour expectations we have with some of the children, especially outside of school on their way home. I live in literal dread for the day that one of them is run over and it is out of sight of school so none of us could help. Worries like this are what give me sleepless nights and wrinkles!!

<http://www.woodlands.cheshire.sch.uk/page/wellbeing-resources/74373>

You already know my views on this, but I have signed an 'open letter' from thousands of other Headteachers to Gavin Williamson this week and the letter was like this:

"Primary schools have been on the frontline of the Covid crisis since March, providing a vital service for the most vulnerable and key workers' children during lockdown. We have worked tirelessly over weekends and throughout the Summer to ensure we could fully open safely in September. We continue to do so: every day, we face new challenges as we manage the effects of lockdown, class closures and isolation on the learning and well-being of our pupils.

At all times, we put the best interests of our pupils first and we are committed to making this a productive, fulfilling school year for them, despite the continued disruption we all face. SATs and other statutory government assessments – which take up hundreds of hours of valuable teaching time – have no place in the midst of a pandemic. These tests will start before Christmas when 6- and 7-year-olds will face the Phonics Screening Check. Formal tests are not the way to assess the effects of Covid on young children and schools. Our own focused and precise teacher-led assessments will provide all the information necessary to see where learning gaps are, and how to bridge them.

With so much learning time already lost, and an uncertain future ahead, we cannot afford to waste any more valuable face-to-face teaching time. If pupils are to enjoy a rich, broad and stimulating curriculum, we cannot spend time preparing them for, and carrying out, statutory tests which will cause undue anxiety and whose sole purpose is to measure school performance, not to further children's learning.

Schools should be held accountable, but basing our performance on these tests administered during a pandemic can only produce meaningless data and put pointless pressure on children.

It would be not just ineffective, but morally wrong. We are calling on the government to urgently cancel SATs and other statutory assessments in the 2020/21 school year."