

## WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL: HEADTEACHER'S BLOG – 18/12/20

Suffice it to say, it has been a long term, and an even longer year.

Thank you to everyone who has been so understanding and accommodating as we have navigated the rapid changes, the difficult challenges, the Covid journey, the normal things we would all have to sort out anyway (toilets, squabbles between children, bumps, bruises, bereavements, broken hearts etc etc), the gripes, the grumbles, the good, bad and ugly of life itself!

Thank you to everyone who has shared laughter, jokes, fun, kept us smiling on the gates, emailed and written in to remind us that even though the press have vilified us, the government don't respect us, and we don't always get it right, you truly recognise and value the time, effort and work we put in every single day to make a difference in the life of your child.

We have welcomed so many children this term from a range of other schools, and I can only imagine how odd it must be to move school amongst all of the national kerfuffle, but those new families have become part of our own and many of them have said that their child has never been happier – sometimes all it takes is a change of scene, or a different peer group, and you flourish.

We have welcomed new staff and focused on the areas of learning where children inevitably had gaps and these have rapidly been addressed – this will continue.

We have finalised plans and look forward to the new year with more excitement than trepidation as we have already proved that we can all work together to literally overcome a million problems in a pragmatic and effective way – whatever happens in the new year, we have excellent foundations upon which to build.

Our school would not run without every person here working flat out, and this is no exaggeration. I feel blessed in many ways because we have managed to keep school open and learning, actual real authentic and effective learning taking place, even with a bubble closing for 2 weeks, when up and down the country schools have been in bits due to Covid.

Our site staff (which includes the cleaners and those responsible for safety, and the mid-days) have made sure we have been open because the school is spotless every day through their work.

Our admin team, on both sites, work tirelessly to keep the cogs turning, because without them emailing, record keeping, administering medicines, administering first aid, giving you information, following up on things like high school admissions and so on, we would be lost. Totally lost, and to be fair, they take the brunt of anxiety, stress, annoyance, and they must work with me EVERY DAY. Feel for them....

Our TAs, pastoral crew, and teachers have, as ever, been exceptional. There is nothing at all to say, other than that. In my entire career I have never worked with such a large team, who are all equally committed, bar none. I drive them, relentlessly, with passion. I don't allow complacency, and yet they stay, and are always telling me I am lovely! Something amiss I think!

Our SLT, including the governors, work more hours than any of you would believe possible and must make decisions every day that will not be popular with everyone in our community, but which we base on the children we are lucky enough, and proud enough, to have entrusted into our care. This can seem sometimes like a thankless task, but we do it because we love what we do, and are invested in the longevity of our children knowing that we are building positive futures and that it takes not just schools, not just families, but a combination of those things in order to raise successful children who become fully fledged and functioning adults in a harsh world.

We have, in line with Covid measures, created a Christmas message for you all, that I would have shared today as we have the last 2 Christmases, but in view of the fact that our PTAs performance has not been able to be shared, it just didn't feel right to share with you the staff one – for which we all raised money ourselves to buy 2 toilets in Africa with the 'Toilet Twinning' project. We did share it with the children to try to make them laugh, and in lieu of them watching their whole school perform. Hopefully that, and the bagel breakfast and pj day will have gone some way towards making the end of term, and end of year a little bit special.

All that remains to be said, really, is have a wonderful Christmas, and please, stay safe and take care of yourselves, your families and (in a collective way) our communities. I will be completely off line for 2 weeks, and am insisting that staff are also. We will be processing Covid cases until Christmas Eve via the dedicated covid email address, but otherwise having a rest for the first time since February.