

Well, it's been a busy and emotional week here at Woodlands, and I just wanted to start by saying a heartfelt thank you. Many of you have reached out to me with kind words, offers of support, and prayers following the news about my son's cancer diagnosis. I am utterly devastated, but your kindness has genuinely lifted me. To the staff who've brought me cups of tea, lunches and generally made sure I've not gone a minute without care - thank you from the bottom of my heart. I'm staying positive and focused, and it means so much to feel held by such a loving school community.

📊 A first peek at some of our standardised test results

This week, our team has been busy inputting and reviewing the data from this year's standardised tests - and I'm utterly delighted with what we're seeing so far! While we'll do a full analysis and share the detailed picture with you in due course (usually towards the end of next term when the data is validated), the early indicators show that many of our pupils have made phenomenal progress. One key takeaway already emerging is just how much the children have benefitted from the focus and calm of our after-school academic clubs. These sessions offered a distraction-free environment, allowing pupils to thrive without the interruptions that sometimes occur in daytime lessons. As a result, we're planning to roll out these invitation-only academic clubs again from September. These sessions are about creating space for learning and progress, and the results are speaking for themselves!

🚒 Keeping safe: 'invacuation' (lockdown) practice

You may have heard from your child that we carried out a lockdown (invacuation) drill this week – a calm and well-organised practice, preceded by pupil assemblies and requests for support from you, through numerous correspondence channels, to ensure that all pupils and staff know exactly what to do in the rare event of a serious threat on or near the school site. These practices are now part of national safeguarding expectations across English schools, aligning with guidance from the Department for Education and emergency planning teams. While no one ever wants to imagine scenarios involving armed intruders, terrorism or industrial risks (such as a chemical incident at ESSAR), they are, sadly, not beyond the realms of possibility. As such, we must ensure our community knows how to respond safely. To support this, we're planning to invest in a school air horn to act as an unmistakable auditory signal in the event of an actual lockdown. We would ask again that you reiterate to your child that listening to adults, and remaining silent, could be all the difference in personal and group safety a real-life scenario. I know this all sounds deeply unpleasant - and yes, potentially scary - but the alternative, of being unprepared in the face of danger, is simply unthinkable. Our commitment is to always prioritise safety while keeping children informed, calm and confident.

👨👩👧👦 Lovely evenings with our EYFS families

A very special mention to our fabulous EYFS team this week. They hosted not one, but two brilliant welcome events - New to Squirrels and New to Foxes & Reception. These evenings were full of warmth and smiles as families got their first proper taste of what life in our Early Years is all about. The team did an absolutely wonderful job welcoming everyone, answering questions and showing off the spaces - you are all stars! ★

📅 A week of outdoor learning, transition and all sorts!

The school has been full of exciting happenings. Outdoor learning was in full swing for classes including 1LW, 1AA, Owls, Badgers, and 2PB - we love seeing the joy and exploration that comes with these sessions. Our Y2s continued their transition lunches over to the junior site (with more to come!), and selected Y6 pupils have been out for extra transition sessions at WHS, too. It's a time of moving on and moving up, and we're embracing it all in the spirit of growth, as we do each year at this time. On that note, your child will begin formal transition activities next week - which is always a super exciting time. Over the next fortnight, they'll start thinking about their new classes, teachers, and routines. It's a mix of nerves and excitement, but we're here to help them every step of the way. Please remember that we have spent considerable time here in school planning classes and balancing individual pupil need and support staff, resources and friendship groups when we allocate classes: all of this in the knowledge that we routinely work in ability-groups across the phase in any case, so children work with a whole host of different groups in their working week.

School improvements in full swing

Some really exciting developments have begun on the infant site, I am sure those of you with a child over there will have noticed - the outdoor sensory areas for the baby room and the new Resourced Provision are now under construction! These new spaces will be a brilliant addition to support sensory exploration and calming regulation, especially for our younger and SEND children.

Meanwhile, we're very much in the thick of winding this academic year down whilst gearing up for September. That includes the usual teacher and TA handover meetings, staff planning days (this year being facilitated by Mrs Liversey in her new favourite home, MPS, and subsequent curriculum tweaks), copious report writing and reading, for Mrs Liversey and for me (who reads and comments on every one) this is one of the busiest and most important times, not to mention all of the logistical gymnastics that goes on ...

Ofsted ... Drama with a capital D!

We're currently navigating some unprecedented (yes, really!) drama with Ofsted as part of the registration process for our new nursery room, Hedgehogs. Let's just say it's been testing every ounce of our patience, brain power and persistence - forms, emails, more forms, MP involvement, DfE involvement, and a sprinkling of baffling bureaucracy! We'll keep you posted, but please send all of the positive vibes (and any spare marbles you have lying around – I seem to have misplaced mine!).

In a separate headache, we've also been made aware of, and begun to deal with, new fraud legislation and have been undertaking a full cybersecurity overhaul, with the guidance of Mrs Coaker and Mr Chadwick - absolutely vital, but not exactly the most thrilling way to spend admin hours. Still, safety first, always!

A gentle reminder about communication

As we approach the final stretch of the school year, I want to gently remind everyone that this is an intensely busy time for all staff in school. We're working flat out to support pupils, manage transitions, complete data tasks, plan for September, and, most importantly, keep school running smoothly for your children right up to the last day. Naturally, emotions begin to run high at this point - especially for our Year 6 pupils who are preparing to leave us, and for families navigating change. That's completely understandable. However, I must ask for your consideration when it comes to communication. Sending multiple daily emails to staff, particularly those that are non-urgent, isn't manageable or sustainable for anyone - and it risks taking staff time, energy and attention away from the children, children who need them most. If communication becomes overwhelming or inappropriate, as a few of you will know, I will be forced to step in to support my team. We're here for you, always - but we need kindness, patience, and realistic expectations, especially at this time of year. Thank you in advance for helping us keep some semblance of balance.

Summer Fayre next Saturday!

And, a final joy to end on: our Summer Fayre is happening next Saturday, our PTA as ever are pulling something fabulous out of the bag, and we really hope to see as many of you there as possible! Bring the whole family - there'll be stalls, games, goodies and hopefully some sunshine too (I'm already shaking my lucky weather-stick). It's always such a fun, feel-good day in the calendar, and a great way to come together before the term, and indeed the year, draws to a close.

Thanks again for your support, kindness, and your partnership in all we do. I feel so proud to lead this school community, especially in challenging times.

Have a restful weekend when it comes,

Dr Carr