

## Welcome Back!

A very warm welcome back to the start of our new academic year at Woodlands! Whether you're returning after a well-deserved summer break or joining us for the very first time, we're delighted to have you as part of our school community. September always feels like a fresh chapter - full of new beginnings, renewed energy, and plenty of opportunities ahead.

## Getting off to a strong start

This week, staff have been hard at work behind the scenes, making sure everything is ready for the year ahead. We began with safeguarding training, essential for keeping up to date with national changes and ensuring our entire staff body, particularly our many new colleagues, are confident and equipped to keep our children safe. Alongside this, we also completed cyber security training, an important step in protecting the school and ensuring we can keep running smoothly should we ever face a cyber-attack.

Our pastoral team also spent two days processing a subject access request, a reminder of the often unseen but vital work that goes on in schools to ensure transparency and accountability. The pastoral team were also straight into the term with some safeguarding meetings for our families and onboarding new staff with our CPOMS systems. And, in a wonderful change of pace, the whole school came together for a shared art project that has left us all feeling inspired and connected – as ever, we thank Mr Barnes for his creative energy and inspiration.

## A huge milestone – Hedgehogs are ready!

Perhaps the most exciting news of the week was our three-hour Ofsted registration visit for our brand-new baby room, Hedgehogs. I am thrilled to share that the inspector found no issues at all, not one, giving us the green light to open next week! Huge thanks must go to Miss Skillen and her team for their relentless hard work, and in particular to Mrs Melvin, Mrs Davies, and Mrs Moss, who really rolled up their sleeves to bring my ideas to life.

## Staffing updates

As ever, schools are full of comings and goings, and we want to keep you in the loop. Over the summer, Mrs Megginson unfortunately broke her ankle. Thankfully, Miss Tyrer has stepped in to look after her class until she returns. As Miss Tyrer will also be starting her maternity leave later this term, the timing has caused minimal disruption, especially as we welcome back Paul, our maths specialist, who will be working on KS2 interventions. Later this term, Miss Gittins will also begin her maternity leave, and Mrs Wilkinson is already being trained up to support Mrs Morphet in Miss Gittins' absence. And, in what feels like the third in a happy pattern, Mrs Barrett is also expecting a new baby in the new year! Many congratulations to all three colleagues - we are thrilled for you!

## New connections with families

For our youngest learners, we hope to have Tapestry up and running very soon. This will allow parents to connect with us more directly, see what their little ones are up to, and share in their learning journey. Please keep an eye out for an email about how to get started.

## A word on Gus (our famous school dog!)

Finally, I wanted to clear up a little summer gossip. I did receive an anonymous letter over the break and as such I'd like to reassure everyone about Gus. Yes, he is very much the school dog -

but, like all dogs, he also has to live somewhere. Five years ago, I was nominated as his custodian, despite my super busy lifestyle outside school, which means I take full responsibility for his care, training, food, grooming, walking and general wellbeing. If I'm not in school, Gus often isn't either - he's not yet allowed to walk to school by himself! The "dog sleeping" sign on my door was simply a regulation aid for some children, and while Gus plays an important role in our wellbeing work, this is always within the framework of a careful risk assessment. This includes parental permission, which means that not all children will interact with him directly. He doesn't wander unaccompanied around school (he'd probably find his way to the dinner hall if he did, or to two of his favourite staff – Mrs Cotton and Mrs Dutton!).

And one last practical note – school employed staff, like parents, aren't able to take holidays in term time. This is a policy set by Cheshire West HR for staff, and by the Secretary of State for Education (currently Bridget Philipson) for families. If you feel strongly about it, she's the one to write to!

Looking ahead

All in all, it has been a packed but exciting first week back. We are stepping into this year with optimism, strong foundations, and a wonderful team spirit. Thank you to everyone, staff, pupils, and parents, for the energy, dedication and commitment you bring to making Woodlands such a special place.

Here's to a fantastic year ahead!

Warm regards,

Dr Carr