

Weekly Blog - Friday 12th September 2025

We've settled into the rhythm of the new school year very quickly here at Woodlands, and it's been another busy and positive week, perhaps most notable for us opening our doors to babies as young as 9 months for the first time ever. I continue to be grateful for the energy and commitment shown by staff, pupils, and families as we get into full swing.

Professional growth and safeguarding

Much of this week has been about professional development. Staff have been taking part in performance management meetings with me, and I'm pleased to share that every single member of the teaching staff (except Mrs Megginson who I will meet virtually next week) has now successfully met with me to set their objectives for the year, as part of our statutory performance management cycle. These conversations are **so** valuable in shaping direction and supporting growth across the school – not to mention setting the scene for staff development and CPD.

Our safeguarding focus has continued too, with online sessions covering risks outside of the home and centralised training for our Deaf and Hearing Support mentors. Safeguarding never stands still, and I am proud of the way the team embraces these responsibilities so diligently.

Specialist support for our children

We've welcomed a number of external specialists into school this week, including speech and language therapists working with our youngest learners, and the Deaf and Hearing Support Service, not to mention counselling and also colleagues from other schools who have observed and supported our children. These partnerships are so important in ensuring every child gets the tailored help they need to thrive.

In addition, our pastoral and SEND teams have been working closely with external colleagues on multi-agency meetings, reviews and assessments. While this work can sometimes go unnoticed, it is central to our ethos of inclusion and personalised support and although it can take a huge toll on staff well-being, we are a big enough team to be able to support our colleagues involved with the most vulnerable.

Enrichment and experiences

It hasn't all been staff training and meetings though - our children have had some exciting opportunities, too! Our swimming programme got underway again this afternoon. Year 3 enjoyed their first judo PE sessions, delivered by Judo Education, earlier in the week, which were full of energy and lots of smiles! Year 5 visited the library, another important step in fostering a lifelong love of reading, and a real treat. On that note, I am absolutely delighted to announce that Woodlands had the highest number of children starting the Summer Reading Challenge of all schools in Ellesmere Port this year - 108 in total! Bravo! This incredible effort means we have won a trophy, and we will also be awarding a £20 gift voucher to the child who has most impressed Mrs Dutton with their summer reading journey. A huge well done to all the children (and families) who took part - you are brilliant reading, and learning, role models.

Looking outward

It's also been a week of connection with the wider community. Colleagues attended fraud awareness training at Whitby High, safeguarding practice review sessions online, and even the "Gold and Green" launch event at Theatre Porto. These external links help keep our practice grounded in the wider educational landscape and ensure Woodlands continues to benefit from the very best thinking and collaboration.

Behind the scenes

A huge thank you also goes to our site team, especially David, who has been on his own since before the start of term as Pete is recovering from surgery. SPORTSAFE were in this week completing essential repairs in the KS1 playground. Keeping our environment safe and engaging for children is no small task, and we're grateful for all the work that goes on quietly in the background to make school life run smoothly. It never ceases to amaze me that there are still a small group of children who choose to disrespect things like the school toilets and other equipment. Thankfully these episodes, although costly and disappointing, are few and far between, but this week, poor David has already had to repair toilets damaged in the KS2 building. Please do support us by speaking with your children about this. Also, cycling on the school grounds is not permitted, on purpose, because it is dangerous and children can be hurt. Please do support us by speaking with your children about this.

Looking ahead

Ofsted have recently published a new inspection framework, and over the next 2-3 weeks I will be leading the rewriting of our school self-evaluation (SEF) to reflect this. I plan to share some updates with you early next week so you can make sense of it all. The SEF rewrite will be an important piece of work to ensure that we continue to hold ourselves to the highest standards, celebrate our strengths, and identify areas for further development, in an Ofsted friendly way.

So, as we head into our second full week of term, I am struck once again by the sheer variety of life at Woodlands. From safeguarding and specialist support to sport, reading and community connections - it all comes together to create a vibrant, caring school. Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

Warm regards,
Dr Victoria Carr
Headteacher