

Headteacher's Blog – Week Beginning 22 September

At the risk of becoming repetitive, it has been *another* busy and purposeful week at Woodlands, with a great mix of professional learning for staff, enrichment for children, and important opportunities to connect with families. Please do read the letter I sent out explaining about how we support your children in their learning – this is a key reference document and one you can look back to for information as you prepare for parents evenings later this half term.

Specialist support and training

We began the week with a training session focused on supporting children with Down Syndrome, alongside visits from the SPOTTS team and speech and language therapists in Hedgehogs. These opportunities help us strengthen our expertise and ensure that every child receives the right care and support. We are really focussing on communication and language development – it is a precursor to all forms of communication and in particular, reading and writing so it underpins a great deal. Staff had 2 very late nights in school on Team Teach training and later in the week, our SENDCOs attended the SENDCo cluster meeting and put a face to the name of the new Director of Education, Sal Thirlway. Members of our team also attended training on attendance expectations (I can almost see you all rolling your eyes), safeguarding drop-ins, and subject network meetings. These sessions keep us sharp and ensure our provision reflects the very best practice.

Fire drill and safety

On Wednesday, we held our first fire drill of the year - infants and juniors both did brilliantly in evacuating quickly, calmly, and safely. These routines are so important and give us all confidence that we can keep children safe in the event of an emergency. We plan to work more on this as we like to practice a range of scenarios so don't be surprised if your child comes home and tells you about the noisy bell and standing in a line outside!

Enrichment and curriculum

Enrichment is always the icing on our daily cake and this week is no different. Year 3 continued their judo PE sessions, building strength and confidence through sport. Year 5 enjoyed another round of library visits, and swimming continued for Year 4. Our after-school clubs are also in full swing, with children taking part in table tennis, football, tag rugby, guitar lessons, and more. Academic clubs have been packed too, with extra reading, writing, phonics, maths, and English opportunities running across all year groups - including some very committed Year 6s arriving early before school!

Connecting with families

Mrs Liversey said it was lovely to welcome prospective parents for EYFS tours on Monday, and Miss Roberts said the same when the team met with Year 2 parents later in the week to talk about the upcoming Menai residential. These are important milestones in school life, children (and staff) LOVE them, and it's always a privilege to share what makes Woodlands such a special place.

Wider networks and partnerships

We've also strengthened links beyond school this week. Staff attended cultural learning exchanges, geography subject leader meetings, apprenticeship reviews, and training connected to national projects and grants. These connections enrich not only staff but also the experiences we are able to bring back into classrooms for our children. We aim to always be at the cutting edge of any initiative that is right for our learners, our staff and our community and it appears that, so far, we have made the right choices!

Free School Meals

We would like to encourage you to check over the weekend if your child may be eligible for free school meals using the instruction emailed out earlier this week by our lovely Mrs Melvin. Even those receiving

universal school meals in Rec-Year 2 should check their eligibility as your child may also qualify for Pupil Premium status meaning their school trip fees will be reduced by 50%!

Successes and Celebrations

Today also marked the first day of our 🌟 VIP awards 🌟 for Yr1-Yr6 children (Reception will join in celebration assemblies in January). Mrs Liversey has already enjoyed hot chocolates with some KS1 'Always' children that have been celebrated and our KS2 assembly ended to the song 'Celebration' led by our VIPs who will enjoy lunch at the top table today. Meanwhile, Ally the Acorn, Betty the Butterfly and Lizzie the Ladybird are looking forward to going home with some children from our RP classes, we can't wait to hear what adventures they will get up to this weekend!

Macmillan Coffee Morning

With cancer sadly touching the lives of so many in our school community, many of you may already have attended, or are planning to attend, a Macmillan Coffee Morning. The Macmillan nurses do truly incredible work, providing vital support to families when they need it most. Here at school, we also held a staff bake sale, filling our staff rooms with a wonderful mix of homemade and shop-bought treats. A special mention goes to Mrs. Cotton's famous cornflake cakes, which proved to be a particular favourite!

As I reflect on this week, a week where I supported my son through (hopefully) his last session of chemotherapy, I'm proud of the balance we continue to strike as a school - professional rigour, safeguarding, supportive community, and joyful enrichment all woven together. Thank you to our staff for their commitment, to our children for their enthusiasm, and to our parents and carers for your continued support in making Woodlands such a vibrant and caring community.

Warm regards,
Dr Victoria Carr
Headteacher