

## Headteacher Blog – Week Beginning 24th November 2025

There are some weeks at Woodlands that feel full... and then there are weeks like this one, where every corridor, classroom and meeting room seems to have been in constant motion, the emails have been on fire all day and late into the evening and there have been a multitude of issues and concerns, plans and opportunities that have completely consumed us all. If ever there were proof that schools run on teamwork, caffeine, goodwill and a substantial amount of calendar colour-coding, this week would be it.

We began on Monday by welcoming a new wave of Wrexham University Y1 Foundation Placement students — Jessica in Badgers, Sophie in Owls, and Chloe shadowing one of our KS2 teachers alongside Olivia, who has continued her block placement in Year 2. It was a real pleasure to conduct the student induction and see first hand the positive and dynamic young people coming through the training pathway. Our role is to keep them supported and motivated to do a rewarding, but very demanding and difficult job, from their first day as students until they get their first job, and beyond!

They have each brought a burst of fresh energy and enthusiasm, quickly becoming part of the Woodlands rhythm. Our children love having new grown-ups in class (especially when they can impress them with obscure facts or unexpectedly profound questions – something we are working on across school with our Philosophy for Children focus), and it's always a pleasure to help shape the next generation of teachers.

The week also began with multiple strands of professional development: EYFS training for Casey, our Hedgehog and Squirrels Deputy Room Lead, New Writing Framework 2025 training for Mrs Dutton, safeguarding briefings, and numerous meetings about next term and pupil numbers in our pre-school/nursery settings. Monday also brought a visit from Diane Tongue, Maths Hub Lead, working with Miss Roberts - a brilliant opportunity to reflect on and refine mathematical practice across school, and I am chuffed with the feedback we had.

Our Hedgehogs Tour welcomed prospective families into our EYFS spaces, and later in the day Adele, our teacher of the deaf, reviewed equipment and support for our pupils - a reminder of the detailed behind-the-scenes work that ensures inclusion is lived, not claimed, not just empty rhetoric. The day closed with supervised toothbrushing training for a group of staff, which may sound mundane and random but is actually a brilliant public-health initiative. Enthusiasm levels were unexpectedly high for this activity!

### Visits, Training, and Learning Everywhere

Tuesday continued at pace:

Fiona and Casey were out conducting home visits for our newest little ones who are due to start in January. EYFS staff attended the PEACE Project, Miss Roberts and Mrs Edwards again worked with the Maths Hub all day, and Miss Shephard and Mrs Dutton carried out a pre-visit at Burwardsley ahead of future trips. Time spent recceing is never time wasted and they were able to gain a great deal from the visit.

We hosted a full Health and Safety Audit with Ian Glaister, whilst I attended an online SEN national meeting for schools who have Resourced Provisions, and we also welcomed speech and language therapist, Ben Large into Butterflies, while Mrs Cotton attended a child protection conference. Meanwhile, our Year 1 pupils took part in the Multi-Skills Event at EPSV, returning rosy-cheeked and full of stories about balancing races and extremely competitive beanbag challenges. After-school

clubs filled the school again — gymnastics, basketball, and a great deal of excited chatter on the way out of school.

#### Mid-Week Momentum

Wednesday brought more training, more movement, and more learning. Toni from First4Maths worked with the Year 5 and then Year 6 teachers, deepening mathematical pedagogy. Faye, another of our SALT, visited school. We also held multiple multi agency meetings that focused on supporting our children and families — all examples of the meticulous, child-centred work that happens around our curriculum and care each week.

Y2 had their turn at the Multi-Skills Event at EPSV, proudly returning with certificates and, in one case, a leaf that a child insisted 'was definitely lucky and probably magical.'

SLT met for the afternoon about staffing for the remainder of the year as we grow again next term, and after school, the staff meeting enabled staff to have time to plan and prepare for activities in the coming weeks — I think my lap top was switched off about 10pm. No one could accuse us of not being productive on Wednesday, and all of this despite staff ill ness across school as the dreaded lurgy takes its hold on us all.

#### Community Connections and Staff Development

Thursday brought everything from breakfast meetings at Whitby High, to Mrs Plage visiting multiple nursery settings. Meanwhile, after-school clubs continued, gymnastics, music and more, filling the halls with the familiar sounds of effort, laughter and the occasional thud of enthusiasm outweighing balance.

#### Friday's Full Finish

Non-uniform day! We all enjoy a non-uniform day and the excitement it brings to school. Your continued cooperation in maintaining our regular uniform days makes these special occasions even more enjoyable for the children. The PTA will be thrilled by the generous donations received for tomorrow's Christmas fair which is always a wonderful way to kick start the festive season. Don't forget to drop by between 11 and 2 for some festive fun!

Today remained true to form, we had Mrs Anne Marie Rutter in school and she spent the day with Mrs Williams on Read Write Inc (our phonic programme) coaching training. Our Wrexham University link tutor visited to observe the student teacher in Mrs Dutton's class, Mrs Plage and Mrs Melvin from the office carried out further home visits for our newbies and we had Swimming Group B out at the pool. Year 3 enjoyed their weekly library visits, one of the highlights of their timetable and a lovely way to end the week (to be fair, I wish I was with them, the luxury of a trip to the library...) I know the pleasure of reading, and it's always wonderful watching children carefully choose a book they are excited to take home - often followed by the enthusiastic declaration, 'I'm definitely reading all of this tonight!' (Rarely happens, but absolutely delightful when it does.)

#### Academic Clubs in Full Swing

Throughout the week, our extensive range of academic clubs continued: times tables, writing, reading, phonics, arithmetic, comprehension, handwriting, and more, spanning Years 1 to 6 each day of the week. We know the value of these clubs and recognise that sometimes the classroom during the day can be quite busy and therefore some children miss essential learning that we reinforce in the clubs. Thank you for your continued support with these, if your child is invited and does not attend then those gaps in their learning may become pronounced over time. The commitment of

staff to run such a diverse programme, and the children's eagerness to attend, contributes so much to the culture of aspiration and confidence we see across school.

#### A Final Thought

As November draws to a close, I continue to be amazed by the sheer breadth of activity that happens in our school each week, and, more importantly, the warmth, professionalism and resilience with which staff continue to deliver it. Yes, I have been accused at times of running the school with military precision (the irony being, anyone in the military would laugh at this) but someone has to maintain order, behaviour standards, fight for limited resourced from an over stretched local authority, ensure the provision is there for staff and pupils, and parents are supported. I do that. I have an effective, professional and dedicated team, but the buck stops with me. It is actually my job to run the school and we are successful as a result of decision making and taking primarily by me, with the support and challenge of our governors and staff team. Our staff, our team, from student teachers finding their feet, to children discovering new challenges, to staff juggling meetings, teaching, training, family stresses, and more, Woodlands is alive with learning and purpose. When we are reaching out to parents for support with difficult situations with their children, we do not waste our time doing this – it means that we are attempting to support your child to become a resilient and proactive, fully functioning member of society in the future.

Thank you, as always, to all of those parents who work with us, rather than against us, for your support and partnership. I hope you have a restful weekend - preferably one involving coming to school to support our wonderful PTA tomorrow at the annual festive event that kicks it all off for us – The Woodlands School Christmas Fayre! We will all be off to Bethlehem very soon and it is a wonderful time of year.

Warmest wishes,  
Dr Carr