

Headteacher Blog Week Beginning 9 February 2026

This week at Woodlands has been one of those brilliantly busy weeks where there is a real sense of school life moving on all fronts at once: rich learning in classrooms, lots of visitors in school, important work happening behind the scenes and plenty of opportunities for parents to step into the day-to-day life of the school.

We have continued to host a wide range of trainee teachers across school this week, including Chester University students and a student working within the Year 3/4 team. It is always a privilege to support teacher training, and our pupils benefit hugely from the extra adults, fresh ideas and additional capacity for small-group learning. Our children have, as ever, been wonderful ambassadors - confident, welcoming and never short of opinions when asked what makes a good teacher and a good school!

One of the real joys this week has been the number of opportunities we've had to welcome parents into school. Foxes have hosted several Puzzles, Patterns and Play sessions, and it has been lovely to see families sitting alongside children, exploring early maths, language and thinking skills in such a warm and purposeful way. We also welcomed parents into Year 2 and Year 1 for Stay and Learn sessions, which are always a fantastic reminder of how powerful it is when children see the important adults in their lives sharing an interest in their learning.

Wednesday and Thursday also brought a wonderful EYFS focus, with Hedgehogs Stay and Play and both Owls and Badgers have visited the library at Hope Farm this week. These trips are small in size but huge in impact: building confidence, communication and that early love of stories and books that we want every child to carry with them.

This week also included Safer Internet Day, with live lessons for both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This work is more important than ever. The online world is not designed with children in mind, and we continue to work hard to teach pupils how to stay safe, how to speak up, and how to be kind and responsible online. These are messages that we are desperate for you, as parents and carers, to help us reinforce and which we truly hope that you understand yourselves.

Music has been another highlight, as I sit and type I can hear singing from the hall, which always uplifts me but in addition, our Year 3 pupils also enjoyed violin sessions, filling the school with that wonderful mixture of concentration, effort (and the occasional squeak that tells you learning is happening properly...).

As always, there has also been a significant amount of essential work happening behind the scenes. Our safeguarding and SEND teams have been involved in core groups, PEPs, annual reviews, EHCP updates, TAF meetings and professional consultations throughout the week. These meetings are time-consuming and often emotionally demanding, but they are absolutely vital in ensuring the right support is in place for children and families – who always come first.

A particularly important piece of work this week has been our transition away from SIMS to Arbor. Admin staff have been working through the required training from home, as there really is no opportunity to concentrate to the degree and depth required in our busy offices, and Friday marked the Arbor migration day, meaning we paused amendments to SIMS during the afternoon. As you can imagine, this causes us some logistical issues and headaches but they are necessary. This is a big change, but one that will ultimately improve efficiency and communication.

Early Years Provision

I also wanted to share that I have been in touch, again, with the Local Authority this week to follow up any further information regarding the potential development of an Early Years Resource Provision (EY RP) for September which I know so many people have contacted us about. This is something we are very keen to resolve, as it would strengthen our offer for children with additional needs at the earliest possible stage, which we have a proven track record of these past 3 years, but also alleviate some of the anxieties of parents who clearly want to bring their children to us and need answers. Just as soon as we know, you will know.

Alongside this, I have also contacted the government to highlight the systemic issues and barriers inherent in having a separately registered nursery (Hedgehogs), particularly around funding structures, inclusion pathways and early identification. We will always push for what is best for children and families, and I will continue to advocate for the support our community needs and the clarity our school requires to function and use resources in the most efficient and effective way. Again, we wait.

Staff News – Welcome Backs and Lovely Visits

We were absolutely delighted this week to welcome Mrs Lonsdale back from maternity leave - a warm welcome back to the Woodlands team! It has been lovely to see her return and settle back into school life and she and Miss Sheard have hit it off marvellously.

We also had a wonderful visit from Miss Gittins, who is currently on maternity leave, and her baby – the second of our new baby visits with Miss Tyrer popping in last week. There is something very special about seeing colleagues return with tiny new arrivals - it brings a real sense of family and continuity to school life, and there were definitely a few misty-eyed moments (and possibly some staff quietly considering whether they too need a baby cuddle break as part of wellbeing provision!).

Recruitment

As always, we continue to recruit carefully to strengthen our team and ensure we maintain the high-quality provision our pupils deserve. Thank you to families who share our vacancies and help us attract the very best candidates. We have got lots of choice already and will shortlist after the closing date for TA adverts at the end of half term. Exciting times!

Half term...

This half term we have 2 fabulous things happening in school, a Dance workshop on Monday and Tuesday, run by VARA Sports and we are having a new school pond installed on the junior field to help Cheshire West and Chester create habitats for wildlife across the region! So exciting!

This week has been a reminder, once again, of how much school life contains: learning, support, safeguarding, celebration, training and community - all happening simultaneously. Thank you, as always, for your continued partnership, encouragement and support. Have a lovely week off and stay safe.

Warm regards,

Dr Carr

Headteacher, Woodlands Primary School