

## Headteacher Blog – Week Beginning 11 May 2026

This week at Woodlands has been dominated - quite rightly - by our wonderful Year 6 pupils as they completed their SATs assessments. I could not be prouder of the maturity, resilience and determination they have shown throughout the week. They approached each day calmly, gave their absolute best and represented themselves brilliantly. SATs week can feel intense for children and staff alike, but our Year 6 pupils truly rose to the challenge.

A huge thank you must also go to our staff team, who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the week ran smoothly, calmly and positively. From preparing rooms and breakfast support to encouragement at exactly the right moments, they have gone above and beyond for the children.

If I am being completely honest, I remain fundamentally unconvinced by SATs as a system. They do very little to enrich children's learning, tell us very little that good teachers do not already know, and offer virtually nothing meaningful to high schools, who re-assess pupils almost immediately anyway. In reality, SATs measure how a child performs in a very narrow set of tests, on a very specific week, under a particular set of circumstances - and for many children that simply does not reflect who they truly are as learners. A growing body of research and commentary has raised concerns about the impact of high-stakes testing in primary schools, including curriculum narrowing, "teaching to the test" and increased anxiety for pupils and staff alike. Even parliamentary committees and education researchers have questioned whether the accountability pressures attached to SATs distort learning experiences and reduce opportunities for a broad and balanced curriculum. Children are so much more than scaled scores from a week in May: they are artists, musicians, scientists, performers, leaders, friends, comedians, problem-solvers and kind human beings, and no test can fully capture that.

Of course, one of the few highlights of SATs week is the Friday, which brings with it each year (rain or shine) the most important part of SATs week - the ice cream treat from Steve's Super Whip! A very well-earned celebration for a fantastic group of children.

## Learning Across the School

While Year 6 were hard at work, the rest of the school certainly didn't slow down. Our Owls and Badgers children enjoyed outdoor learning sessions this week, making the most of the brief episodes of sunshine and continuing to explore learning in practical, hands-on ways. There is always something lovely about seeing children completely immersed in outdoor play and discovery.

We also welcomed a range of visitors and specialists into school throughout the week, including speech and language therapists, health professionals and safeguarding teams. Much of this work happens quietly behind the scenes, but it is absolutely central to ensuring children feel safe, supported and able to thrive, as I know I have banged on about before.

Tuesday brought a brilliant creative opportunity for pupils in 1LW, who worked with artist Jake Ryan during the afternoon. Enrichment experiences like this help bring creativity alive and give children the chance to express themselves in different ways.

Meanwhile, Year 5 pupils continued developing their digital skills through the Coding and Micro:Bit workshops with Whitby High School. These sessions have been a fantastic way to inspire pupils' curiosity around computing and technology. The poor teachers who walked her from Whitby were drenched by a sudden downpour on the way but they did not let a bit of water affect their enthusiasm!

## Looking Ahead

Thursday evening saw our Menai meeting for current Year 3 parents, ahead of next year's residential. It hardly seems possible that we are already preparing the next group for such a special experience, especially when this year's Year 2 trip still feels fresh in our minds! Shout out to the parents who wrote in to teachers to thank them for going the extra mile and leaving their own families at home in order to enable this trip to take place, by the way!

Alongside this, staff have continued to take part in training, moderation and development work, including safeguarding supervision, EYFS training and network meetings, in my case, I had a project management meeting with an LA representative ahead of next month when we start more development work and two meetings with school

leaders from other CWAC schools about school-based nurseries and resourced provisions. School improvement is never something that stands still, and I continue to be incredibly proud of the professionalism and dedication of our whole team.

### A Busy but Positive Week

There has also been the usual wonderful rhythm of Woodlands life this week: clubs running every evening, children attending swimming, ukulele lessons and library visits, parents coming into school for meetings and tours, and staff balancing the many moving parts that make school life work. A reminder that academic clubs really are about supporting your children to achieve the very best they can do in the school year and really should be supported by you as a means of ensuring that your child reaches their full potential, rather than seeing them as an inconvenience.

### Ready, Respectful and Safe

As we move into the second half of the summer term, I would like to remind all pupils of the importance of being Ready, Respectful and Safe at all times - in our behaviour, our language and our learning. These values matter enormously and help ensure that Woodlands remains a calm, purposeful and happy place for everyone.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support and encouragement.

Wishing you all a lovely weekend.

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