

Another week at Woodlands, and another diary which rather neatly demonstrates that describing a primary school as simply a place where children come for lessons doesn't begin to capture what actually happens here!

This week we've had everything from knife-crime awareness and flu vaccinations to judo, archery, violin, swimming, mental-health support, speech and language work, occupational therapy, staff professional development and governor training. We are also continuing our extensive programme of academic clubs before and after school.

Alongside all of that, I want to return this week to two important themes that I intend to keep visible throughout the year: keeping children safe, including our continuing work around allergies, and helping families understand the Fundamental British Values that form part of children's education at Woodlands.

🔵 Learning to Keep Ourselves and Others Safe

Our older children have been involved in an important piece of protective education this week, with Blades Down working in Years 5 and 6 on knife-crime awareness. Some people may wonder whether topics like this belong in a primary school. My view is that good protective education is precisely about giving children age-appropriate knowledge before they need it. We don't frighten children; we equip them. We help them recognise risk, understand consequences, make safe choices and know where to seek help.

That same principle runs through so much of our safeguarding curriculum - from online safety and healthy relationships to road safety, Prevent, medicines and allergies. Children cannot make informed choices about risks they have never been helped to understand.

Our whole-school flu immunisation programme took place on Tuesday, while our Mental Health Support Team continued its work with children and families. We are awaiting a date from the immunisation team for those that were missed.

Safeguarding isn't a single lesson or policy. It is woven through everyday school life.

🍌 Allergy Safety

I am going to continue talking about allergies and food safety because this is simply too important to mention once and then assume everybody has read it. Over recent weeks we have been strengthening our allergy and medical-information arrangements, based on new legislation that we have shared, known colloquially as 'Benedict's Law'. That work only functions properly, however, if we have accurate, current information from every family.

If you have been asked to complete an allergy/medical information form for your child, please complete it. This includes families whose children have no known allergies or relevant medical needs, where the form asks you to confirm that. I want to be very clear about why this matters.

Failing to complete the information we request can potentially place your child at risk. Staff caring for your child need to know whether they have an allergy, what they are allergic to, what signs of a reaction might look like and what action is required. We cannot safely rely upon assumptions, informal conversations at the gate or information that may have been provided several years ago. Children's medical circumstances can change, and our records need to be accurate.

There is also a significant and entirely avoidable workload attached to forms that are simply ignored, or even refused. When a parent does not respond, a member of staff then has to spend time emailing, telephoning, checking records and chasing the information. Multiply that across a school of our size and

hours of staff time can be diverted away from supporting children because we are pursuing information that families have been asked to provide, simply in order to keep their young ones as safe as possible.

So please don't leave it for us to chase. Completing the form is part of the partnership between home and school that keeps your child safe. If nothing has changed, tell us. If your child has no known allergies, tell us. If something has changed, it is particularly important that we know.

Our message to children, which I would appreciate you reminding them of at home, remains equally simple: we do not share food at Woodlands. Thank you to the overwhelming majority of parents who have completed requests promptly. It genuinely makes a difference.

A Huge Amount Happens Behind the Scenes

Our EYFS colleagues have continued to develop their expertise, with training around the EYFS and the power of play, while other colleagues have undertaken WellComm training.

Our inclusion work continued throughout the week. Speech and Language Therapy colleagues have been working with children and parents, an Occupational Therapist visited our Resource Provision, there have been annual SEND reviews with parents, and families visiting our Specialist Inclusion Base.

These individual appointments sit alongside the everyday work of teachers, teaching assistants and our inclusion team. Much of this is invisible to most families, but it is an important reminder that inclusion isn't a room or a particular member of staff: it is a whole-school responsibility.

Inclusion Means Belonging

One of the things you will hear us talking about increasingly this year is our developing approach to inclusion across the whole school. As Woodlands has grown, and continues to, so too has the range of specialist spaces, expertise and provision available to our children, and we want to make sure we use all of those resources intelligently and flexibly. Inclusion does not mean that a child belongs permanently to one room, one class or one type of provision. Children in our Specialist Inclusion Bases will, where appropriate to their individual needs, access learning, activities, peers and experiences within mainstream classes; equally, there will be occasions when children ordinarily learning in mainstream benefit from the expertise, environment or carefully structured support available within one of our SIBs. For some of our younger KS1 children, an EYFS environment may temporarily provide exactly the developmental, sensory or regulation support they need before they are ready for their next step. Over half-term, we are also creating our new Burrow room, based on the infant site, adding another purposeful space that can be used flexibly to support regulation, readiness to learn, assessment and successful inclusion. The important principle is that the spaces belong to Woodlands children; children do not belong to spaces. Our aim is movement in both directions, when it is appropriate and beneficial, with decisions based upon children's needs rather than artificial boundaries between "mainstream" and "specialist" provision. That is what meaningful inclusion should look like: the right child, receiving the right support, in the right environment, at the right time - all while remaining part of one Woodlands community.

Physical Literacy – More Than Just PE

Our whole staff professional-development session this Wednesday focused on Physical Literacy, across EYFS, our Resource Provision and Years 1–6. What is this?? Well, physical literacy is broader than simply being "good at sport". It is about children developing the confidence, competence and motivation to move and be physically active. For some children that comes naturally; others need much more deliberate support to develop those foundations. Being active supports good mental health, physical health and long term health overall and is part of a wider conversation about skills and mindset for life.

That sits perfectly alongside the wide range of opportunities children have had this week. Year 3 continued with judo, a small group of Year 5 and 6 pupils headed to Chester Zoo for orienteering, Year 4 continued swimming, and KS2 Breakfast Club offered archery. Our dance clubs with Vara continued, too.

Somewhere amongst all of that may be a child discovering something they love doing - which is exactly why breadth of opportunity matters.

Learning Before and After the Bell

I highlighted this last week, but it deserves another mention because the scale of it is considerable.

Our staff are currently providing academic clubs covering maths, writing, phonics, SPaG, reading comprehension, reading and times tables, across Years 1–6. Some begin at 8am, while others run after the normal school day has finished.

Thank you to the colleagues giving their time and expertise to provide these opportunities. They are carefully targeted to give children additional practice, build confidence and help secure important knowledge and skills.

Enrichment - Making Children's Worlds Bigger

You may have seen recent discussion about the Government's new Enrichment Framework, which identifies five broad areas of opportunity for children: arts and culture; sport and physical activity; civic engagement; nature, outdoors and adventure; and wider life and future skills. Its central principle, that children should leave school with far more than academic knowledge alone, is one I wholeheartedly support and one which will already feel very familiar to anyone who knows Woodlands. Alongside our absolute commitment to children learning well, we have never believed that childhood should be reduced to test results. Our children perform, compete, create, visit new places, experience different faiths and cultures, learn outdoors, lead, support their community and try things they may never otherwise encounter - much of it made possible by staff giving considerably more than the lessons they are employed to teach. The new framework is currently non-statutory and there are legitimate national questions about how increasingly ambitious expectations of schools will be resourced, but we will use its publication positively: mapping the enormous range of enrichment already available at Woodlands and, crucially, making sure those opportunities reach every child, particularly those who might otherwise face barriers to participating. Ultimately, I want every child leaving Woodlands to be able to say: I learned, I discovered, I tried, I contributed, I belonged - and my school helped me see a bigger world.

Looking at Learning

Our English leaders undertook learning walks this week, visiting lessons in Years 2, 5 and 6. Our maths leadership work also continued through contact with the Maths Hub. Learning walks are an important part of school improvement. They aren't about trying to "catch teachers out". They allow leaders to see what children are experiencing across different classrooms, identify strengths, see whether agreed approaches are embedded and determine where further support or professional development might be useful.

The adults at Woodlands are learners too. That includes our governors, who have dedicated Ofsted training this week, helping them prepare for the questions they may be asked about their strategic role, knowledge of the school and how they hold leaders to account.

EYFS Families

This morning we had an EYFS Coffee Morning Drop-In in the Infant Hall, and parents were very welcome to join us! Informal opportunities like this are so important. Not every conversation with school needs an

appointment, meeting agenda or email chain! Sometimes a cup of coffee and the opportunity to talk to the people working with your child is exactly what is needed. It was lovely to see so many of you there.

GB British Values at Woodlands – The Rule of Law

Last week I introduced the Fundamental British Values which schools are required to actively promote: democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. We started with Democracy and the idea that children's voices matter - but so do everybody else's. This week we move to our second value: the Rule of Law.

Why Do Rules Matter?

For a primary-aged child, the Rule of Law begins with understanding why communities need rules.

Children encounter rules everywhere: at home, in school, when crossing a road, playing sport, using the internet or visiting somewhere new. Good rules aren't there simply because an adult enjoys telling children what to do! They exist to protect people, establish boundaries, ensure fairness and allow communities to function safely.

Our three simple expectations at Woodlands - Ready, Respectful and Safe - are a very good starting point.

We want children to understand not simply what the rules are, but why they exist. That also means learning that choices have consequences. If I choose to behave in a way that affects somebody else's safety, learning or wellbeing, I have responsibility for that choice. Equally, rules should be applied fairly and children should know that adults have responsibilities too. Interestingly, there is a connection between this British Value and several things that happened this very week.

Our knife-crime awareness work helps older children understand that society has laws designed to protect people and that actions can have serious consequences. Our allergy rules teach even our youngest children that something as apparently innocent as sharing food can affect another person's safety. Our behaviour expectations teach children that being part of a community means balancing our own wishes with our responsibility towards other people. That is the Rule of Law in a form that makes sense to a primary-aged child.

And there is perhaps an important message for adulthood in there too: rules don't cease to apply simply because they are inconvenient to us. Whether that means parking safely outside school, treating other people respectfully or following arrangements designed to keep children safe, being part of a community comes with responsibilities as well as rights.

Next week, we will look at Individual Liberty - another phrase which sounds rather grand until we explore what it actually means in children's everyday lives.

Parent Governor - A Reminder!

A quick reminder that nominations for our Parent Governor vacancy close on Friday 16 October. If you have been considering putting yourself forward, please do! Parent governors play an important role in supporting and challenging the strategic leadership of our school. If only one nomination is received, that candidate will be appointed unopposed and we will confirm this on 16 October. If more than one nomination is received, an election will take place on Friday 6 November. We would love to see parents getting involved in helping shape Woodlands' future.

Website and Policy Updates

A big thank you to parents for your patience while we update the school website. Our governors have been busy reviewing and proofreading a substantial number of policies at last week's governing body meeting,

and our team is now working through the process of uploading the updated documents and ensuring the information available to families is accurate, current and accessible. There is quite a lot to update! We appreciate your understanding while this important behind-the-scenes work is completed.

☀️ Another Very Woodlands Week

By Friday afternoon, our children are as tired as the staff, having experienced everything from judo, archery and orienteering to violin, swimming, dance and library visits, alongside the small matter of their normal curriculum! That is why rest and reset are so important and this weekend, after 6 full weeks without a day off, I fully intend to recharge my batteries!

Have a lovely weekend one and all.