

Teachers, Parents, Students...

Together Promoting Success

Dear Parents/Carers

We are nearing the end of our Autumn Term and Christmas is just around the corner! What a busy term it has been, thank you for all of your support. We hope that you find the following information useful and of interest...

Termly Subject Leader Updates:

We updated you last year on developments in our curriculum and this seemed to be very well received. Parents commented that it was a good opportunity to find out more about what their children do at school and what our staff are doing to manage and enhance the curriculum. Here is the curriculum update for you so far this year...

English:

This term we have been working with the English Hub, auditing our early reading provision after rigorous monitoring of the Bug Club Phonics scheme. We have purchased some more fully decodable home reading books (using money raised through fund raising) and have reorganised the existing books we have, in order to ensure children have access to fully decodable books at the right stage for them. Phonics training for staff took place again in October, meaning all staff teaching reading have received recent training.

As part of our ongoing commitment to improve the knowledge and expertise of reading teachers and leaders, Miss Arden has been attending the Wirral Leader's Developing Reading and Writing course run by specialist literacy teacher, EEF consultant and teacher trainer Megan Dixon. This course is theory driven and is giving literacy leaders across Wirral the foundations to improve literacy teaching within their schools. We have built in follow up staff training time across the year to embed ideas from this into our practice and part of our January INSET day will be devoted to disseminating information to staff. We are also pleased to announce that Mrs Harvey has been successfully appointed as our Early Reading Lead – she will work closely with FS2, Year One and Year Two staff as well as liaising with Miss Arden who will remain our overall English Lead.

Our Pathways to Read and Pathways to Write schemes have been used across the school since September and we are already seeing an impact in reading and high quality outcomes in writing, particularly in improving the children's stamina for writing and their ability to write lengthier pieces. The children are enjoying the range of high quality books the schemes are based on and the outcomes are very promising.

Subject Lead: Miss R Arden

Maths:

Miss Taylor was appointed as Maths Lead in September 2022. We have joined the Wirral and Cheshire Maths Hub via Andy Ash from Our Lady of Pity RC Primary and are awaiting staff training dates from them.

Miss Taylor has attended an online CPD session, 'Implications from National Tests Wirral LA', led by Tara Loughran, Maths Consultant. The headlines of the session highlighted that questions involving calculations using division, subtraction, decimals and shape, space and measure were poorly answered by children across Wirral. The main implications for teaching were identified as, enabling children to make more connections between the different areas in maths (particularly shape, space and measure), to improve number fluency and to embed accurate and consistent use of mathematical vocabulary.

In response to the training and data analysis, Mastering Number has been implemented in EYFS and Year 1 to develop number fluency skills (subitising) for our youngest learners. This has been successful so far and parents have appreciated Maths workshops amongst our infant year groups.

Week commencing 3rd October 2022 – Mrs Evans conducted maths appraisal observations in each year group.

Subject Lead: Miss S Taylor

History & Geography:

A learning walk of History around school showed that History plays a major part in the teaching and learning at Thingwall with much historical language displayed. It was observed that the subject makes purposeful links with other subjects such as Science and Art and timelines are evident in corridors and around classrooms of varying foci.

Mrs Goulding has conducted a learning walk around school with children from FS2- Y6, looking for evidence of maps and locations around the world. Older children could direct her to where atlases were and locate information within

atlases, whilst all children could locate different globes and maps in the corridors, including world maps and the local Wirral Peninsula. All children asked knew why we have maps and could locate a compass and recognise compass directions on them. Some children could relate this to using maps out of school e.g. Using a Chester Zoo map; Merseyrail underground map, weather forecast on the TV. Older children could name other versions of maps they might use such as aerial, Worldle and Google Earth.

KS2 children were able to show Mrs Goulding links across time periods they have studied and used technical language such as 'artefact', 'archaeology', 'tectonic plates', 'tsunami', 'ring of fire', 'plastic pollution', 'legacy' and 'settlement'. Younger children could expand upon the effects of plastic pollution in the ocean which was hurting sea creatures and could share their findings about artefacts from the past using old toys and Victorian washday gadgets, commenting on how these artefacts were different than today because we now have electricity and plastic.

Last year, a pupil brought up "Why don't we learn about the Normans because we have Normans, Romans, Viking and Saxon house teams?" Staff have altered History planning as a result of this question, so that Y5 now teach about the Normans. This year, one child has asked "Why we don't learn about the partition in India?" This is another very valid question, so Mrs Goulding will look at our plans and see where best to make this change or addition.

Mrs Goulding has collected in both Geography and History exercise books, to see if recapping of past work was evident and to look where adaptations for learning were made for SEND and for our higher ability children. It was clear that all children receive the same broad and balanced curriculums matched by the detailed medium term planning. Recapping and making links with other themes taught was evident in various ways - through lesson starters, lesson summaries and topic starters. Adaptions in teaching and learning were evident through children's outcomes, teacher annotations in marking and sometimes word banks, writing frames and questioning tasks that needed a pupil response, and the challenge was matching the children's ability.

Subject Lead: Mrs J Goulding

Religion and World Views (RAW):

The new schemes of work for Years 1 to Years 6 have been finalised and are now in the second year of use by Thingwall, Barnston and Irby Primary Schools. The report detailing the background research to these schemes can be found on the Harris Manchester, Oxford University website. Barnston, Irby and Thingwall Primary schools have been approved for a further two Farmington Projects this year so will be working together on Visits, Visitors and Vocabulary (Irby Primary taking the lead) and Reception, Religion and World Views (Thingwall and Barnston will be taking the lead).

As mentioned in the November newsletter, we identified a need for new Bibles towards the end of last year's Spring Term but did not have sufficient funds to purchase a class set. St Michael's Church in Pensby launched a 'Sponsor A Bible event' and we are pleased that the congregation have managed to sponsor a whopping 75 Good News Bibles for use at Thingwall and Barnston schools. This is a massive achievement from the St Michael's congregation and we will write to thank all concerned in the New Year.

We have enjoyed various visits and visitors this term. Years Three and Four visited the mosque in Birkenhead to listen to the Call to Prayer and we were thrilled that pupils from Woodlands Primary were able to show us round. We have also welcomed Wirral's MEAS team into school to deliver Bangladeshi workshops for Years 5 and 6 and they will visit us again in January for the Lunar New Year for key stage one workshops. Harvest festival was well attended and we managed to collect many bags of shopping for the Charles Thompson Mission for local families in need.

Key Stage Two did a lovely traditional Carol Concert at St Michael's Church in Pensby and KS1 performed a non-traditional play called Santa's Setback. Many thanks to Mrs Mitchell, Miss Arden and Miss Yardley, who did a great job organising the Carol Service in Mrs Evans' absence.

Working with other schools on RAW continues to be a strength and we are continuing to build our strong partnership with Barnston and Irby RAW Subject Leads. We have shared monitoring opportunities with Riverside Primary four times so far this year and also are currently working with LJMU to further develop our schemes of work in EYFS.

Subject Lead: Mrs D Evans

Science:

The paperwork and evidence to support our Primary Science Quality Mark application was finalised and submitted at the end of June 2022. We achieved the Primary Science Quality Mark for our school at the end of September, in recognition of the high quality science curriculum that we offer from FS2 to Year 6.

The Science School Development Plan for 2022-2023 and the Science Self Evaluation Schedule for 2022-2023 have both been updated.

A new format for science subject assessments has been introduced. Teachers enter the score children achieve in their Headstart Primary Science Topic Tests, completed at the end of the unit of work, as well as the teachers' judgements of children's progress alongside their classroom performance (written work, questioning, discussions and practical investigations). At the end of the term, this data is collated and scrutinised by the Science Lead.

Science packs were handed out to each teacher at the beginning of term with a checklist of requirements for teaching Science. The packs also contained the National Curriculum Science Programmes of Study objectives for each unit being taught in their year group and Focus Knowledge Maps for those related topics (which are stuck in each child's book at the beginning of each topic).

Subject Lead – Mrs S Holroyd

PE:

Working Mondays and Tuesdays, as PE Lead, Miss Yardley teaches all classes each week, and is able to monitor pupil progress against identified objectives from the 'Whole School Skills Progression' document. This informs half-termly assessments in PE, providing useful whole class and individual pupil data. Weekly discussions enable her to discuss planning and effective delivery of lessons to ensure continued progression for all pupils, in line with planning. Invasion sports this term have included hockey and tag rugby, as last year, pupils concentrated on basketball and football. Leading up to Christmas, we will be moving indoors for gymnastics.

Extra-curricular clubs include multiskills, judo and boccia, the latter, an all-inclusive activity, part of the Paralympic programme. We are very grateful to Peter Jones from the Belvidere Centre in Wallasey (a centre working with pupils with Autistic Spectrum, ADHD, Moderate & Severe Learning Disability and Physical Disabilities) for his support in setting up our club.

Representatives from the Lawn Tennis Association and Heswall Tennis Club led free introductory tennis lessons for FS2, Year 1 and 2 pupils, with all children receiving invitations to take part in a fun filled morning at Wirral Tennis Centre, Bidston. We are in contact with a parent with links to Calday Rugby Club and hope to organise a rugby event for our junior pupils, building on the recent success of England teams in World Cup competitions (including our Wheelchair Rugby team).

Once again, we have entered football teams into the Corgi and Houlihan competitions and are working hard to prepare our teams for these.

Subject Lead: Miss J Yardley

Design and Technology:

Throughout the first term, there has been evidence of opportunities in design and technology throughout the key stages with many classes using cross-curricular links with history and English to engage pupils with their design and technology topics. All of the topics have been design based with practical tasks involved that have been suitably differentiated for children's individual needs and abilities and staff are aware of the different resources available to help children achieve objectives and complete tasks to a high standard. Food based design and technology curriculum content is planned for the next two terms. The opportunity for children to evaluate their work is evident and children enjoy designing and then thinking about how they could improve their designs.

Subject Lead for DT: Mrs Stratton-Powell

Modern Foreign Languages:

In MFL we are continuing to work on recommendations regarding improvements to our system for assessment. After consultation with teaching staff last term it was decided to focus on sticky knowledge rather than course coverage and deliver our Euro Stars lessons over two sessions, with a focus on writing and recall skills to enable greater depth of learning to take place. Miss Collins has looked at examples from French books this half term and has assessed the impact the new approach has had on assessments of learning within the core objectives, matching that to year group essential vocabulary. KS1 children study Spanish and KS2 children study French.

Subject Lead: Miss Collins.

PSHE:

Staff are now fully using the Jigsaw scheme of work and children are responding well to this structured scheme of work. Mrs Evans has been caretaking this subject in Mrs Leyland's absence and has been able to plan in visits and visitors to enhance the PSHE curriculum. We will be holding our annual Mental Wealth Week – Healthy Bodies & Healthy Minds in January and have so far been able to book in Freddy Fit, Flourish Tutoring and possibly Commando Joe's for a return visit for Years 2-6 too. Funding will need to be secured to fund these three visitors which will benefit all year groups, costing in the region of £1500. Mrs Evans will be looking at bids with one of the parent governors to hopefully pay for these visits instead of charging parents.

Subject Lead for PSHE: Mrs C Leyland

Computing:

This term, Jen McCulloch (expert Computing consultant and teacher) has delivered two training sessions for staff focused on our Computing scheme, Purple Mash. These sessions were based on effective use of the scheme and improving confidence and expertise in teaching coding (programming). Feedback from teaching staff is positive and the profile of Computing across school is improving. The assessments for computing have been improved to include age related expectation descriptors, making assessment decisions for teachers clearer and more specific. Purple Mash is now being used more effectively for the collection of evidence for each unit. Regular monitoring is in place, ensuring continual improvement of the subject. Our class set of iPads are being well used across the school (including for a lunchtime digital photography club run by Mrs Evans) and additional hardware has been distributed throughout the school and is being well maintained by Wirral IT.

Subject Lead: Miss Arden

Outdoor Learning:

Working with POTs, volunteers enjoyed a fun session tidying and clearing the garden area ahead of development of our grounds in line with objectives identified in our bid with Liverpool City Region. Following a meeting with Lynn Struve, Wirral Authority Eco Lead, we have identified key projects for this year's Eco School Award (now an annual requirement - originally biennial). These include; School Grounds, Litter (includes reducing waste) and Healthy Living (using the outdoors for learning) and our Action Plan is ready to present.

The start of this academic year has seen EYFS making good use of their outdoor space and they now have a designated area that is open to children all day, which will have a positive impact on their development. This is to further develop the use of the grassed area for children to experience Forest School style activities more regularly. School (led by Mrs Barnish and Mrs Holbrook) was successful in obtaining a £5000 bid from the Liverpool City Region to develop our gardening and wild garden. So far, the area has been cleared with the support of the school community and we are looking into what we will plant and how we can enhance our biodiversity next. This will also include a gardening club, due to start in the new year. As part of this grant, we will be able to support other curriculum subjects, such as science, with the use of electronic microscopes and night cameras. Mrs Harvey hopes for Year 1 that we will be able to access the outdoor space for more lessons, such as phonics, geography and science, as the class become more ready and able to do so, as it is noted that children have responded well to this previously.

Subject Leads: Miss J Yardley and Mrs J Harvey

Music:

Mrs Holroyd attended two music CPD sessions on 27th June and 5th July, delivered by Lindsay Kutlu from Edsential, demonstrating progression from EYFS to Year 6 on 'Pitch' and 'Duration'. She also updated the Music School Development Plan for 2022-2023 and the Music Self Evaluation Schedule for 2022-2023. Mosh Tots visited us for a musical morning on 21st September - FS2 to Year Four had a thoroughly enjoyable morning with a musical performance. The children had a fabulous time and experienced music, song and dance from seven different genres – country, rock, reggae, jazz, blues, disco and hip-hop. The Pop Project visited school in October to deliver a wonderful musical extravaganza based on the Beatles, which was thoroughly enjoyed by the whole school.

Subject Lead: Mrs S Holroyd

Art:

In Art, we are focusing this year on upskilling our teaching staff. We have a full range of training sessions booked with Art teaching specialist Gayle Forshaw and two twilight sessions have already been delivered to teaching staff - The Effective Use of Sketchbooks and Progression of Drawing. Staff are booked on a further twilight, Progression of Painting, later in the school year. Teaching staff are booked onto further year group specific CPD, developing essential skills and knowledge to write effective schemes of work for their year group. Each year group will focus on embedding skills within the new sketchbook presentation and recording method, ending in a finished art piece and Miss Collins will be looking at examples from sketchbooks and speaking with pupils from FS2-Year Six towards the end of December.

Subject Lead: Miss A Collins

Chair of Governors Christmas Wishes:

Please find a festive message from Mike Collins, our Chair of Governors.

As Chair of Governors, I would like to wish you all a happy and relaxing Christmas break. I would like to express my thanks to all of the staff for their hard work and I am sure that you will join me in wishing them a happy holiday. I look forward to working with staff and parents in the New Year as we work closely with the Oak Trees MAT and commence our consultation phase this coming January. Best wishes and all the best for a prosperous new year.

Staffing Changes:

We said goodbye to Mrs Stratton-Powell at the end of last week and wish her well in her future career. We hope she stays in touch with us and lets us know how she is getting on. We were thrilled to welcome Mrs Leyland back after her maternity leave and know she will quickly settle back into Thingwall life.

Termly Attendance Letters:

As you will be aware, we conduct an annual parent questionnaire every January to glean views from our parent/carers population. Last year, a parent suggested that it might be a useful idea to receive a termly attendance update, in addition to the usual attendance information provided with the Annual Report. We thought that this was a great idea and will be sending attendance information home for the Autumn Term in the first week back after the Christmas break.

With very best wishes for a lovely Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year. We will see you all on Thursday 5th January 2023.

Mrs D L Evans