

Principal's Update October 2021

Our School Development Plan

All Schools reflect on their strengths and areas for development before identifying their priorities for the next school year. This is known as the school development plan. The current priorities for our school development plan are:

Priority One:

To improve standards and raise expectations across the curriculum for all pupils through the consistent application of policies and RCSAT procedures for the teaching of reading, writing and maths.

Over the last two years we have introduced some new initiatives to improve reading, writing and maths across the school. In 2020 we introduced Maths No Problem and IPEELL (how we teach writing) and Pathways to Read last year. Our focus for this year is embedding the improvements we have made whilst raising our expectations, so that all of our children make at least good progress. We are also having a big push on the children's presentation and handwriting.

Priority Two:

To review and develop the provision of the staffs and pupils' mental health awareness.

In September we relaunched Heartsmart. HeartSmart is a creative approach that we use to build character, emotional health and resilience. It provides children with the skills to improve their mental health, relationships with others and their academic achievements. We want our children to know that they are loved, cared for and valued.

In November, every member of staff will receive the basic youth mental health first aid training. This will ensure that we are in a better position to identify children who are need of additional support and provide the necessary interventions in school. Early next year, two members of staff will receive the full training.

Priority Three:

To develop religious and spiritual literacy throughout the school to strengthen age-appropriate, informed conversations about religion, beliefs and spirituality, whilst also providing opportunities for the children to develop their courageous advocacy.

This priority is about empowering the children so they have a greater understanding of religion, beliefs, and spirituality so the children become articulate agents of change. Our children often want to help and support others by raising money for charity. These events often promote basic discussion about the issues facing those who are in need. Taking this to a deeper level would strengthen their understanding and awareness of the need for social action in different issues facing God's world.

PE Update

Swimming

We will be hiring a large, heated swimming pool next May. It is going to be erected at Bunbury. Our KS2 children will travel over to Bunbury for some intensive swimming lessons over the course of a week. This comes highly recommended by several other Cheshire East schools who have used the company in the past.

Dance & Drama

We have arranged for a specialist dance and drama teacher to deliver some lessons over the course of the Spring term. Each class will be working on a performance which they will share with parents just before Easter.

Questions Raised by Parents:

Question 1 - Please could lots of photographs of events parents are not allowed to attend be published on the day of the event or close after, such as sports day (very small number put online) and harvest service, no photos issued as yet.

Wherever possible we upload pictures to Face Book and the school's website (gallery items). Each class aims to either upload something to Face Book or the school's website each week. We tried to film the Harvest Service but were unable to share it as the majority of the clips included children who couldn't be filmed, despite our best efforts. As I'm sure you'll appreciate we don't want to exclude these children or make them stand to one side.

Question 2 - The uniform at badged seems to be poorer quality than that provided at last supplier. Can this be investigated please?

We made the decision to change suppliers as we received several complaints about them after the ownership changed. We haven't received any complaints about the quality of the uniform. Could any concerned parents let Mrs Marsden know and we'll inform Badged.

Question 3 - When we moved to an academy we were promised that our individuality of the school would remain but we seem to do exactly the same as the other schools and have lost lots of what used to be done in school, such as clapping for attention, "are you ready"...."born ready", non-uniform day for reward of 20 stickers for individual children, etc.

The three schools in the trust share the same vision and ethos. As small rural church schools there are lots of similarities and differences. Each school does have its own identity. As principals, Mrs Badger, Mr Goodwin and I meet regularly to drive improvements in each of our individual schools and across the trust as a whole. We share good practice and staff across the trust, all of which has helped improve standards at Warmingham. Things evolve over time and changes aren't linked to us becoming an academy. The children have a significant voice in the decisions we make.

Question 4 - The other week a "government person" came in and the children told to be good or the school would be closed, I'm sure this is a misunderstanding from the children but please could we understand what this person was doing?

Last week, Malcolm Gate our new chair of governors came into school to chat to the children about our new connected curriculum. He spoke to a selection of children from Hedgehogs, Squirrels and Badgers. The children's responses:

Hedgehogs (Y1 and 2) - Victorians Study Theme

Finding a time capsule in the school grounds as a beginning to their learning really caught the children's imagination. "Mrs. B dug it up. We found a Victorian wax doll, a Victorian iron and D thing that you had to put on your head. This was for a first punishment." "They had an ink pen which you had to dip in ink-pots," and "they did joined up writing in Y2," according to Seb - who had also been to visit a Victorian house in Sandbach as a result of his learning.

The children immediately made connections between the present and Victorian times eg. with toys such as the cup and ball. They were keen to show me examples they had made and talked about wood advantages/disadvantages versus today's plastic. (The children made perceptive comments about these). "You get to write about toys and we made our own." They gave other examples such as the rocking horse and diabolo. "It would be fun to play with these things." Seb said they played with them "in the 1870s and the Victorians built houses in the 1860s"

They enthused about meeting a Victorian teacher (Miss Grim) and a maid in the Village Hall. They talked about how strict the teacher was: "When they came in you had to stand up. We didn't know that. We had to do it again!" "Teachers could whack them with a cane. You got hit on the bottom or the hands with it!" (Emily). Rogan said when asked, "It was like a stick which you slap on someone's butt or knuckles." This led to comparisons with today's school experience. "When you got one wrong you had to wear the dunces hat," and we talked about how you might have felt wearing it. "You had to stand in the corner too."

The maid led to discussion about rich versus poor – and what kind of people have servants now – "especially the Queen." "We had to see if you are good enough to be a maid and they had a thing that gave you a big bottom! " You have to do everything – wash up, put the fire on and wash clothes." "The mummy had someone to get her dressed and they even brushed their teeth for them." The children thought this was hilarious. "Posh people couldn't dress themselves or brush their own teeth!"

The children were proud of their Victorian study books, with Lily and Emily saying that making a cut out paper Queen for the front of their books as being their favourite activity. They were eager to guide me through their books.

Squirrels (Y3 and 4) - Romans Study Theme

The children had a chronological context to Romans times as they told me they had looked at a timeline in class from dinosaurs to World War 2. The "Theatre Guy" as they called him, had certainly captured their interest and thoroughly entertained them, with the archeological dig in the school grounds motivating two of the children wanting to be archaeologists as their "job" later in life.

Rich versus poor was again a feature in the topic as the children described the role of a Roman slave versus a Roman leader, with the inspiration being the Theatre Guy. "This guy came round about Rome. He was an actor and he turned into an Emperor and then an old man." Simon "I got sold as a servant," was very keen to talk about his experience of being chosen as part of the Theatre Guy's presentation (Emperor versus old man) and I don't think I've met a child more enthusiastic about his learning. Smell (horrible) was a feature of his tactile experience as a slave, "it stunk." "Slaves had to wash themselves with oil and water and went to look after the possessions of richer Romans" (when they visited the baths). You were important if you had slaves."

Interesting facts emerged at a rapid rate and without prompting, "They ate stuffed dormouses (this started a brief discussion about plurals) and snails."

"Julius Caesar invaded many countries and said I should be Emperor for life!"

"Two people built the city - Romulus and Remus were the founders of Rome (brief discussion about myths followed) – that's why Rome is called Rome, after Romulus."

"They built a wall to keep the Scottish people out of Britannia." Alfie was more precise, impressively so, "They built a great wall – Hadrian's Wall - built in honour of the Emperor. When the Theatre Workshop came round we pretended we were on Hadrian's Wall."

"They had gladiators in the Colosseum - they were people who killed animals and it was in like a theatre. I brought in a book about Rome – I've been to Rome." (Eliza)

"We dressed up as an archaeologist. We got to go out in the woods with magnifying glasses. We thought we'd found diamonds. but it was glass! We found Roman coins in the woods" (Sara). When asked how she knew they were Roman coins she said, "They had the Emperors' faces on –

they had leaf crowns.” When asked about her experience she said, “I liked being an archaeologist – then you can tell people about the past.”

One of the children, when asked about their favourite part of their learning far, said “The best bit is the mini stories in the book corner and on the whiteboard.” When I enquired further, “they are like facts on the whiteboard.”

When asked if they could remember any topics from Y1/2 the children were unanimous in stating the “Egyptian topic.” This was followed by “that Egyptian dance. It was great!” (actions and accompanying humming followed!)

Badgers (Y5 and 6) - Local History Study Theme

When I asked the direct question “Tell me some facts about the local area that you have found out” contributions included:

“We’ve been doing canals – why were canals built and how they changed history”

“We’ve been finding out about how canals and narrow boats have changed”

“We’ve been finding out about Warmingham’s history”

“They used animals to trample down the clay. Horses used to pull the narrow boats down the tow path”

“Romans were paid in salt”

“When they open the locks the water levels go down – then when you go through it fills up”

*“Every week we learn something new. We’ve been doing our ‘Big Write’ about canals also”
The children also explained their home learning connected to their topic. They showed me their 12 tasks from which they could choose to complete. Some of the children had visited the canal at the weekend. Frankie’s knowledge was extensive as a consequence of first-hand experience. He talked about living near an old salt works and knew a great deal about the Sandbach Flashes including the Moston Flashes, even challenging geographical facts about the flashes that had been aired in class!*

The folk tale “The Moston Dragon” was mentioned by some children. Following this we briefly discussed myths and legends and in particular the significance of local tales that have been handed down from generation to generation.

Question 5 - Could the amount of homework be reviewed please? There is so much expected.

Homework is one of those things that we will never get right for everyone. Some families feel we expect too much, and others would like more. On all of our home learning expectations we try to stress that they are not set in stone. If you feel they are not right for your child, it’s important that you speak to your child’s class teacher.

Taken from the Home Learning Expectations which was sent home with the children’s Home Learning Journals (yellow books):

It's important that we work together as a team so you can support your child where it is most important - beyond the school gate, supporting your child's learning at home. A great deal of thought has been put into our home learning expectations. There is a range of tasks and activities which will allow the children to practise what they have learnt in school and extend their knowledge. At no point should home learning ever become a battle or take over your home life. It is vital that children have time to be a child – playing and enjoying time with their family and friends. Every child is different – if you feel that our expectations aren't quite right for your child, please talk to us and we can adapt them to suit your child. They are NOT set in stone.



Question 6 - Is a larger range of after school clubs, free, being looked into?

Each half term we are trying to arrange a wider variety of after school clubs. Some of these are covered by staff in school and others from outside providers. As a small school we have a limited number of staff and a limited budget. Next half term we have arranged the following clubs:

Tuesday – Mad Science (Whole School)

Wednesday – Hockey (Squirrels & Badgers)

Thursday – Clubs led by teachers. The children can choose from Dungeons and Dragons (Badgers), Eco Warriors (Squirrels & Badgers) and Board Games (Otters & Hedgehogs).

Friday – Multi-Sports (Otters & Hedgehogs)

Mrs Bugliarello is also planning some STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) family events where parents can help their children work on mini projects. We are hoping to run the first one next term.

Question 7 - Would the school consider doing wrap around care again? A few mums are struggling finding childcare before and after school. It may be useful on club days too when siblings aren't at the same club.

We had to close our after school wrap around care as the numbers were too low resulting in a significant loss which we simply can't afford as small school. Circumstances change, so I will send home a questionnaire to see if there is enough of an interest to reopen Wag Tails.

The class teachers will all be running an after school club each Thursday with the other clubs open to the whole school wherever possible so parents only have to pick their children up once.

Question 8 - One of the parents has enquired about free school dinners for all children in the autumn & winter terms so all kids will get a hot meal in the cold weather not just the youngest ones. She has written to a local MP about it because we think it may be more of their area, but would it be something the school would consider? Would that sort of funding be accessible?

It would be wonderful if we could provide universal free school meals to all of our children. Unfortunately, this is something, which is decided at a National level and not part of the school's general budget. Writing to our local MP is a good move, and hopefully something they are willing to raise in parliament.

There is additional funding available for low income families for school meals. There is more information about this on the school's website - <http://www.warminghamce.cheshire.sch.uk/page/free-school-meals/6689> . The school also receives additional funding known as pupil premium for all children who received free school meals.

I would urge all parents to check to see if they are eligible even if their child prefers packed lunches as the pupil premium funding helps us provide additional support and opportunities, which directly benefit them.

Other Comments from Parents:

We wanted to pass on our compliments about the number of clubs that have been offered and the variety.

The car park is working much better now too with the longer drop off time.