

Well, we have made it to the end of the term, the end of the year – and what a year it has been! We have been expecting Ofsted all year and they have not been. We are overdue and therefore remain (as good as we are) ‘Requires Improvement’. Thank you for your patience and unwavering support, your overwhelmingly positive feedback literally on a daily basis, your acknowledgement of the progress school has made and the work we do for you and your children.

I was delighted to see so many of you last Monday at the class drop ins – having a chance to look at your child’s work and see their classroom environment after so long it must have been as wonderful for you as it was for us to see you!

Equally, I have had so much positive feedback from those of you who have attended class assemblies these past two weeks – I am only sorry that I couldn’t attend them all and that we genuinely cannot allow anyone to take photos and videos of their child’s class because we have several vulnerable children in each year group who are subject to a variety of protection measures for them and their families. I know a few of you suggested that we simply ask those children to step out of the photo but as I am sure you realise, it would be crushing for children (already vulnerable) to be asked to remove themselves from their group. I know it is a compromise for you but I do know that as an inclusive and supportive school community you all do understand.

Reports all went out last Friday – it is always a mammoth task at the end of every year to ensure that they are all done, proof read for the inevitable spelling errors and grammatical mistakes (we are all human and do make them). I proof read every report and it is honestly a real pleasure to read about each individual and what their teacher has noticed about them, their skills and talents, their learning styles and what they love. I write my comments based on what I observe of them in school and also on what their teachers say so it is a real joy.

The Year 6 Colour Run on today – what can I say? This was colourful, I am sure you will all see traces of green in their hair and behind their ears akin to that following a field exercise when the cam cream isn’t quite washed off some people! The children enjoyed it perhaps more than Y6 parents who are yet to wash out the paint!

We held Sports for Champions Day this week, which everyone also enjoyed, despite the HEAT!!!

Y6 enjoyed their prom last week, held at Whitby. I have booked it again for next year, and the DJ (hopefully my ears will have recovered from staff singing karaoke because the DJ will bring the karaoke again!). The Year 6 staff were amazing and made certificates for each child to celebrate their individuality, but what made the night for me was the children knew who those individuals were as they were read out – simply based on the anecdotal stories and reasons cited on the certificates. What a lovely bunch and how exciting for them to have enjoyed the end of the school year activities again after 2 years where this was impossible. To that end, today we say goodbye to them all and good luck and goodbye to Miss Moore! I am sure there will be tears galore on the gate..... We are also saying goodbye to the lovely Miss Hughes who stepped in and covered her Y5 class for the last term. We wish you well.....

On the topic of staff, and in light of the amazing staff I have, in addition to the fact I have written on all of the reports for children, I thought I would write a public report for them! In the past I have bought each of them a handmade wooden book holder as a Christmas gift, written and posted individual letters that they have received at home (similarly to the post cards we send home to your children), and have written to partners and family when I have asked them to work over and above the colossal workload I already give them. This time, I am doing an open letter.

I will start with our cleaning and site team. This year we lost Michelle, Granny Michelle left us to be a carer for her gorgeous additions. I have chatted to Michelle over the years, sharing her excitement about her daughters’ weddings, and then their imminent new arrivals, and then about her conflict between wanting to spend more time with them and leaving our team. She left Glamorous Pam to deal with the black hole that is my office on her own for a bit, with the help of our amazing Gill. Pam who always looks so amazing with her ‘messy bun’ that I once tried to copy and looked more like Mrs Twit than Pam! She always has a smile for us all and tidies up after Gus and the million visitors to my office without complaint. She also took Lynn under

her wing and made sure she settled in as Michelle's replacement. Hence forth to be known as Glamorous Pam! Gill, who I poached from my last school, is so amazing that she doesn't just turn her hand to cleaning, she is also one of our wonderful TAs, helped Pam and also works on the infants helping both Jen and Elaine who, between them all, must clear up at least my substantial body weight each year in glitter alone! Pete and Bill, the site duo, are always being pestered by me to keep the windows clean, the weeds under control, the rubbish swept outside school, the hedges trimmed, the equipment and walls painted etc etc. how they keep their cool at times I do not know, but they manage it, thankfully! These guys are the reason that our school always looks so clean, is often super tidy, why we maintain minimal absences due to transference of bugs and who work tirelessly to help me ensure we are all, staff/pupils/parents/visitors kept safe in the grounds.

Our middays are all just legends in their own right, some of whom have been here years (like the inimitable Sammy!) and love it so much that they cannot give up. What I do know is that we literally could not run the school without them, and they are all superstars – they were driven as mad as the rest of us during Covid restrictions but made sure that all of the children were looked after and safe, catered for and listened to during the unstructured time of the day! I think the summer months are more fun than winter ones, however, and they have enjoyed seeing me on the field with the dog, sometimes even taking him out on my behalf when I am fixed with work in the office. You guys are the essential organs of our school! Thank you for your service Lisa, Ange, Sammy, Tina, Liz, Sara, Cheryl, Gill Sally, Cheryl, Hannah, Carol, Leanne, Jenny, and Laura!

Our kitchen staff are also wonderful by the way and although (if you want to be technical!) they are not my staff, they are very much part of our school community and messy family and will get on board with our (my) mad cap ideas with enthusiasm – need I mention the monthly cooking for the homeless or the whole school Jubilee pudding fit for a Queen? We have 2 sites, 2 kitchens, 2 halls, and the quality across the board is exceptional. Sue, Heather, Kellee, Jill, Zoe and Sue – I salute you all, keep feeding our gorgeous staff and children, fuelling their brains and energising them!

We have a couple of exceptional staff who work specifically on emotional resilience with our most vulnerable children. It takes a special kind of individual to be able to do this and our ELSA staff include Leanne, Ann, and Clare; each of them prides themselves on their work ethic, commitment to supporting children through their most tricky times and genuinely I can say the compassion and care they have not just for the children but their colleagues is second to none. They could not strive any more for the children they work with and as a Headteacher I couldn't ask for more from them. Of course they are part of a wider body of staff who work unstintingly, over and above their paid hours on a routine basis without a murmur, for our most vulnerable children and those with additional needs, many of whom are working outside of school on second jobs, or qualifications in addition to their day job here – no mean feat. Again, it takes people with patience, compassion, kindness, empathy, physical and emotional resilience, tenacity and altruism. To say that these people occupy a special place in my heart (which is not as stone-like as some would believe!) would be an understatement. I have the ultimate respect for them and the work they do and I know that if your child is supported by any of them then you would agree, they are the lifeblood of this school. To Tom, Lauren, Gill, Diane, Lisa, Liz, Laura, Davina, Jen, Rayner, Tina, Kaili, Nat, Fiona, Cheryl, Michelle, Nat, Jenny, Leanne, Shaun, Katherine, and Ann – I see you, I see the work you do, I am proud to serve you and proud of the work you do for our children. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

We have another group of staff who have hybrid roles! Again, their work ensures that not only are the children supported every morning but also that teachers can take their planning time, and when anyone is off (a horrid and regular occurrence due to Covid this year) they teach classes for us exceptionally well. I thank you Maths Magician Paul, Chrissie, Andrea, Carmel, Claire, Deb, and Deb (and of course Nat!). You are amazing – your stock ordering and 'shopping around' saved us over £1000. We have the opportunity to establish a toddler group here as a result of your skills and desire to work with me outside the box! Your innovative ideas create opportunity and I love it that you are all so proactive – what a team.

As for our admin team, if the TAs (HLTAs, and ELSAs) are the lifeblood of the school, and the midday staff are the essential organs, the admin gang are for certain the essential systems. Without them, nothing would work. Newsletters, attendance, absence recording, Health and Safety, stock orders, deliveries, texts, co-ordinating activity, new intakes, diary dates, data bases, government returns, census information, emails,

phone calls, scrapes, bumps, accidents, medicine administration - it all goes on in our offices and genuinely, I cannot tell you the respect I have for the staff who work in there (not least as they have to also factor in me and my demands!). Sue, Lisa, Donna, Nicky, Jann – the love is real. You guys are the best!

Teachers (some of whom also have a key senior leadership role in our school alongside their teaching commitment!), Arzoo, Pete, Laura, Mel, Lucy, Jen, Dani, Roisin, Daisy, Mel, Emma, Beth, Emily, Kim, Lottie, Gill, Annica and Lou – you have worked tirelessly on subject leadership, implementation, Covid planning, post covid planning, pupil premium planning, teaching, assessment, school improvement, getting to know your children, celebrating them as individuals, tailoring learning experiences, seeking opportunity for enrichment and a million and one other things I demand of you. I am excited that as we have already been planning 2022-2023 that we will have an EPIC year together and that we all have something to celebrate in the coming months. Thanks for sticking with me, digging in with your eyelids at times and maintaining the energy and desire to work in our team that every single visitor to this school comments on. There can be no greater pleasure for a Headteacher than working with a galvanised team and I know I am utterly blessed.

My military journey continues to offer opportunity and as such, despite not making the cut for the 2024 Force Atlantic rowing team, I came across a leadership guy called Floyd, who I was keen to bring in to work with our staff as much of what he was saying I had been advocating for years. To make sure I wasn't just creating an echo chamber of my own limited views, I asked Mrs L to attend some training he was running in an academy trust in Stoke. As with Commando Joes (a huge hit for our school) I loved it but needed Mrs L to green light it as she is the voice of reason; so it happened with Floyd. Anyway, she loved it and learned a lot about herself in the process, so he is coming to us in September but the point of this story is, the whole leadership team (all 9 of us), worked out our personality drivers and could clearly see mapped out where we complemented, overlapped and compensated for one another's strengths and weaknesses. Floyd will come and do further work on the benefits of this but meanwhile I should mention that ...

I know the success of our team, why I am so blessed, is less down to me than it is the class based (Laura, Lou, Lottie, and Emily – mentioned above) and non-class-based senior leaders of our school, all of whom work harder than any professionals I have worked with in my 27 years of teaching. I often talk of love, and indeed have just written a book on leading with love so you would hope I would, but the love I feel for these guys is like nothing else. The kinship, the bond we have, that was forged in the fiery pit of adversity that has been leading a school through not just Covid but the aftermath of a turbulent few years that saw a legacy of huge (almost insurmountable) debt, and shocking standards, loss of pupils and loss of faith by the local community amongst many other challenges, is like no other. My pride in their professional growth and capability is only matched by their expertise and skill. I feel quite emotional writing this, because they are like my family and I am proud to serve them and serve with them. My love, gratitude and thanks to Sue, Alice, Clare, and Sharon, our very own Covid Queen. You guys are the skeleton of the school and hold us all together.

On that happy (soppy) note – I wish you all an amazing summer to remember. Please be safe and I look forward to welcoming you back in September when we will be on fire for another amazing year! 😊