



Headteacher's Update – March 2024

Although it felt more like Winter than Spring, we continued to have fun this term!



Fortunately, we are only forced to dress up as pirates, snowmen, princesses and wizards once a

year but amongst other events this term we had a very enjoyable World Book Day. Pupils had a great time laughing at the staff parade in assembly. These events provide memorable moments that the children can look back on but there is of course a serious side as we celebrate authors, books and the importance of reading.

Aside from a day dressing up there are a number of other developments to share with you as we continue our school improvement journey and strive for excellence in all areas of school life.

Our focus on reading continues with a specialist consultant booked to carry out an audit of our reading practice. Our approach to reading is thorough and layered. We provide whole class reading three times a week where the entire class reads and studies an age appropriate text. They practice reading aloud with intonation, looking at vocabulary choice and meaning and studying the structure of different text types. In addition to this we carry our focus group reading session on a two weekly cycle where an ability group of up to 6 pupils join their teacher to read and share an ability appropriate text. This is a chance to listen to each child read and consider their levels of comprehension. We then offer weekly phonics teaching following the Sounds Write scheme which assists pupils with both reading and spelling. Finally, pupils who are not reading at their chronological age benefit from additional interventions from Read Write Inc to comprehension sessions, to after school boosters or daily one to one reading to an adult in school. Overarching all of this is the importance of reading for pleasure and our library is very well stocked and presented, making the weekly library session one of the most popular sessions in the week for pupils.

The review offered a number of very helpful next steps which will refine our approach and make reading even more engaging to our pupils. Despite a very comprehensive offer we still look to develop our resources and offer.

Our refinements in writing this year are receiving positive feedback from both staff and pupils. We now use colour coding in our teaching slides and resources to help pupils identify parts of speech. We also use symbols (called widgets) to prompt pupils and reinforce instructions.

Continuing with the priority of academic excellence, subject leaders, year leaders and the senior leadership team have all been busy with learning walks, book samples and observations. Regular monitoring across the school is essential to preserve standards, capture our best practice and target support to staff or pupils.

Writing is highly planned by teachers with well-designed teaching slides that use colour coding and widgets to help pupils identify the key technical features of various texts. Both the quality and quantity of work in books is impressive.

Our maths sample evidenced an increase in problem solving activity rather than an unnecessary number of practice questions. This has been the key focus of our improvement work this year with staff who are maths champions tasked with guiding colleagues and modelling best practice.

Science books impressed us with lessons that had a good blend of knowledge content alongside lots of investigational work and practical science. Good use of technology was evident with photos of tasks added to exercise books and QR codes linking to work. It was also good to see there were opportunities for extended writing and not everything was structured with worksheets.

Topic books were similarly impressive and are a wonderful record of the broad and balanced curriculum on offer at Cleves. These books contain not just History or Geography work but design

and technology and outdoor learning days. Year leaders have created lovely pic collages of some of the many creative opportunities pupils enjoy which get stuck in to these books.

I hope this came through at our parent consultation day when you had the opportunity to look at your child's work.

There is an increased focus on personalised teaching for year 6 as we approach the SATs in May and staff are providing a comprehensive range of after school boosters. We have 12 sessions a week with just over 80 children attending activities. This intensive, targeted support all helps pupils in the final weeks before the key stage 2 assessments and I would like to record my gratitude to the staff involved who have volunteered from across the school not just the year 6 team.

This half term we had another visit from Theresa Hughes to deliver internet safety training to staff, provide assemblies for pupils and offer an after-school workshop for parents. Theresa has joined us half a dozen times over the years now and continues to offer valuable, hard hitting, up to date training and messaging about on-line safety.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs has been the school improvement priority that has dominated this half term as the SEND working party completed an action plan which maps out improvement work for the medium term. Mrs Matthews has worked extremely hard and completed the Inclusion Award application form with 21,000 words detailing our practice. We plan to submit our application in the coming weeks. The feedback and evidence we have collected has prompted an ambitious and exciting new plan to continue to push our standards and offer forward.

As you know we work closely with our Infant feeder school partners and that work continues to develop. The Infant Head teachers visited Cleves to observe year 3 children in class, sample their work to look at outcomes and meet their previous pupils to discuss how they found transition.

All in all it has been another productive and enjoyable half term.

I would like to finish my end of term letter with an important staff update. After many years at Cleves Mrs Earl has decided to retire and leaves us at Easter. Mrs Earl was previously our Upper School phase leader and part of the senior leadership team. More recently, she decided to move to a part time role and for the last few years she has worked in year 6 as our literacy specialist. Over her years at Cleves she has made a huge contribution from encouraging the Arts, supporting colleagues, modelling best practice and more recently working with children in year 6 to improve standards in writing. In one way or another, Mrs Earl has been an important part of our success from our SATs results to our outstanding OFSTED. I would like to offer my thanks and recognition for her important contribution to our success.

As one person leaves another returns, we welcome back Ms Pugh who is coming back from maternity leave after Easter and will initially take on Mrs Earl's groups.

All that remains is for me to offer a final thank you and a final congratulations.

Every term I think it is important to acknowledge and repeat my thanks to all the staff at Cleves who offer so much to our pupils. To say they go the extra mile is an understatement.

Every term I reflect on the importance and the impact you have as parents. Every school will say they work in partnership with parents but few truly do, or receive as much support as we enjoy from our parent community. From helping with homework to encouraging your child to read, to joining us

in school to help with cookery lessons, to accompanying us on school trips – the exceptional offer in place at Cleves is equally thanks to you.

My last comment this term is to our pupils though. I would like to congratulate them all on their work, effort and progress. Although we know our pupils are exceptional, every time we have visitors they comment on the childrens' positivity, behaviour and work ethic. We are very proud of them.

Have a great Easter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'C Hodges'.

Mr C Hodges
Headteacher