



Headteacher's Update – October 2023

Dear Parent/Carer,

Seven weeks ago we returned to glorious sunshine and a new school year. A great deal has happened over this period including a change of season with Autumn now definitely upon us. It has been a fantastic half term with our year 3 pupils settling in, pupils in all our other year groups moving on to their new classes, new teachers and support staff joining the Cleves team and new ideas for school improvement. Since our Friday newsletters keep you up to date with the many events and activities I thought I would focus on some school improvement updates on this occasion.

I thought I should firstly go back several months to comment on activity through the summer holiday. Our new holiday club, Laser Lions, proved very popular with up to 100 pupils attending the provision every day. We appointed this company when our previous holiday club provider ceased trading. Laser Lions started at Cleves with a limited number of children as a test run in the May 2023 half term. Feedback from pupils and parents has been very positive and our business manager, Mrs Clements, was on site at points in the summer holiday and monitored their offer. I am very pleased with the quality of this new service.

Our site manager, Mr Forsey, completed a busy redecoration programme through the summer break and as always we returned to an immaculate site ready for staff and pupils to return.

Our term started with two INSET days, which allowed us time to introduce our school improvement plans for the year. Whilst there is another busy year ahead with a full programme of activity we identified and discussed **5 key priorities** –

1. Literacy

- More variation in pupils' writing and increased independence.
- Punctuation and grammar (PAG) content mapped out in each year group.
- PAG definitions explained clearly and consistently by staff by creating a directory.
- The use of symbols known as widgets to represent parts of speech, instructions or key learning.
- Colourful semantics -where parts of speech are colour coded in teaching materials.
- Sounds Write phonics scheme training for new staff.
- More consistent approach to handwriting and practise time in class.

2. Numeracy

- Increased consistency in approach to iron out minor variations across classes.
- Clearer whole school approach to retrieval where we practise prior learning.
- Build on previous learning in lessons with reference back to last term or last years learning.
- Key learning in every lesson to be explicit.
- Increase in pace through practice questions to allow more opportunity for mathematic reasoning.
- To create opportunities for more mathematical discussions.
- Staff maths champions in each year will model Cleves best practice to colleagues.

3. Computing

- A new innovative computing curriculum.
- Our IT team will support each year group to re-plan new and more ambitious lessons.
- Introduce innovative new resources such as 3D printers and virtual reality headsets.
- Our Multi media room reorganised and fit for purpose.

4. SEND and inclusion

- Increase our staff team and leadership capacity by releasing Mrs Matthews from class to work alongside Mrs Grafton and Mrs Miller.
- Apply for the Inclusion Award.
- Focus on SEND best practice and new research.
- A focus on useful strategies for all staff and pupils to know and use such as zones of regulation.
- Seeking increased parental input and improving our communication about what is on offer.
- A multi-disciplinary team with bought in therapists, specialists and Educational psychologists to ensure our pupils receive the best support from a range of professionals.
- New therapy rooms.

5. Increase our Arts provision

- Apply for the Arts Mark Award.
- More visiting music specialists providing events for every year group.
- Surrey Arts teachers in every year group for music so our pupils try 4 different musical instruments over time.
- Opportunities for drama identified with training and support for staff.
- An Art specialist appointed to support and enhance our Art offer.
- Increase Arts lunch and after school clubs.
- Offer excellence groups across the Arts subjects.
- Look to build links with external Arts agencies.

Aside from these 5 key priorities, in other news our new staff have settled in very well and were all busy over the summer break preparing their classrooms. Miss Earl, Miss McKinnon, Mr Jacoby and Miss Hunter have all made a great start to life at Cleves.

I am very pleased to report Ms Clarke has increased her hours at Cleves and now provides 3 days a week as our mental health and well-being lead. Cleves is unusual in having a non-class based mental health leader who can support pupils directly, signpost parents to help when required and manage our large team of therapists and counsellors.

Since well-being remains a key priority at Cleves I am pleased to report we have increased our provision further still. In addition to our existing offer (including counsellors, drawing and talking, pastoral groups, pet therapy, social anxiety support, occupational health) we have managed to secure an Art therapist for the first time through our work with Valley Trust. We look forward to gauging how this new strand of our support is received. With a majority of our interventions being talking therapies this is a route we have tried to secure for some time.

I am delighted to report that Mrs Jones, our paediatric physiotherapist, is back at work after a period away from work due to an injury. This has further bolstered our support for pupils. Another big change this year has been Mr Smith's move across to the Cleves sports coach role after standing down as Deputy Head. Mrs Flaherty and Mrs Cannell are currently both acting up in the Deputy Head role and doing a great job supporting staff, pupils and parents.

Lunch clubs are all under way and over 400 pupils are attending a range of activities. As part of our target to increase our provision in the Arts (to match our offer in sport) we are about to offer a number of new Arts clubs which will hopefully extend the number of pupils engaging with a lunch activity. We secured a grant to assist with Arts delivery and special events so have committed some of this to employ a part time art specialist to support in lessons. She will offer two lunch clubs a week which will extend our current provision and be a great new opportunity for children to explore their artistic talent.

We have provided yoga sessions to all classes for several years now and it is always popular but we have changed our approach. Although the sessions were well run and positive with a very calming effect, pupils were not often using any of the techniques outside of the lesson and staff were not employing them in class. This year most lessons will be based in the classroom with an emphasis on how the techniques could be used at points in the day or used by individuals if they are having trouble self-regulating.

Our October INSET Day is dedicated to SEND and inclusion. Small teams will be capturing what we do well and proposing next steps. This will help populate the very lengthy Inclusion Award application form but more importantly generate the beginning of an action plan. We then have some helpful feedback from a parent forum Mrs Batchelor hosted in the summer and a SEND questionnaire to factor into our planning.

We have a small office room on order following a successful bid to Elmbridge Council for £22,000 for this new space. Our intention is to set up a fit for purpose therapy room for one of our specialists. We aspire to have three spaces in time to accommodate all the provision we need to offer to children with complex needs. Learning provision and interventions sometimes need to be complimented with pastoral support or therapeutic programmes so we plan to build on our existing offer with better accommodation and resources for pupils who may benefit from more help.

Even at this early stage in the school year there have been many important and memorable events. We held our traditional welcome service for our year 3 pupils at St Mary Oatlands which was well attended by parents and year 4 did a super job sharing their memories and advice. Year 4 enjoyed a local River Trip to inform their Geography topic whilst year 5 went to Hampton Court. Year 6 experienced life as Victorian children for a day. Our first PTA meeting of the year was very well attended. Pupils have enjoyed assemblies, sports fixtures and a spooky disco. The half term has absolutely flown by and it feels like we have packed a year of activity into 7 weeks. On our return there is plenty more to come. None of this would be possible without the energy and dedication of the entire Cleves staff team who I must thank for all they do. After a well-deserved rest they will all be ready for the next chapter including our Christmas productions.

Most important of all, our pupils have worked hard, produced impressive results and matured even over this short period. They remain a delight to work with and should be proud of the start they have made to the year.

I wish you all an enjoyable half term.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "C Hodges".

C Hodges
Headteacher