



**Eastwood Road, Stoke On Trent, ST1 3JS**

21/07/2023

Dear Parents and Carers

## **End of Year Address from the Executive Principal**

It is hard to believe that we are already moving into the final few days of the academic year! So much has been accomplished by our amazing school community that it is quite a challenge to know where to start in this end of year address.

So, let's start with the curriculum!

Our school has a long history of, and passion for, continuous improvement. That is why year after year the children in our care leave having made exceptional progress throughout their time with us. – and we continue to pursue excellence in all that we do. There have been many changes throughout the year, particularly in respect of the substantial improvements to our curriculum through the development of some incredibly talented subject and senior leaders.

One of our most prominent achievements has been the successful implementation of the Opening Worlds curriculum which ignited a complete curriculum review. This has spearheaded enhancements across multiple subjects this year as we move towards creating something known, in educational terms, as a '**3D curriculum**'.

This approach seeks to build long-term recall by creating links between different concepts across three dimensions:

- **vertical links** within a subject which all key concepts to be encountered repeatedly over year groups
- **horizontal links** connecting concepts across different subjects within year groups and
- **diagonal links** that connect concepts across year groups **and** subjects

Together these links help our pupils to construct holistic mental models of the world and understand how it all fits together. And there is no doubt about it – this is definitely working! As we created the initial trial and then moved towards full implementation, we have seen a dramatic increase in the amount of knowledge that our children have been retaining.

It is abundantly clear that our children now know more and remember more than ever before! Not just this, but the children themselves have been telling us that, as a result, they are enjoying subjects like history and geography so much more! This is clear to see during our drop ins, book looks and regular conversations with children around the school.

As a result, our children will more confidently, and securely, be able to move into their next stage of education; be that in the new academic year, key stage or indeed transitioning into school, college and into the workplace.

Alongside curriculum developments this year, we have been thrilled to broaden our enrichment opportunities; reintroducing a wide variety of creative arts activities including choir, dance, athletics, gardening, photography. We have also been able to engage in a widening variety of external performances and community events, including 'Showstoppers' and 'Young Voices', and been able to re-establish some incredible educational visits to further support and extend our children's learning.



This aspect of our work will continue to develop into the new academic year. We are already planning and booking additional educational experiences to stimulate your child's curiosity and love of learning; all of which will be published through our new-and-improved website and calendar.

And with our website in mind, it is with huge thanks and gratitude to the very talented Mrs Willis, that all of this information - and new curriculum and school-community updates - will be at your fingertips! When SET (the Shaw Education Trust) suggested the redevelopment of our Trust schools' websites I couldn't wait to be one of the first primary schools on board. However, some of you will know, that this requires a degree of technicality that is far beyond my existing knowledge-base! (smile). However, Mrs Willis came to the rescue, worked alongside our new provider, and then trained up the wider staff team to successfully implement this project!

There are many things I am grateful for in this life and having such a gifted and committed team who work tirelessly on the behalf of our school, our children and wider community is certainly one of them!

I am exceptionally proud of the staff team here at Waterside who relentlessly strive to ensure the best possible education and outcomes for your children year on year. This year, whilst we have seen some of our staff move on to promotional opportunities elsewhere, we have also had the privilege to appoint new staff who have already become fully absorbed and influential members of our staff team. In addition, we have also seen the amazing dedication of those rising through the internal school ranks, taking on new leadership opportunities and promotions from within. Not least, Mrs Willis and I have been growing into our new respective roles as Head of School and Executive Principal. These roles will continue into the Autumn Term as I have now been appointed as the substantive Director of Primary for our Trust.

To the onlooker this change of titles really will not look very different in practice: Mrs Willis will continue to hold responsibility for the day-to-day leadership and operational aspects of our school and I will continue to oversee, influence and review its strategic direction and implementation. Alongside this, I will have strategic oversight of the other 7 primary schools within our trust, developing trust strategy across our wider family of schools to secure high quality education in all of our primary provisions. This first and foremost starts with us here at Waterside!

Both Mrs Willis and I are passionate about securing the best possible education for all the children in our care. We want our children to have an optimum education which enables them to flourish in every way; to provide a happy, stimulating and exciting learning environment; widening horizons and providing the kind of learning opportunities that empower all of our learners to create, achieve and live out their dreams. To this end we, alongside the tremendous team here at Waterside, will continue to develop and enhance our provision.

And, so – even as we say goodbye to our wonderful Year 6 pupils and the summer holidays begin – we will continue to work behind the scenes to prepare for the new academic year ahead, knowing that it will not be too long before we all get to welcome you here again! As ever, a HUGE thank you for the incredible support that you give to us here. It is a huge privilege to serve you! Wishing you all a very happy holiday.

Rachel King

Executive Principal

