



"That they may have life and live it to the full."

Ditton CE Juniors Newsletter – April 22nd

HEAD LINES

You will have received the news from our Interim Executive Board (IEB) chair, **Dr Peter Gregory**, that my time here comes to an end last week of April. My stay this time was always open ended and dependent upon when the school's progress towards joining a family of schools, (the Aletheia Multi Academy Trust), was formally begun. There will need next to be a consultation process but I am really pleased to announce that my successor, **Sue Tunnicliffe**, now takes on the critical role of transition headteacher for this next phase. Sue and I have already started an intensive and detailed handover in order that there is no check to the progress the team here has made recently.

BEHIND THE SCENES

I mentioned last time that both the local authority and our IEB have spoken very positively about the ground we have covered since Christmas, and the depth we are going into when analysing our strengths and areas for growth. I can now add that I feel Sue and I are cut from the same cloth and that she will serve you all with the **passion, excitement and ambition** I have tried to offer. A thought on that if you'll forgive me?

The progress we have made recently has only been delivered because of the **three key things** that drew me back to Ditton when the school was leaderless. The dedication, trust and effort of **this team** including our IEB, your **wonderful children** and **your faith** in my own commitment to the school. I believe I 'get' Ditton but it was these levers that gave me confidence I could make a difference even at my ripe old age! I came back because these groups deserved faster progress, pride and success, and because I have always felt that this school could aspire to greatness with those positives. I genuinely hope you feel I have served you well and put ambition for the school front and centre. Working with Aletheia we can accelerate that ambition even faster, deliver ever improving learning and forget some of the uncertainty and insularity/isolation of the past. This place gets under your skin for all the right reasons and **I thank you all for the privilege of serving here.**

Behind the scenes we continue to focus on that ambition and, ably led by the new **senior leadership team**, staff have been working hard this term, especially to become expert at helping children explain and review their learning. I have summarised the most recent **parent survey** and will send it out next week. It too helps us see where we are successfully building and where we are still to develop. One reply to the survey said that I bang on about this new leadership team but haven't named them! I do bang on because they have exceeded my expectations and have had to present the picture of the school, and what they are doing about it, to everyone from Local Authority officers to IEB members, almost fortnightly since Christmas! They are, **Kelli Moon** who is currently acting deputy, **Ruth Campbell** our SENCo, **Amy Baker** now in charge of Assessment and Writing, **Lauren Nazer**, in charge of Reading standards, and **Kirstie Semark**, responsible for Curriculum and Learning. We have set a very fast learning curve, they meet weekly to review and I am extremely proud of them and of the support **others on the team** have given them. It has meant we can be crystal clear about expectations, about ambition and our Improvement journey. Lastly, as proof that we listen, you will see in the survey that some parents are still unsure about how their child is doing. I hope our first step of sharing **reading attainment** is seen as a step in the right direction but it has also been so enriching to have groups of you back in school and this will continue as the pandemic situation grows less worrying (we all hope).



The following children have been nominated by their class teacher for the weekly flourishing awards.

Week ending 25th March – 3JC Noah K, 3KS Brooke B, 4LN Daisy R, 4SM Annie-Louise K, 5KM Reece F, 5HS James K, 6MG George W, 6AB Honor N

Week ending 1st April – 3JC Harry T, 3KS Jackson F, 4LN Indie J, 4SM Markus W, 5KM Dylan K, 5HS Teddy C, 6MG Alfie C, 6AB Paige M



BIG QUESTIONS

A parent recently thanked me for all the extra time and effort I've put into this but I'd like to share any credit with the team and perhaps, even more unusually, share it with you. I firmly believe **communities build schools, and schools enrich communities**. It is only by you raising questions and having ambition for your children that teams can aim ever higher. That remains our potential here and we all have a responsibility to build excellence. I'd just like to shuffle off by also saying that, sometimes, it is the **positive feedback** that makes great workers –so keep that coming. As The Beatles once said 'the love you take is equal to the love you make.' (I'm not sure about that one either!)

We are aware that there are some children in Years 5 & 6 who do carry mobile phones with them on their journeys to and from school. These **MUST** be handed in to the class teacher at the beginning of each school day, so that they can be stored safely and will be returned to each child at home time. Sadly, we have also been experiencing a number of issues with the use of WhatsApp and other online platforms that our children are using outside of school. We would like to remind you that children under the age of 13 should not be using such apps, as this is causing a lot of disruption to children's learning and mental health. Your support with this, would be greatly appreciated.



I was looking for a **bible verse** that captured both my leaving, my returning and my leaving again. Staff started to call me **Mr Elastic** and it does feel a bit like a Yo-Yo. There is nothing on Yo-Yos in the good book and Jesus said little to help me on how hopeless I have been at retiring (although my wife is far from struck dumb on the subject), so I settled on this, which is somewhere in the gospel of Mark and may actually have been said at the sermon on the mount.

Jesus talked of the wise builder who built on rock and the foolish one who built on sand, but what he was hinting at was that, when you build, you should do so with one eye on security, stability and longevity. Don't just do it to look nice and get it completed quickly. And another thing strikes me – he was also saying you aren't just building for you, you are building, with compassion and concern, for those who will live there in the years to come.

I know Jesus was really talking about what people would do with his words in future. I guess, in an odd way, I'm hoping a few of my words will not just get washed away. I can dream when it comes to my colleagues here. As for the children, well, I've had four and none of them listen to me much now!

Richard Sutton-Smith