

9<sup>th</sup> January 2023

Dear Parents, Carers and Children,

First, Happy New Year to all of you who I have not managed to wish a happy 2023 to in the playground. I hope you had a brilliant Christmas holiday! I have heard lots about visits to see Father Christmas, ski trips, new toys and family board games since we returned to school – all via enthusiastic and excited children.

At the start of the year, I would like to share some more information about school improvements, particularly in the areas of our focus for Bowling Green this academic year. It is common for all schools to select three broad areas to develop. As you will know from me sharing them previously, ours are children's speaking, listening and communication; further embedding our curriculum, and supporting personal development.

### **1. Children's speaking, listening and communication (oracy)**

We want our children to be excellent talkers and word users, to value their own voice and to be confident to use it for different purposes.

Several parents have spoken to me about the word 'prosody', which essentially means reading with expression and is a focus in school for all our children. Reading with prosody is important for fluency (recognising words automatically) and comprehension (understanding what has been read) and is a priority at Bowling Green this year. Children who have Phonics lessons have a weekly session with a familiar text on using 'storyteller voice' and children who no longer have Phonics lessons have a weekly fluency lesson. See our [website](#) for further details. Excitingly, our Year 5 children are part of an innovative programme where fluency is a primary focus for 10 weeks with great results so far.

To support our oracy target, we follow a programme called Talk Through Stories, which explicitly teaches our younger children advanced vocabulary. We also have repeated texts from Reception to Year 3, updated reading areas in classrooms with engaging books, new initiatives to borrow books from class libraries and our parent library, and our re-launched Reading Challenges. Mrs Mellor has ensured speaking and listening skills are now mapped out across every year group and it is brilliant to hear children debating, role playing and verbally responding to class discussions in each class in school.

### **2. Further embedding our curriculum**

Following last year's move to single-age classes, our curriculum needed to adapt and embed across school. This year, we have a brand-new Reception curriculum that Miss Bottomley and I have worked hard on (a 'labour of love', if you will!). Each term is split into a key question: Who am I? Where am I? What am I? with lots of exciting learning opportunities in each curriculum area. Our children are loving it so far.

From Year 1 upwards, you may have heard your child talk about pre- and post-assessments as we continue to really focus on what children know at the beginning on units and to provide challenge to all children in what we want them to know by the end. You may have also heard the phrase 'Flashback', which we use in most lessons in school to recall and revisit previous learning (last lesson, last topic, last year). Our teachers are working hard to activate children's memories and ensure learning is 'stuck' in their long-term memories following training from Mr Andrews.

Elsewhere, Mrs Hollingsworth has adapted our Science curriculum this year to make it more hands-on with a heightened focus on scientists, hopefully to inspire the next generation of forward-thinkers. It is rare to walk around Science lessons at school without a class involved in a practical activity, be it 'making' blood or poo (to learn about the circulatory and digestive systems) or creating healthy diets. Maths, too, has had some positive tweaks from Miss Bianchi with the additional focuses of increasing independence for all learners and in raising challenge through 'Dong Nao Jin' challenges (which translates to 'use your head') in every class. They're *really* difficult!

### **3. Supporting personal development**

We want our children to have wonderful experiences and aspirations – both academically and socially – and to be ready for life in modern Britain. Mrs Deighton has led training on how we can do this in the classroom by focusing on research-informed teaching practices and I am continuing this - as SENCO - with a focus for children with additional needs. Recently, in an audit of our approach to mental health and wellbeing by Open Minds CAMHS, Bowling Green was described as ‘exemplary’ and several practices from our school were shared across Calderdale.

I hope you will have noticed our increased extra-curricular clubs offer and our increased role within our wider community, as well as our involvements so far with the Royal British Legion, Elland Christmas market, Outlane Window Trail, Calderdale libraries, the United Reform Church in Holywell Green, SmartMove and Overgate Hospice. Our role as a Picture News Advocate School also increases our children’s understanding of world news events and British Values, as well as our curriculum which both explicitly and implicitly teaches children about celebrating diversity in a modern society.

We are also sharing more learning with families on SeeSaw with Mr Morris supporting children’s access to technology in school as well as further developing our KITE Values of Kindness, Independence, Tenacity and Enjoyment, Houses based on inspirational people and our three new Eco-Warriors in school.

To me, it feels like our brilliant community school is getting better every single day and we are continually working hard to make each year our best one yet – for children, staff and families. From our recent Open Day sessions for prospective parents whose children will be starting school in September, I shared several quotes from recent audits of school. A selection is shared below:

“There continues to be **striking improvements** across school with a **hardworking and knowledgeable team**. Recent results at Bowling Green are **all above national and local results, often significantly above**. These are a credit to the school.” *Alan Giles, External School Improvement Advisor*

“My visit was **extremely positive**. The children were **industrious** and actively **engaged in interesting lessons**. The atmosphere around school was positive and calm, and staff and pupils demonstrated **good relationships**.” *Paul Miller, Governor (Vice Chair)*

“The school takes safeguarding very seriously. **Children feel safe and enjoy school**.” *Jayne Firth, Chief Operations Officer*

“Pupil interviews were yet another positive – **children spoke highly of school, their teachers, about what they learn and about the wider curriculum**.” *Dani Worthington, Director of School Improvement, Great Heights Academy Trust*

‘Bowling Green has a **very welcoming, safe and inviting feel**. (The school) promotes messages about the importance of celebrating diversity, equality, inclusion and self-worth. There are **robust systems and support in place that encourage positive mental health and it is clearly a priority for the school**.’ *Elodie Clowrey, Educational Mental Health Practitioner, Northpoint CAMHS*

Once again, I hope you all have a bright and prosperous year. I, for one, am certainly looking forward to another year at school and am excited about continuing to ensure the children at Bowling Green Academy enjoy the very best time in primary school.

Best wishes,

Mr Jamie Stuttard, Principal