

Highworth Combined School

As the year comes to an end, it's a good opportunity to reflect back over all that has happened since September 2021.

We came back to school in bubbles; we had meals in takeaway bags that were eaten in classrooms. Lots of people were ill and had to stay at home for a long time! We all did a lot of lateral flow tests. Many of you were involved with remote learning at home on laptops and tablets. Children never quite knew who their teacher would be that day or which of their friends they would see and which of them would be at home not well.

It was only at the end of April that we could at last go back to assembly together, hot meals in the hall and playing with friends from other year groups.

It would be safe to say therefore, that although it might have seemed that we were back to normal, we really were not.

And yet as we come to the end of a very unusual year, I can tell you that it has been a remarkably successful one for our school.

Curiosity continues to drive so much of this success. Your children's desire to learn and ask questions inspires and motivates us. As a team of teachers we regularly read the latest publications to make sure we know what works well when teaching children. There is no doubt that this has contributed to us out performing many other schools locally and nationally.

We have a strong moral purpose: we want to send children to secondary school ready to succeed and this year, more children will leave us secondary ready than ever before. We know this because of the remarkable results achieved by our Year 6 children in national SATs tests. We also know that children throughout our school are back on track with learning, both from internal assessment and

success with national SATs in Year 2, and that it is likely even more children will leave us ready for the next stage of their education in future years.

The tricky start to the year meant that being resilient was very important, and this year we have supported more children than ever with wellbeing. We never underestimate the importance of children being able to regulate their emotions and be ready to learn. This approach is crucial to what is most important: happy children who want to learn.

All of this success is only possible when the whole community comes together for a common purpose: to do the very best for the children at Highworth. We have always said that relationships underpin everything that we do and this has never been truer. After keeping parents and carers at arm's length, we have been so pleased to welcome you back with in person parents and carers evenings, Sports Day (sorry to Early Years that the weather did not allow), HAT, the Summer Music Concert and the end of Key Stage 2 production. We cannot wait to continue this and have arranged a Firework Event for October!

So, finally a huge thank you to each and every one of you for the contribution you have made to our success:

To parents and carers for getting your children into school each day, or for keeping them home when they have been unwell (!); for reading with, and to your children; for practising maths; for coming to parents and carers evenings to find out how to support; for the trust you put in us to care for your children each day.

To the team of adults who work in classrooms: for teaching and supporting new lessons from a demanding curriculum; for being kind and patient whatever the circumstances; for constantly striving for better teaching and learning.

To our inclusion team of Learning Mentors, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, Teachers of the Deaf, and Communicators: for all that you do for the children at our school who have barriers to learning; for

inspiring us all to be inclusive, tolerant, nurturing and understanding of disability and difference.

To our admin support team: for managing our finances; for maintaining our premises; for maintaining our records; for making sure we have all that we need and that staff are paid (!) and for answering the phone hundreds of times a day!

To our team of cooks and Mid-day Supervisors: for producing and serving amazing meals from scratch every day in the tiniest and hottest kitchen; for your flexibility in continuing to make lunch times work when there were so many restrictions.

To our PTA, Highworth Friends: for raising much needed funds for the extras that our budget just won't allow and for making sure we have fun together as a community.

To our governors: for giving up so much of their own time to be critical friends; for keeping us on track and working for the benefit of all.

And finally, to the best Senior Leadership Team any head teacher could ever work with: for stimulating discussions on how to improve; for supporting staff and children to maintain high standards of behaviour; for making sure children are safe through diligent work on safeguarding and the personal support you give me when things aren't going so well!

It is a joy and privilege to lead our school and I cannot wait (after a rest this holidays) to come back in September to see what more we can do for the amazing children and families we serve.

My very best wishes for the break ahead.

Clare Pankhania