

## Visit of the Curriculum Committee

On November 13<sup>th</sup> Rachel Burd and Nicholas de Haes (both School Governors and members of the Holmleigh Curriculum committee) came to Holmleigh to observe phonics and reading teaching (writing discussed with staff/students but not observed).

### Headline points:

Quote from a child as part of pupil voice interviews: “Our teachers are amazing! They make it fun and motivate you”

Another enjoyable and energising visit to Holmleigh to observe staff and students and the learning going on, with a focus on literacy. Observing and talking with staff and children helped to bring to life the strategies that we have heard about in committee meetings. It is clear that Holmleigh is doing a truly outstanding job of teaching students literacy!

### Curriculum across key stages:

- It is clear that the curriculum around reading is planned so that it progresses and builds upon itself year on year eg. In year 3, children were taking part in guided reading, rather than assisted reading, and had a level more independence than year 2
- Children can expect to do their reading exercises at the same time each day/week across all year groups and so this has become a routine for them
- Reading strategies (e.g. predicting) is taught across year groups
- Students engage with material across all levels of Bloom’s taxonomy

### Behaviour and conduct

- Behaviour for learning appeared to be consistently good and children were consistently engaged in their learning. Children in our pupil voice conversations could eloquently explain the link between behaviour and learning
- When working with students in small groups, students that were not with an adult remained on task and focused

### Curriculum Committee:

- We met with a curriculum committee who were keen to engage with us and had many reflections on their learning (and compliments for their teachers). This is in its early stages, but it might be helpful to have a blurb available on the purpose and activities of this group for visitors or the website. When it is more established, perhaps they could support in creating a document of their findings. The school may also want to consider how other children may be able to apply to join the group?

### Tools and strategies to support reading:

- All children we spoke to were able to confidently explain how they were improving their reading at school (Destination Reader, Accelerated Reader etc)
- One child explained that the reading pathway tools meant that he couldn’t always read the books he wanted to. He did also explain that he understood why this was, and he knew he had access to the library
- There are many opportunities to assess children in their reading formally and informally, the data is used to support further learning (eg. Accelerated reader records whether children

have read and understood a text, members of staff have planned meeting time to discuss the development of children they are reading with)

- Children in our pupil voice conversations were able to tell us how they can support themselves in improving their reading and how their adults at home can support. They told us that the teachers and their carers communicate in meetings and after school
- Children in our pupil voice conversations told us about their writing practice: they were writing poetry, myths adverts etc. Their writing tasks were often linked to school trips or external engagement activities. They were clearly writing in a range of styles: prose, poetry, scripts etc.
- In nursery, we saw early stage assessment for phonics learning, where a member of staff assessed how well children could follow verbal instructions and pick up sounds
- In reception, we observed children learning how to shape words with their fingers and then on a whiteboard. Learning was differentiated for children at different stages, with students performing in bottom 20% getting intervention at another time of day
- In year 1 we observed children learning how to shape words with their fingers and then on a whiteboard. Learning was differentiated for children at different stages
- In year 2, we observed children doing supported reading. A small group of children were able to independently lead themselves due to an absence of a member of staff. We later observed the children learning phonics with their teacher using 'bugclub'. We were told that children can use this online tool with their adults at home. Through 'bugclub'
- In year 3 everyone was reading the same book, the teacher modelled a strategy, then the classes practiced in pairs
- In year 6, children are starting to adopt a combined strategy approach to reading and were able to tell us how they are learning to 'describe', 'summarise' etc and were able to pinpoint what reading strategies they find easier / more challenging and why. They also used subject specific language such as 'genre', and would use hand signals to 'build on' another child's answer. Students used sophisticated language.

#### **Generating a love of reading:**

- We entered a year 6 classroom and could feel the excitement of the children, as they described a pivotal point in their book they had reached; they were keen to raise their hand and tell us about the characters. The year 6 teacher is clearly instilling in them a love of reading
- The library is well stocked and it is clear that there are texts about a diverse range of families, ethnicities etc and a diverse range of genres, so I'm sure all children can find something of interest to them