

Dear Parents, Carers and Staff,

As another school year draws to a close, I have found myself reflecting on just how much we have achieved together. This has been one of the most successful, rewarding and memorable years in our school's history.

Before anything else, I would like to thank our incredible staff. They are the beating heart of this school. Their care, passion and unwavering commitment make this a truly wonderful place for children to learn and grow. Every day they go above and beyond, often in ways that go unseen, and it is an immense privilege to lead such a dedicated and talented team.

One of the things I admire most is that they never stand still. They are constantly striving to improve, embracing new ideas and always looking for ways to make our school even better for the children. Along the way, they have acquired some rather unexpected new knowledge too, from K-pop Demon Hunters to the encyclopaedia knowledge of England's men's football team! More importantly, they began the year together at our Trust INSET, where we had the privilege of hearing the truly inspiring Jaz Ampaw-Farr speak about the power of everyday heroes. Her message has stayed with us throughout the year. It reminded us that the greatest difference is often made not by grand gestures, but by the kindness, consistency and care shown every single day. I see those everyday heroes in action throughout our school, and I know our children benefit from them every day.

In September, we welcomed 60 new children into Reception. Mrs Lager and Mrs Speakman introduced a new vision for our youngest learners, centred on purposeful, high-quality interactions and an environment that inspires curiosity, exploration and the development of key foundational skills. They deliberately spent much of the autumn term building relationships, establishing routines and nurturing confidence. Through determination, creativity and a willingness to beg and borrow furniture, they transformed the classrooms into spaces that felt less like school and more like places where children naturally wanted to learn. The children have flourished.

Watching those same children perform on stage during *Larkfield's Has Talent* this week was the perfect reflection of that vision. Four and five-year-olds stood confidently in front of the whole school to share their talents. When one child felt a little overwhelmed, something truly special happened. The entire school quietly and spontaneously joined in singing *Stargazing* by Myles Smith so that they didn't feel alone. It was a moment of empathy, kindness and encouragement that reminded us all what makes our school so special.

I am incredibly proud that 78% of our Reception children achieved a Good Level of Development, the highest result we have ever achieved. However, as wonderful as those outcomes are, the true measure of our school was not found in a set of data, but in the confidence, kindness and compassion shown on that stage.

In Year 1, we strengthened our play-based curriculum, giving children more opportunities to consolidate their learning while developing resilience, motivation, teamwork and problem-solving skills. The children embraced these opportunities with enthusiasm. Alongside this, our new handwriting curriculum has had a significant impact, and their hard work in phonics has been rewarded with 83% of children achieving the expected standard.

Across the school, our children have enjoyed a rich and varied year of experiences. They have explored castles, visited the tram museum, spent time learning in forests and celebrated books, science, good mental health and all the things that make each of us unique. They have performed in our Nativity, entertained us with a wonderful Year 2 leavers' concert, enjoyed Christmas and Valentine's celebrations, and welcomed a host of special visitors, including Pudsey Bear and, of course, Father Christmas.

The summer term certainly brought its own challenges, with an almost relentless heatwave. Our staff quickly became experts in keeping children safe and comfortable, introducing foot spas, cooling misters and making full use of our one air-conditioned room! Despite the soaring temperatures, the children showed incredible resilience, positivity and determination, and learning continued with smiles and good humour.

This year has also brought some bittersweet moments as we said goodbye to two much-loved members of our school family. Mrs Turner and Mrs Taylor have given so many years of dedicated service to our community, and we thank them sincerely for everything they have contributed. They leave with our gratitude, our admiration and every good wish for a happy retirement.

Our Year 2 children now leave us ready for the next stage of their education. They do so with excellent outcomes and, more importantly, with confidence, kindness and a love of learning. Our maths mastery curriculum has now been embedded for three years, and we are seeing the impact, with almost 80% of children reaching the expected standard in mathematics. We are immensely proud of all they have achieved and know they will continue to flourish as they move on to the junior school.

Although it is important to celebrate success, we never rest on our laurels. We are already looking ahead with excitement to September. One of our biggest developments will be the introduction of the OPAL Play programme, alongside the continued work of Mrs Lager in developing our play provision. We know the enormous difference that high-quality play can make to children's happiness, wellbeing and learning, and I look forward to sharing much more about this exciting journey with you in the new school year.

Finally, thank you to our parents and carers for your continued trust, encouragement and support. Schools achieve their very best when we work together, and we are incredibly grateful for the partnership we share with our families.

I wish you all a wonderful, restful summer break. I hope you enjoy spending time with family and making happy memories together. We look forward to welcoming everyone back in September for another exciting year at Larkfields.