

## Summer term updates

9<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

First of all, welcome back after a sunny Spring Bank break. Having visited all the classes this week the children were all keen to share their holiday stories and news with me, which was lovely to hear. I wanted to write to you to update you on our Academy improvement priorities for this academic year and the progress that we have made with these to date. As well as constant school improvement, this year we are focusing a heightened amount of attention on:

1. To improve and develop a consistent approach to behaviour across the school.

This year we have worked hard to develop a consistent behaviour policy through school, which is working well across school. Earlier in the year, I wrote to you to share our new school values which we have worked to embed through school in assemblies, learning environments and also through our curriculum. We continue to celebrate positive behaviour through our weekly celebration assembly. We have loved sharing these assemblies with parents this year and we hope that you agree that the children have enjoyed sharing this experience with you too. I am pleased to share that in a recent behaviour survey for children 100% of the children surveyed said that they understood our behaviour policy and that 100% of children in their class behave well in school. We were also impressed that 100% of children could identify the correct definition for bullying and knew what it was. We received other positive responses demonstrating an improvement in behavior this year and that children felt that behaviour over lunchtimes has also improved. At West Vale we celebrate diversity and difference of all children, this year we have had diversity weeks throughout the year to focus on this and have also focused on this in PSHE lessons and assemblies. We are thrilled to share with you that we feel that behaviour for learning is good across all classes and this has been acknowledged by external monitoring and visitors who have attended school, which we are extremely pleased with.

2. To create and develop an ambitious curriculum to meet the needs of all learners.

We continue to be really proud of our West Vale Academy curriculum, following changes that were put into place this academic year. This year has seen the implementation of new schemes to help the children know and remember more across the curriculum. Last half term we spoke to children across the school about a range of subjects and we were thrilled with how much interest, knowledge and links they could make in a range of subjects. Over the course of the year, subject leaders (at West Vale, all our teachers lead three subjects each) and senior leaders have looked closely at each curriculum area to look at how skills and knowledge develops across school, the quality of work the children are producing the impact that this is having on the children's knowledge. Children are remembering high levels of clear and precise details about subjects and could all talk about areas of learning they were particularly enjoying. We have also had a renewed focus on developing the school environment this year to ensure that there are displays through school reflect a range of different subjects, that high quality children's work is showcased through school and that classrooms are tidy and purposeful. We are proud of how great school looks and we have had many positive comments from visitors about the changes to the school environment, which is lovely to hear.

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### 3. To improve standards, attainment and progress in Maths.

We have had a refreshed focus on the teaching of Maths this year and Mrs Akroyd, who leads Maths, has been the driving force of this work. We continue to follow White Rose Hub for our Maths lessons across school and we have worked this year on developing a consistent 'I do, we do, you do' approach to give our children lots of opportunity to practice and apply their skills. Children's knowledge of arithmetic has been a focus for this year, where children in years 2 and 6 have practiced these skills weekly and our year 5 children are now beginning to work on this in preparation for year 6. In addition, we have supported groups of year 2 and 6 children with Maths tutoring in the run up to SATS. Our tutor and staff team dedicated time before and after school in order to fully support the children with their Maths learning. In addition, we have run a before school time tables club to support our year 4 children, as we understand the value of children being able to recall their times tables automatically. Mrs Akroyd has also led a parent/carer session linked to the multiplication check and will be leading a session this half term to focus on how Maths is taught at West Vale and our calculation policy, which I hope you will find informative and useful to support your children at home.

I would like to share some quotes from visitors we have had in school over the spring and summer term so far:

*"West Vale Academy continues to make good progress, the school have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct and these expectations are applied consistently and fairly. Leaders are supporting all staff well in managing pupil behaviour including lunchtimes. During the visit good behaviours for learning were observed."*

***Dani Worthington, Director of School Improvement at Great Heights Academy Trust***

*"West Vale is a truly inclusive school. There is real expertise at a leadership level, and this is rapidly being cascaded amongst colleagues supported through staff CPD, including support staff, and high expectations/increased accountability. There are high expectations for all pupils and real ambition. There are comprehensive procedures in place which include: assessment of needs, whole school provision mapping, curriculum adjustments, teaching strategies and a wide range of personalised intervention strategies."*

***Debbie Shutter, Governor Chair***

*"The Principal and the SENCo are ambitious for the pupils with SEND and have worked hard with the teachers in order for them to make adaptations to their lessons so all pupils can access the learning. This means that pupils with SEND access every part of the school's curriculum and achieve well. They have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. They have developed a simple but effective behaviour system and as a result, pupils behave exceptionally well in class and around the school."*

***Gill Robinson OBE, independent Educational Advisor***

As ever, I am thrilled by the hard work and positivity of all of our children at West Vale and the dedication from our brilliant staff team. I am looking forward to a positive final half term of the academic year.

With my very best wishes,  
Laura Horsfall

Principal