

Fresh starts and fresh ideas in action.

Welcome to the first Principal's news blog for the week starting 8th January. I am intending to write this regularly and got the idea for this from a colleague who works as a Headteacher in Hitchin; we met at the University of Bedfordshire where we were conducting interviews for students wanting to study for a degree in education. We will have three students working in Elstow for the work experience part of their courses, from next week, one in Year 5 and the other two on a non-QTS degree path, in Year 3. They'll work under the expert supervision of the Literacy lead, Megan Holmes and Mathematics lead, Louise Whiting. To keep the quality of teaching and learning at Elstow as high as possible, I've applied to mark KS2 reading SATs this summer and Mrs Ciantar will be moderating KSI and KS2 writing for Bedford Borough.

Talking of English and Mathematics, you may be aware that for each year group, one of the two teachers will be teaching all the writing and the other the maths. Pupils are already enjoying moving classrooms to learn and the class walls reflect the information and facts needed to support their understanding. For reading, all class teachers will be following a five day lesson sequence which involves learning and using new vocabulary, summarising information in paragraphs, recalling details and explaining in full sentences what the whole text might mean. Valuable and high quality lessons which the teachers and children are already really enjoying.

If you have a chance when you are collecting children at the end of the day, do pop into classrooms and have a look at the learning displays; they're really good and have so much information on them. There are also Knowledge Organisers on the Curriculum tab on the website which you can find [here](#) This will help you understand the facts that the children are learning in class and you'll be able to ask questions about what they remember! In school they'll be having mini-quizzes in the mornings to help them learn. If you'd like copies of the Knowledge Fact Sheets, just ask the class teacher.

For Mathematics, we now not only have daily lessons but also, for every class, a fifteen minute 'maths meeting' (we need a whizzy name for this – any suggestions welcome!) In this session, children learn some of the Maths information needed to help them calculate in lessons. An example might be how many seconds in a minute, hours in a day, days in a week, months in a year, days in a year or being able to identify different types of triangle and know their internal angles add to 180 degrees. It's all about short bursts of information which are practised in a fun way. Mrs Harding demonstrated it with a quick chant in Year 5 on the meaning of the word 'inverse'. It was great to watch!

This week has seen the start of swimming for Year 3 Hawks, and the Daily Mile across the school. It's been great looking out and seeing children and teachers running around the playground! The teachers had noticed that some children needed to run off a bit of steam

each day, and others needed a fresh air break. In addition to increasing their capacity to concentrate, this short daily session also helps children understand a bit of resilience – keeping on going – and adds to their fitness too. So far, they are loving it! I must remember to bring some shoes I can jog in.....

We are working actively with Bedford Free School to improve the sports offer – and we are hoping once our planning is in place to have some different year group opportunities on Fridays to extend some of the lessons. More to come on this one...

On Thursday after school, we had our Local Governing Body meeting, and we all took pleasure in noticing the positive path Elstow is on. Mrs Maples commented on the number of prospective parents looking around the school, many of which are coming on recommendation from other parents in the local area.

We have had a number of visitors to Elstow – not least the CEO and Executive Principal of Northampton Primary Academy Trust. They walked around the school on Thursday afternoon with Stuart Lock – our Advantage Schools Executive Principal. They were, in their words 'blown away' by the environment and quality of teaching and learning on show.

I am a very proud Principal and still consider myself very fortunate to be leading this lovely school!

Have a lovely weekend.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samantha Baxter".

Miss Baxter