

Hawthorn Community Primary School

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Headteachers' Review – Summer 2021

For the past five years, during the final week of the school year, I have written an Annual Review of the school year which has been sent out on the final day of term. Before I write this I usually re-read a number of those which have spanned my years at this school. Without wishing to be too nostalgic it is very nice to be reminded of former colleagues, past pupils and notable events that have been part of Hawthorn School over time.

The reading of these past reviews, particularly in respect of retirements and appointments of past colleagues and the departure each year of the Year 6 group, is a reminder of how much change occurs within a school community. That such change occurs should be viewed with some regret but also looked on as an opportunity for the further development of the school, as we welcome newly appointed colleagues and children.

This year there have already been a number of departures from school and several other staff members will be ending their Hawthorn journey today. At the end of term 5 Miss Laura Hedley left us to return to the north-east. I am delighted to inform you that she will be beginning a new role as maths lead, member of the senior leadership team and year 5 teacher in a school in Consett in September. Our loss is certainly their gain!

We also said goodbye to Miss Sarah Webster at the end of June. She had been providing maternity cover in Maples since September and had established herself as a key member of the year 5 and 6 team. We wish her well with her travels to Singapore and hope that she quickly settles into her new school – if the Covid restrictions allow her to travel!

Today we are saying goodbye to Mrs Hilary Hill, who has been teaching in the school for the last 11 years but has decided that the time is right to wind down from the many demands of teaching as she begins her early retirement. Mrs Hill has demonstrated a great commitment to her work at school and has been very willing to use her many talents in all areas of school life – we will certainly miss her musical expertise!

Also leaving is Mrs Kay Corney who returned from her maternity leave earlier this year, but who has decided to spend more time with her young family. Mrs Corney was originally part of our school as a pupil, and I'm sure that she has seen many changes since that time, but I hope that her time teaching at the school has been a positive experience – we wish her all the best for her future.

A member of our support staff is also leaving us this year to take up a position closer to her home. We are very sorry to lose Mrs Lina Chumbley, as she has been a very valued member of our year 5 and 6 team – working with all of the children across the phase, but particularly with those in Oaks class.



As we say goodbye to friends and colleagues, it provides us with opportunities to welcome new members of staff to the Hawthorn team. In September – most importantly we will be welcoming a new Headteacher to the school. Miss Emma Jacox, has already been into school on a number of occasions and I know that she is very excited to be taking on the role. I hope that you will support her in her role as much as you have supported me.

We will also be welcoming two new teachers to our staff. Mr Luke Dix, who is another ex-pupil, will become the new teacher in Maples class; and Mrs Alison Macfarlane, will be working in a job-share arrangement teaching with Miss York in Elm class. At this point I would also like to wish Miss York all the best for her forthcoming wedding this summer. When school resumes in September she will be known as Mrs Martin, rather than Miss York! We can also confirm that Mr San Jeewoonarain, who has been an apprentice teacher within Cedars class this year has been offered a full time contract at the school from September and will be the new teacher in Oaks class.

We will also be welcoming two new site supervisors to the school in September, as Mr Simon Clubley will be retiring at the start of September, once a handover has been completed. Mr Alan Northern and Mr John Lewin will be sharing the site supervisor role, but come to us with a huge amount of experience, and I am sure that they will continue to look after and improve our wonderful old building.

Although school finishes today for the children and the majority of our staff, there will be lots going on over the summer to improve the fabric of the school building. The schedule of window replacement which began at the start of June will continue over the summer break, and we hope that by September all windows will have been replaced and new blinds fitted. This is largely down to funding we have received from Pathfinder Trust and something that we could never have achieved without them. 3 out of 4 sets of children's toilets are also being refurbished over the summer – with new sanitary wear, flooring and cubicles being installed and their redecoration. Our school IT system is also being completely rebuilt, so please be aware that staff will be without their laptops for the first part of the holiday and so will be unable to answer any messages that you may send on Class Dojo.

But it is not only a number of staff who we are saying goodbye to today, we are also wishing a fond farewell to a number of children who are leaving us to move to new schools closer to their new homes and to all of our year 6 children who are all ready to embark on the next stage of their education at secondary school. Today is tinged with sadness, as we are saying goodbye to a number of children who have spent the whole of their education up to this point as part of our Hawthorn family. We know that they are well-prepared to continue their learning and I am sure that they will enjoy the same success at their new schools as they have seen here. I am incredibly proud of all of the children – the resilience they have shown over the last fifteen months has been incredible, and I am only sorry that their final few months at primary school has been so challenging and we have not been able to send them off to secondary school with the final flourish that they deserve, but I hope that they all enjoyed the water fight and the ice cream! Good luck to you all. I hope you have some very happy memories of your time at Hawthorn.

I also know that we have some families who are also coming to the end of their association with the school, as their youngest child prepares to leave. I hope that the Hawthorn



experience whether for all of the 7 years or part of has been as rewarding and fulfilling for you as it has for us.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank a few of the people who work so hard to make the school the special place that it is. Firstly, to all of the talented staff who work within the building. It doesn't matter what role people are undertaking within the school, I know that every single member of staff has the children's best interests at heart and is committed to doing the best job that they can do. I feel incredibly lucky and privileged to work with such a talented, supportive and caring group of people, thank you all.

Thanks also to the volunteers from our Parents and Friends Association (PFA) who have had another successful year of fundraising, despite the cancellation of their main events of the year, and being unable to provide the children with the usual exciting and fun events. We have our fingers crossed that these will be able to resume in the new school year and I am sure the committee would welcome any new members who may like to get involved.

I would also like to thank the Governors of the school who have continued to work hard to challenge and support the school in its improvement journey. Although they have not been able to visit the school in person this year as much as they would have liked, they have continued to challenge and ask questions to ensure that the school is making progress towards its goal of being a 'good' school when OFSTED revisits. I am grateful for the continued support and challenge of our Governing Body and thank them for giving their time and enthusiasm to undertake this role.

I have been a member of the Hawthorn School Community for more years than I care to remember (both as a teacher and as a parent) and I feel extremely privileged to have had the chance to be the Headteacher of such a lovely school, where the children are enthusiastic about their learning, are well-behaved and caring, and where the staff all work hard to provide the best for all of the children at all times. I still firmly believe that Hawthorn is a special place. A place where the children have the opportunity to thrive in a supportive and caring atmosphere; where our traditional values still have worth; and where the staff work hard to implement the changes that need to be made, without losing sight of what we hold dear.

Although I have missed much of this current academic year through ill health, Hawthorn has continued to go from strength to strength, and I am so grateful to all of my colleagues, but particularly Mrs Billingham, for running the school so well in my absence. The year has also been challenging because of the further restrictions caused by the pandemic and school closures. We have been incredibly lucky that we have not had to close any bubbles during this time – I'm sure there are very few schools that can say that, and that we have continued to welcome children into school during this time. The way that the staff, children and you as parents have adapted to the new ways of operating has ensured that Hawthorn has continued to operate, when many schools around us have been forced to close. Thank you all for your understanding and patience.

On Tuesday this week I was reminded by the staff and children that primary education is about so much more than lessons and learning skills and knowledge, when 'Mrs Clubley – This is Your Hawthorn Life!' was performed by the children on the school playground. Over the last eighteen months we have been unable to hold any of the events that make Hawthorn such a special place, and it was lovely to see the children work through a typical school year, with each class performing something to mark some of these special times in



school. I was treated to a performance of the Harvest Samba, Remembrance Day poetry, Christmas songs and dances, A Chinese New Year Lion Dance, Easter Bonnet parade songs, May Day performances, a lovely poem about school trips and a trip down memory lane from when the children performed Joseph at the United Reformed Church. These events are the things that stay in the memories of everyone connected with the school, and I hope that when life returns to some sort of normality, they will once again become the 'norm' for Hawthorn.

As I complete this final review, I am still uncertain of what the new academic year will bring for us all. We know that there will be new challenges to face in school – but I am sure that everyone associated with Hawthorn will rise to these challenges and the school will continue to move forwards. Please watch out for e-mail updates about plans for reopening in September over the summer break, we will try to keep you as informed as we can about arrangements for the start of school as soon as more information becomes available. I am sure that you can appreciate that at a time when there are so many uncertainties we do not want to make plans too early, only for them to have to be changed. I hope that you all have a lovely summer, and although I will not be here to welcome you all back to school in September, I will be thinking of you all. To all of our leavers, good luck in the future and may you achieve great success.

Finally, I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has passed on their kind wishes or sent in cards and gifts on my retirement. It has been an honour to lead such a wonderful school and I have so many happy memories of my time at Hawthorn. Leaving today will be such a huge wrench, but I know that I am leaving the school in a strong place.

Thank you for your support.



Julie Clubley Headteacher