

John of Gaunt Infant and Nursery School

Narrative of Improvement



‘Always choose kindness’



John of Gaunt Infant and Nursery School Part of the Aylsham Learning Federation

The Context

John of Gaunt is a school that has seen many changes over the course of the last 5 years from a change in leadership to several changes in staffing due to several retirements which created a newly energised staff team but nevertheless one with a large proportion of staff who are early in their careers. This led to a drive to move the school forwards in the way that we knew was right for the children.

The demographics of the school have also changed in the past 5 years, mainly due to a large amount of new house building in the town which has brought with it a significant increase in the amount of social housing. Pupil Premium levels at the school have fluctuated from 4% in 2016 to 25% in 2021, 20% in 2022 and now 15% in 2023

The school is a happy school which has a positive ethos and this has been commented on many times by visitors. We believe in developing the whole child and ensuring that they always have a broad and balanced curriculum. We celebrate success and enable children to feel safe and secure so that they want to come to school. The community in which our school is situated is very important and we whole heartedly believe that it does 'take a whole community to educate a child'.

We are on a journey of improvement. True and sustained improvement is not a quick fix and is not something that takes place overnight. It takes time, hard work and energy to ensure that everyone is a stakeholder for improvement.

Federation

One of the first moves in generating improvement was for the school to join the Aylsham Learning Federation (ALF). This happened during the year 2017 – 2018, the school moved from being one with its own governing board to a federated governing board across the three schools. The joining of ALF meant that although each school remained a separate school in its own right with a Head in each setting the same ethos, visions and values were shared and recognised across the phases. The federation brought with it much support from a business support team and a site team as well as an executive headteacher ensuring that more time could be spent on ensuring that teaching and learning was developed to the highest level. It also brought with it collaborative CPD and an emphasis on research based improvement.

The areas below are intended to show where we felt the challenge was and what we did and do to improve and continue to improve

Behaviour

Although behaviour in the school was not a significant problem it was recognised that there was little consistency across the school with behaviour which left children feeling insecure and a variance across the school in terms of acceptable behaviour.

So we...



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- Adopted a new system during the first year using class dojos which was to an extent successful but we felt was still lacking consistency and clarity for both staff and children.
- Adopted a new system in the second year which more closely matched the system in the feeder junior school and also supported both staff and children to understand what acceptable behaviour looked like.
- It is clear to the children that wherever they go in the school and with any member of staff the expectations are the same.
- There is a heavy emphasis on the positive and rewarding good behaviour
- Behaviour data is monitored and individual support given where it is necessary.
- The children understand what is expected of them and are keen to meet those expectations. The boundaries are always the same and this helps children to feel safe and secure.

Growth Mindset

'In a growth mindset, challenges are exciting rather than threatening. So rather than thinking, oh I'm going to reveal my weaknesses, you say, wow here's a chance to grow' – Carol Dweck

It was clear that our children needed to focus on their mindset. They needed to believe that with hard work they would succeed, that it is Ok to make mistakes and that we learn from them and that with resilience comes achievement.

So we...

- Introduced the 6 R's of Growth Mindset:

Resilient - We don't give up when the going gets tough

Resourceful - We find different ways to get things done

Responsible - We work well with others and take our role in a group seriously

Reasoning - We think carefully before jumping in and plan things out

Reflective - We learn from experience and from our mistakes

Respect - Each other, yourself and the environment

- Children are confident to make mistakes, sure in the knowledge that they will not be laughed at but encouraged to learn from them.
- They regularly hear about resilience and not giving up even when the going gets tough.
- When they face a problem they are asked to think about how the 6R's can help them.

The mindset of the whole school has changed because of the 6R's but we continue to work on this and it has never been more important than it was during the pandemic.



Leadership

Leadership has changed and with the support of the federation we have...

- Supported middle leadership and the concept that everyone is a leader and has a part to play in ensuring the strength of our school is key.
- Shifted staffing into different year groups so that we have strong staff in the right places, there to support and guide in their leadership.
- Appointed an assistant head to support the head of school to ensure a continual driving forwards.
- Formed an extended leadership team (ELT) which includes middle leadership, pastoral and SEND leaders in order to really share leadership across the school and ensure we are all driving for the same goal.
- Support staff with regular CPD to sustain quality first teaching for all.
- Developed the role of our Teaching Assistants to become reading teachers for RWI and also to focus specifically on children's progress in phonics, reading, maths and speech and language through targeted intervention

Curriculum

The curriculum is something that should never be static and we have developed and re-tweaked the curriculum over the last 6 years to meet not only national expectations but also the needs of our children. We moved much more to a topic based curriculum with a text at the heart of everything we do in order to bring that love of books but also provide children with a framework and ensure that literacy is at the heart. However, now whilst still keeping a text at the heart of everything we do, the curriculum is based around standalone subjects within an overall 6 half termly topic. Half termly topic titles usually have a Geography, History or Science focus.

So we...

- Have chosen to focus on books and stories because we recognise that this is what our children need but also that English and communication and Language is the building block for everything else.
- Focus on traditional tales in reception so that these key stories are known really well
- Have begun to introduce a reading spine to enable our children to have access to stories that they may not be exposed to at home and to again keep books at the heart of everything we do.
- Have a broad and balanced curriculum with equal access to sports and the arts as well as humanities based subjects.
- Prioritise Personal Social and Emotional Education and our PSHE and RSE curriculums underpin everything.
- Support the children's Physical Development
- Introduced CLPE 'Power of reading' as our English curriculum
- Introduce Talk through stories to Key Stage 1
- Introduced 'Drawing club' to reception



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- Created our own spelling program for Key Stage 1
- Introduced daily handwriting in both RWI and daily English lessons

Communication and Language and Vocabulary

Many of our children come to us in Nursery or reception with poor communication and Language. For some this is a speech and Language issue but for many it is just an immaturity in their use of Language.

We spend a lot of time just talking and modelling good communication. The use of full sentences and not clipped ones is so important as this is the experience of many of our children.

So we...

- Have worked with the children's centres (as they were then) to identify that communication and Language was an early sticking point.
- Ensure that everyday language across the whole school but particular with our EYFS children is strong
- Initiated a range of programmes – WellComm, Talk Boost, Nuffield, Early Language Intervention (NELI) and also speech sounds intervention. We now just use Wellcomm as the best means of assessing and addressing our children's speech and language needs.
- Worked on developing the children's vocabulary, broadening their vocabulary set and ensuring they understand meaning

Phonics

When it became very clear that despite having a structured and well planned phonics programme using letters and sounds, the children were not making the progress we expected them to we started to look into alternatives. We were also aware that our reading scheme was no longer fit for purpose and did not provide the fully decodable books that we needed to support the children with their reading.

So we...

- Took on RWI from Reception to Year 2 and we use elements of it in nursery too
- Identified a reading leader to support the delivery of RWI and the reading teachers to teach their groups to a high standard
- Worked with the Wensum Hub and our RWI Development Lead to support the introduction of the scheme
- Ensure all staff have fortnightly practise sessions to support their reading teacher role
- Ensure by using RWI that all the children's needs are met no matter what their phonics and reading ability
- Assess the children every half term
- Provide intervention to the lowest 20% of children and also prioritise our School led tutoring grant for Fast track tutoring of phonics



John of Gaunt Infant and Nursery School Part of the Aylsham Learning Federation

We have already seen great progress in phonics and were pleased that 89% of our Year 1 children passed the phonics check in 2022 which was significantly above the national average and in the top 20% of schools and 30% of our Year 2 retake children in 2022 also passed the retake. In 2023 91% of Year 1 children passed the phonics check and 86% of our Year 2 pupils did too (there was just 1 child who didn't). RWI talks about a 'strong start' for reception children and our reception children most certainly had that with RWI. 94% of the cohort were at the expected level by the end of their reception year (Summer 2022). This has shown us that RWI was the right choice and will provide those firm foundations and then expected progression across our school.

We have also started to see the seeds of writing improvement following on from good readers. This is early days and there is much more work to do but No More Marking national benchmarking (January 2022) showed that our children although below the national average still are not far behind. The 2022 cohort were above the national average for their writing by the end of Year 2. The 2023 cohort were just below the national average by only 1 or 2 children and there were 31% SEND in that cohort.

Maths

Our coverage of the Maths curriculum was highlighted by Ofsted, and in a continual strive to improve and a wish for greater cohesion between infant and junior school meant that we decided to adopt Mathematics Mastery as our scheme for the teaching of Mathematics.

So we...

- Adopted Mathematics Mastery as a scheme from Reception to Year 2
- Have had support from a lead practitioner for the federation and our Mathematics Mastery lead to help with teaching in a mastery style
- Supported the Maths lead with CPD from Angles maths HUB
- Adapted the scheme to support children with the children's prior learning gaps
- Ensure fortnightly practise sessions for all staff to support with their teaching of Mathematics Mastery and interventions
- Adopted PUMA tests as a standardised assessment tool

Mathematics Mastery is a long journey and not a quick fix and something which will see year on year improvement in terms of both the children's understanding and the teacher's teaching.

Assessment

The process of assessing children must be one that has an impact. There is little point collecting data if the information gathered is not acted upon and used for sustained improvement.

So we...



John of Gaunt Infant and Nursery School Part of the Aylsham Learning Federation

- Moved the majority of data collection to the MIS system so that data can be analysed, gaps recognised and intervention and quality first teaching put in place to diminish the difference.
- Adopted standardised tests to enable us to ensure that we are striving to meet national expectations, have a greater understanding of national expectations and can compare ourselves with schools nationally
- Have utilised 'No More Marking' which has enabled all staff to 'judge' writing and also given end of Key Stage 1 teacher's further clarity of making secure judgements about writing.
- Have begun to assess no more marking at BVS so that teachers continue to have an overview of where the children's writing moves onto
- Incorporate in school moderation and also external moderation of writing into our CPD timetable
- Use PUMA tests for Maths to provide standardised results which can be age graded and gaps analysis completed to give focus for interventions and quality first teaching.
- Complete half termly assessments for RWI to ensure continual progress through the programme and the ability to spotlight children who are not making progress at the required level and enable interventions to plug the gap.
- Use our own spelling program to assess the children's spellings
- Have created our own spelling scheme and test baseline, and then each term.

CPD

We have developed a strong culture of CPD within the staff community.

So we...

- Support staff with CPD on a school, federation and research based level.
- Ensure that all staff have access to regular high quality CPD aimed at supporting them professionally but also aimed at deepening their thinking.
- Regularly use texts to support our CPD to encourage staff to think beyond our school community and to use research to inform good practice.

Pastoral and semh

Our changing demographics and the development of society as a whole meant we were seeing more and more personal and social challenges amongst the children and families we work with. It was therefore imperative that we found a way to support our community to ensure that they were in the best place to take an active part in their learning.

So we...

- Appointed a pastoral lead to support children and families
- Ensure that the pastoral lead has a role in safeguarding
- Ensure that some of the pastoral leads time is targeted at providing nurture support to our young children



John of Gaunt Infant and Nursery School Part of the Aylsham Learning Federation

- Ensure that for our vulnerable families the pastoral lead is the link between home and school working together
- As a federation appointed an semh lead to work across all three schools supporting children and families at a greater level than pastoral support
- As a cluster of schools appointed semh officers to work across all the schools to support the semh of our children working directly with children and families to target support where it is needed most

Mental Health and Well Being

This has always been high priority in the school both for staff and children. However, the impact of the pandemic has meant it has become even more apparent how there is a need for increase in knowledge and support around mental health and well being.

So we...

- Trained two mental health champions
- Trained 5 Mental Health First Aiders
- Created a Mental Health and Well Being Action group
- Identified a Mental Health Lead for the school and this person has undertaken the Level 4 Advanced Mental Health Lead course
- An additional member of staff had also undertaken the Level 4 Advanced Mental Health Lead course

Safeguarding

Whilst our safeguarding was always a strength of the school and this was highlighted in our last inspection we felt that there were better solutions to managing the increased level of safeguarding and also ensuring that our reporting and recording was at the highest level.

So we...

- As a federation introduced CPOMS as an electronic safeguarding recording and reporting system
- Ensure good continuity between settings and accurate information sharing between all DSL's and ADSL's
- Set up an ALF DSL network and they meet on a half termly basis to share information especially around contextual safeguarding

Pandemic

All the improvements that the school has made have been despite the global pandemic that we have experienced over the last few years. The school has continued to drive forwards despite staffing difficulties, periods of school closure and general interruption caused by the pandemic. The additional workload that the pandemic created did not halt the continued drive for improvement and stakeholders have continued to work tirelessly for that improvement. All our new initiatives have been taken on during the



John of Gaunt Infant and Nursery School Part of the Aylsham Learning Federation

course of the pandemic and not halted because of it. We have had to adapt, change and alter the way that we do things but all the time keeping the children's learning at the forefront of our minds.

Where heading

We aim to sustain the improvements that have been made up to this point and continue to strive to improve the educational outcomes for all our children.

Our strong work with RWI and Mathematics Mastery we know will continue to improve the children's early Literacy and Maths skills so that they are prepared for the next stage of their education journey.

Our School Improvement plan for 2023-2024 naturally focuses on those things but also other areas including creating a culture of reading for pleasure, exploring opportunities for further culture and diversity and a greater understanding of the EYFS curriculum for all staff.

School Improvement and Development Plan 2023 – 2024

