

## **Barndale 'Behind the Scenes' – A reflection on the half term from Daley**

I cannot quite believe that we are at the end of our first half term of the school year. It is even more surreal to think that it is only 40 days since I joined the Barndale House family – what a whirlwind of a half term it has been!

Since September a lot of my work has been about creating a shared vision and building relationships with pupils, staff, parents, governors, other schools and colleagues within Northumberland County Council. I have met so many fantastic people along the way and have been made to feel so welcome. I am super proud to be leading a brilliant team of staff and am very grateful for the fantastic support I have received from parents. Thank you to everyone for the kindness you have shown me and for making the beginning of this journey so positive. Together we have worked hard to create a strong vision and direction for the school that I genuinely believe will help Barndale to achieve the potential we all know it has.

Since September we have focused on establishing new initiatives, routines and systems. We are consciously doing things differently, questioning why we have always done things in a particular way and rethinking processes. I have introduced a new English, maths and foundation subject curriculum to ensure that the learning experience for all pupils is exciting, broad and balanced and new topics are in place for each class so that links can be made between different subject areas. We also have an action plan in place to promote and improve reading across the school and have organised some parent / carer workshops that will be running next half term so that you can come in and find out how you can help with reading at home. I have also introduced new planning, marking and assessment processes so that your child's learning journey is carefully planned and their progress closely monitored.

As you are aware, changes have been made and proposed to our school day, including shorter lunchtimes and a 'healthy half hour' to try and reduce dysregulated behaviour and to improve the general health and wellbeing of pupils. Teachers now keep a 'wellbeing diary' so that the emotional wellbeing of pupils is kept firmly in focus and closely monitored. I have also introduced new 'Positive Handling and Behaviour Management' plans for every pupil and new ways of recording and responding to incidents. We are working hard to promote a positive culture in school where all behaviour is seen as communication.

You may be aware that our residential provision has been inspected by Ofsted this week which gave us the opportunity to talk to the inspector about the revised vision for our '24 hour curriculum' and our new STEP programmes; I am very proud that links between the school and residential are being strengthened to ensure a continuation of learning across settings. We are looking forward to welcoming some new pupils who will be having overnight stays next half term.

To ensure that we are continuing to develop the skills and expertise of school and residential staff, a comprehensive staff training schedule is in place which so far has included safeguarding, first aid, positive handling and behaviour management, visual supports and visual work systems. 'De-escalation and Physical Intervention' training has also been organised for our staff training day on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> October.

We are very pleased to be working with Clarty Commandos, who are delivering some fantastic Forest School sessions and Duke of Edinburgh's Award activities on their site at Howick Hall.

Finally, it was lovely to meet some of you at my 'meet and greet', at the Macmillan Coffee Morning, the Harvest Festival assembly and at our recent Parents' and Carers' Evening.

Phew... I think we are all ready for a little rest before the next instalment! I hope you all have a fantastic half term holiday – I shall look forward to seeing you next half term.

**The Barndale Way: "Be safe, be kind and always try your best"**

*Daley*