

# 14 QUESTIONS WITH OUR HEADTEACHER



Laura Green joined Gladstone Park Primary School in June 2024, and so to celebrate her one year anniversary, we caught up with her to find out about her journey into teaching, what she's most proud of this year, and what Gladstone Park is hoping to achieve in 2025-2026.



## Can you introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about your journey into education?

For sure – I came into teaching through the Teach First programme in 2014, after finishing my history degree at Newcastle University. It was during one summer when I was at home in Bradford that I stumbled upon Teach First when I volunteered at the secondary school that I had attended. I met a Teach First alumni who told me about the programme, and how it was ensuring that graduates who were passionate about social mobility and children's life chances were supporting the schools who needed it the most. I thought about the impact my teachers made on me, and how they were on the front line day in and day out to support and challenge me - I was sold!

As part of the Teach First programme, I worked in an all-through school in Enfield for two years before returning to university to study a masters degree in modern history. Then, I returned to London to teach and have been here ever since!

## What inspired you to become a headteacher, and what brought you to this school in particular?

I didn't set out to become a headteacher – I never really understood what the role involved, but I have always had a drive to ensure that every child in my care has the opportunities that I've had due to the excellent teaching I received. When I was asked to step up into the role, I was quite daunted by it. But I was lucky to have an excellent mentor who showed me that being a headteacher is doing exactly what I believe in – creating an environment whereby every child has a transformational education in every lesson, all the time.

When I was searching for my second headship, I was particular about what I was looking for. I'd visited a few schools before I stumbled upon Gladstone Park, but when I came to this school, I was blown away by it. The sense of community, the most wonderful children and the welcoming, beaming smiles from staff helped me to see that this was a place that I could not only add value, but grow alongside and feel at home in. There's a feeling here that is like no other – we're not fussed by egos and hierarchy. Everybody is willing to step in and support, and we spend a lot of time laughing, even though it's a tough job at times!

## What is the vision for the school, and what does that look like in everyday practice?

Our vision for our children is to ensure that they are prepared for secondary school, and we strive to provide equity of opportunity for them so that they leave us with the foundational skills and knowledge to be able to achieve their wildest dreams in the future. This means that we are constantly asking ourselves how we can tailor our teaching and support to ensure that every child is making exceptional progress and is being challenged to grow. To support us with this, we use Progress Teaching – a tool which helps us to evaluate the quality of education across the school. We spend a lot of time in our leadership meetings thinking deeply about this.



We know our staff's time is precious, so we want to ensure that whatever professional development we provide for staff is timely, research-led and tailored to their needs so that we can have maximum impact in putting it into practice for our children.

However, we want our children to be resilient, emotionally-intelligent and kind too – these are just as important traits as the academic ones, so we reinforce this daily through our interactions with children – we hold restorative conversations, we praise and support each other in all we do – our celebration assembly on a Friday is something that we all look forward to. We spend a lot of time exploring our emotions, knowing that we are all safe to make mistakes here. We're implementing the Thrive approach across our trust from September 2025, and we're really excited about the impact it is going to have on our students in supporting their resilience and emotional intelligence.



## If you had to describe the school in three words, what would they be—and why?

**Warm:** we love what we do, and our children love being here because of the strong relationships we build with them.

**Ambitious:** we strive to do everything we can for our students so that we can give them the best start in life.

**Welcoming:** we adore our community, and we are always striving to do more to serve our families, and those around us.

## Tell us a value that is most important to you as a leader, and how does this shape the culture of the school?

For me, integrity is paramount. It's one of our school values, and we refer to it with the children as 'doing the right thing, even if nobody is watching'. We strive to embody this in our day-to-day culture. For me, it's important that every decision we make comes back to the children – will it benefit them? How will they be impacted? Sometimes, that's super easy and it means celebrating the successes: having the student who's proud of their work and celebrating with them, or high-fiving a teacher after watching them meet their coaching target or listening to them tell you about how they saw their students have a lightbulb moment. Sometimes, it can be an arm around the shoulder for a member of staff or taking a burden off them, or helping them to prioritise and to say 'I've got you – I'm here to help.' Other times that means making tough calls, it might mean shifting our perspective and changing things, accepting things didn't work and going back to the drawing board, which is never easy. However, as a staff team we embrace that, knowing that our children will always demand us to do our best for them, and they deserve us to rise to that challenge.

## How do you ensure that children of all abilities feel challenged, supported, and included?

As part of Anthem Trust, we believe that every student deserves an exceptional education, in every lesson, all the time, and inclusion is at the heart of what we do. Therefore, we are passionate about creating an environment where every child can thrive. This means that we spend a lot of time thinking hard about our planning and teaching and getting to know our students so that we know exactly what they need. Our planning frameworks require us to consider how we are stretching our most confident learners, and how we are scaffolding and supporting those who need it. Our professional development programme for our staff provides regular opportunities for our team to develop and practise a variety of strategies, with research-backed methods to support us in ensuring each child makes exceptional progress. We know this looks different for every child, and so we don't place a glass ceiling on our students – we have high expectations of them all. We see them as individuals and scaffold our teaching downwards so that every student can access our lessons or have a tailored-approach that is suited to their needs.

## What role does creativity, curiosity, and independence play in the classroom here?

For us, creativity, curiosity, and independence are the natural outcomes of a knowledge-rich curriculum. We believe that children need secure, well-sequenced knowledge before they can think deeply, solve problems creatively, or work independently with confidence. Our approach to guided instruction provides the strong scaffolding children need to flourish.

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Creativity is developed through depth. When children know more, they can do more. For example, in writing, we teach vocabulary and structures explicitly so that pupils are then able to craft imaginative stories and persuasive arguments. In art and music, we teach techniques and the work of influential artists and composers, giving children the tools to express themselves in thoughtful and original ways.

Curiosity is sparked by the richness of what we teach—whether it's ancient civilisations in history, ecosystems in science, or powerful poetry in English. We deliberately build awe and wonder into the curriculum, posing big questions, making connections, and encouraging children to ask their own. Independence grows from security. Our guided instruction model ensures that all children are clear on what success looks like, through direct teaching, worked examples, and shared practice. As pupils gain confidence, we gradually release responsibility—moving from guided tasks to independent application. This approach reduces cognitive overload and builds genuine self-efficacy.

So while knowledge and explicit teaching are our foundations, they don't limit creativity, curiosity or independence—they enable them.



## What opportunities do children have to develop their character, confidence and voice?

We believe that every child should feel seen, heard, and empowered. At our school, we create meaningful opportunities for children to grow as individuals, contributors, and leaders.

Character is nurtured through our strong values-based culture, embedded in our curriculum and daily routines. Whether it's through assemblies, PSHE lessons, or class discussions, children regularly reflect on themes like respect, empathy and responsibility. We celebrate those values through reward systems, pupil of the week awards, and our behaviour policy, which focuses on restorative practice and reflection, in line with the Thrive approach.

Confidence is built through a wide range of experiences that encourage children to step outside their comfort zones: performances, sports fixtures, competitions, and enrichment clubs. We support children to take risks in a safe and supportive environment, helping them to learn from mistakes and recognise their own strengths.

Our pupil voice is something that is important to us, and so we are currently reviewing and improving our student leadership roles for next academic year to ensure that our students can feedback in a meaningful way. Our Timi champions (who sit on our Anthem Community Councils) are integral to this – they contribute to decision-making with our governing bodies in meaningful ways. They provide feedback to our governing bodies on our students' experiences and thoughts on school, and how we can improve. We regularly gather student voice to inform our school improvement work, because we genuinely value what our children have to say.

Above all, we aim to ensure that every child leaves us with the confidence to speak up, the character to stand up for what's right, and the belief that their voice matters.



## How do you work with parents and carers as partners in their child's learning?

We see parents and carers as vital partners in their child's education, and we work hard to build strong, respectful and trusting relationships from the very beginning. When home and school work together, children thrive—not just academically, but socially and emotionally too.

We strive to ensure our communication is clear, regular and two-way, but we know that communication can always be improved so we are continuing to review ways in which we can keep our families up to date with key information. Parents are kept informed through half-termly newsletters, and My Child at School and Instagram. But we also listen—whether through informal conversations, structured parent surveys, or coffee mornings where families can share their views. This is something that is so important to us that we're prioritising it in our school development plan next year. We recognise that for our families to feel welcome, valued and empowered, we need to continuously review how we are supporting them. Our PSA (Parent Staff Association) and ACC (Anthem Community Council) are fantastic in providing feedback on this so we can keep learning.

We support parents to understand what and how their children are learning. Curriculum workshops, phonics demonstrations, and subject-specific sessions help parents feel equipped to support learning at home and we hope to build on this next year. We're also mindful of being inclusive—offering translations, flexible timings and personalised support where needed.

For children who need additional support, we work closely with families to co-produce targets and celebrate progress. Our inclusion and pastoral teams meet regularly with parents to ensure they feel part of the journey, not just informed about it.

Ultimately, we strive to create a culture where parents feel welcome, valued and empowered to support their child's learning and development. We are not just a school in the community—we are a school of the community.

## What a perfect lead to our next question! What role does the school play in the wider community, and how are you strengthening those links?

Aha – great question! Gladstone Park is a school that sits as hub of the community. Our role is not only to educate children but to contribute to the wellbeing and cohesion of the wider community.

We actively seek to strengthen our community links in a number of ways, and this is also something that we've included in our school development plan to build upon next year – it's going to be a big year!

At the moment, we partner with local organisations, charities, sports clubs, and libraries—to offer children real-world experiences and to show them the value of community engagement, and this is expertly led by our PSA who are constantly seeking out new opportunities and relationships for us to build with our local community.

We also see families as a vital part of that wider community. Our PSA host events that bring people together—from cultural celebrations to coffee mornings, parent workshops, and fundraising events. These aren't just about school—they're about shared values and collective pride.

We welcome members of the community into school—whether that's guest speakers, volunteers, or local leaders—so that children see the wider world reflected in their learning and understand their place in it. An example of this is our 'Dream Big' careers day where we have scientists, life coaches, solicitors and artists who live locally coming to talk to our students about the many aspirations they can have.

Looking ahead, we're focused on making our school even more outward-facing. That includes working more closely with local services, offering our facilities for community use, and making sure our curriculum reflects and celebrates the rich diversity of the families we serve.

We want children to leave our school not only with strong academic outcomes, but with a deep sense of civic responsibility, rooted in a lived experience of their community. I always say that I want our students to leave with the academic knowledge of a top-performing private school, but with the character, heart and soul of their local community.

## How do you support children's personal development and wellbeing alongside their academic progress?

We know that personal development and wellbeing are not separate from academic progress—they are foundational to it. We aim to educate the whole child, recognising that confidence, resilience, emotional literacy and a sense of belonging are vital for learning to thrive.

We support children's personal development in a number of ways: through a broad, values-led curriculum that includes PSHE, and through enrichment activities such as sports clubs, sewing clubs and gardening clubs. We place a strong emphasis on character education too through encouraging qualities such as determination, empathy, respect, responsibility and integrity in line with our school values. We are currently in the process of developing the 'Gladstone Park Pledge' which we are incredibly excited about. This will be a personal development offer that we guarantee to our students during their time with us. Its purpose is to provide cultural capital and provide with students a variety of life experiences and key life skills to help prepare them for the modern world – think cooking, volunteering, sewing and more!

Wellbeing is woven into the daily life of the school. Our staff build strong relationships with pupils, and we make time for regular check-ins, worry boxes and nurture groups. We use tools like regulation strategies to help children understand and manage their emotions. Our inclusion team works closely with families and external services to provide timely, targeted support when needed.

Of course, we track academic progress rigorously, but we also track personal development—whether that's through learning walks, pupil voice, or staff observations. Our vision is for every child to leave us not only achieving well, but as a well-rounded individual ready for the next stage of life.



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## What are your aspirations for the school over the next few years?

Our aspirations for the next few years are to build on the successes of this year. We have improved our students' outcomes and we hope to continue to build on these each year, but we are also focusing on enhancing our personal development offer too with our Gladstone Park Pledge. We are also striving to become an even stronger pillar of our community, so we are going to be working hard with our families and local ties to ensure we are providing what our students, family and community needs.

## How do you want children to feel when they leave this school at the end of Year 6?

Proud and prepared for the next stage of their education. We want them to look back at their years of primary school and recognise the amazing progress they've made in maturing, regulating, learning and achieving other important life skills. We want them to have explored who they are, have a thirst for knowledge and a quest to be bold, brave and try new things!



## What makes you most proud to be the headteacher here?

The children - every interaction I have with them makes me proud. Whether it's seeing them play a game in the playground, laugh at a joke, learn from a disagreement with their peers, beam with pride in assembly, or challenge themselves in a lesson - everything we do is for them, and it is an absolute privilege to be able to work alongside them every day.

