

# Parents' Newsletter

Love, Respect, Honesty, Perseverance



Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Dear Parents

Welcome to the penultimate Newsletter of the half term. In the next two weeks, we will be preparing to give you an update on your child's progress as we hit the halfway point in the academic year. This means we have various assessments planned over the coming fortnight.

We will be enabling parents to book parents evening slots in the usual manner this time with lists available from after school on Monday 9th February. We plan to use an electronic system going forward but are migrating to another provider over the coming month and will not be live in order to do so this time. Meanwhile the dates for the scheduled consultation evenings are within our Dates for your Diary attachment. As a reminder, any new added dates will always be highlighted.

Kind regards

Bridgette Gough  
Headteacher

## **Brave Voices Across the Trust**

Our eldest pupils across the Trust found their Brave Voices as part of a persuasive speech writing project linked to their mini topic on democracy. The children have written speeches and shared them with each other over Teams. I was lucky enough to join the session and was very proud of all they had achieved and I am sure they will be well received by our MPs on Wednesday when Year 6 visit the Houses of Parliament.

Both classes detailed pressing matters for their communities. However, both schools decided that uniform was a topic they had something to say about. Because of this and a discussion at the PCG meeting held this week we will be consulting with parents and pupils about a review.

Love Life and Learning

## Reflections Area and Collective Worship Themes

Last week, we focused upon creating a welcoming community within our school and embraced the idea that the diversity within our families and communities, enriches our collective experience and understanding. We shared resources and stories that foster an environment where everyone feels valued and welcome. As we navigated the week, the Collective Worship Committee explored thought-provoking questions about empathy and belonging, encouraging open dialogue and reflection on how we can support one another in our shared journey. This fitted with the questions on our Reflections Table currently, imagine what it would be like:

- To not have a safe place to sleep
- To be unsafe in our own country
- To have to leave loved ones behind

This week, we reflect on the profound importance of collaboration in our daily lives. Teamwork isn't always straightforward; it requires patience, understanding, and a willingness to appreciate the diverse opinions and ideas of others. However, it is precisely this appreciation that makes the experience of working together truly rewarding and enriching. Drawing inspiration from the story told in "The Most Magnificent Team", we delve into the idea that listening is not just a skill but a vital component of effective collaboration. We are reminded of the saying, "Teamwork makes the dream work," which encapsulates the essence of how we can achieve so much more when we unite our strengths and efforts towards a common goal.

As Helen Keller wisely articulated, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." This week, let's also take a moment to consider the immense power of community, as highlighted through the Bookshop No Outsiders resource. This resource serves as a poignant reminder that "many hands make light work," emphasising the significance of collective effort. The Bible echoes this sentiment in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, illustrating that two are indeed better than one, as they can accomplish more together than they could alone.



## Headteacher's Cup

Joey Class: W1- Anastasia

W2- Lucas

Aardvark Class: W1- Freddie

W2- Talia

Giraffe Class: W1- Sidney

W2- Arthur B

Capybara Class: W1- Niranjana

W2- Louie

Koala Class: W1- Ruby

W2- Erin

Jellyfish Class: W1- Nicholas

W2- Miles

Falcon Class: W1- Ezra

W2- Mark



## Birthdays in February

Nicholas (late Jan)

Daisy-Mae: Reuben

Tommy: Sidney

Maurice: Benji

Benny: Merdan

Beau: Harry



## Going For Green

Reuben & Dougie

## Sports Cup

Year 3 - Capybara Class & Lewyn

## Recent Developments in School Guidance for Mobile Phone Use and the Growing Campaign for Smartphone Free Childhood.

In recent years, the movement advocating for smartphone-free childhoods has gained significant traction, particularly in light of the findings from the Good Childhood Report, which highlights a concerning decline in children's well-being across the UK. The report indicates that excessive smartphone use is linked to increased anxiety, depression, and a sense of isolation among young people. As educators and parents, it is crucial to consider how we can foster healthier environments for our children.

In response to these concerns, the Government's new mobile phone guidance for schools, published in January 2026 has strengthened its expectations for schools around mobile phone use in schools, with the aim of creating calm, focused, and safe learning environments for all pupils and offsetting the impact of their use for our children. Under the updated guidance, all schools in England are expected to operate as mobile-phone-free environments throughout the entire school day. This reflects growing national concern about the impact of mobile phones on learning, wellbeing, and behaviour. Ofsted will now consider how effectively schools implement their mobile phone policy as part of their inspections. Many schools are now implementing stricter policies to limit smartphone access, encouraging pupils to engage more fully with their peers and their learning. As a primary school we have always collected phones in and asked for phones not to be out in the building but we are now asking that they are not used on school grounds at any point. We understand that pupils may need a way of contacting home or being contacted after school, but we are asking for this to happen outside our grounds. We have witnessed several incidents of children showing other pupils their screens after and before school, meaning parents are not able to monitor what their child is shown/ listens to.

We realise that many families may be thinking about mobile devices as their children prepare for secondary school and therefore have been asked to signpost resources that might help parents navigate this decision. Whilst we realise this decision is for every family to make we do want to provide information for those who may want to know more about the smartphone free childhood campaign.

For families in the Essex area, there are several local groups dedicated to supporting a smartphone-free lifestyle for children. Organisations offer resources and workshops that help parents navigate the challenges of smartphone use. These groups provide a welcoming space for discussions about the impact of technology on childhood and share strategies for fostering a balanced approach to screen time. Here are some links should you wish to explore what is out there. <https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/> They explore helpful questions like How do I talk to my primary school age child about delaying smartphones?

Let's face it – if your child is asking for a smartphone, they're not alone. By the end of primary school, lots of kids are getting them. But even if it feels hard, waiting a little longer can be one of the best things you do for your child's wellbeing. With honesty and empathy, you can help them understand why the answer is 'not yet', for now. Information under the following headings is really helpful in having these conversations

1. Start with empathy
2. Remind them every family is different
3. Keep your explanation simple and honest
4. Explain that smartphones can dent their confidence
5. Explain how smartphones and social media really work – in a way they understand
6. Talk about what they gain by waiting
7. Be honest about the serious stuff – in an age-appropriate way
8. Offer other ways to feel independent
9. Be a role model
10. Keep the conversation going

As we embrace the choice to make these changes, let us work together to create an environment where children and parents can make an informed choice.

## **Out and About: Embracing Nature for Wellbeing**

As we hopefully move towards more spring like weather, it's good to remember the importance of getting our children outside. Recent research from the Good Childhood Study highlights a concerning decline in children's wellbeing, possible links have been made to the changing nature of childhood and to reduced outdoor playtime. The therapeutic effects of nature are undeniable; fresh air and open spaces can significantly uplift spirits and foster a sense of adventure. We recently had a theme of Joy for our worship theme and being outdoors with family and or friends was a common theme to joyous memories, and this is not just in our school but is common throughout.

To support families in enjoying the great outdoors without breaking the bank, we're excited to introduce our new newsletter feature suggested by the PCG, "Out and About." What about free local Park Runs based at Notley Outdoor Centre or explore the beautiful nature trails around Essex? These activities not only promote physical health but also encourage bonding and exploration.

For more ideas on outdoor activities for families in Essex, consider visiting the following links: <https://www.explore-essex.com/whats-on/great-notley-junior-parkrun#:~:text=Parkrun%20Junior:%20Great%20Notley%20Country,9:00am%20%2D%206:00pm>

Let's make the most of our surroundings and help our children thrive by embracing the wonders of nature together!

## **Medicines in School Update**

As we enter the season of coughs and colds, we would like to remind parents about our policy regarding medicines in school. If you wish to bring in medicines for your child, please drop it off at the office. Unfortunately, we are unable to keep general school pain relief medication, and it must be provided by parents, linked specifically to individual children. We kindly ask that all medicines are clearly labelled with your child's name.

Additionally, we can administer antibiotics if they are prescribed to be given four times a day. Please note that for all medicines, a form must be filled in by parents during drop-off. Thank you for your cooperation in ensuring the health and safety of all our pupils.