

Fir Tree Newsletter



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March 2025 Issue 372

Dear Families,

We all hope you are well. Term 4 is in full swing and, as ever, there has been lots going on, including pancake races, preparation for the Y4 performance and a Mayan workshop. The sun even put in an appearance last week! We look forward to sharing lots of positive news at the forthcoming Parent/Teacher meetings which are taking place for this month.

Before the February break, some members of our governing body came into school for a planned monitoring activity. They spoke to groups of children from every class about what is going well in school, and about things that we might need to think about making some tweaks to.

We are delighted to say that the overwhelming majority of responses are positive, with pupils stating they feel safe, happy and well supported in school. Pupils mentioned how an area for development for us, though, is around lunchtimes. A number of pupils remarked that they feel that lunchtimes in the hall are too noisy, with some saying that manners at this time of the school day could be improved.

Following this, a number of assemblies have clarified our expectations, which include:

- 'indoor voices'
- Walking not running
- No talking with food in your mouth
- Remembering to show gratitude to those who help us

A new competition is now in place! Each lunchtime, adults working in the hall will choose 3 or 4 'Lunchtime Legends'. When chosen, a child wins a point for their class. Shortly before the Easter break, we will tally up the scores and the winning class will spend some time enjoying a class reward. We will keep you posted on the results! As you will have seen from the recent communication from school, we are in the process of reviewing our values. We think it is very important that you, as parents and carers, contribute to this process. So far, there have been 12 responses. This process will close at the end of this half term, so make sure you share your thoughts with us. You can do this by clicking [here](#).

Our Y6 pupils will be heading off on their residential visit to Woodlands on Tuesday 22nd April. Soon after their return, like most Y6 pupils in England they will be undertaking tests, often called SATs, during the week commencing 12th May. The schedule looks like this:

Monday 12th May – English grammar, punctuation and spelling.
Tuesday 13th May – English reading
Wednesday 14th May – Mathematics papers 1 and 2
Thursday 15th May – Mathematics paper 3

[Here](#) is a link to a short YouTube video which explains how the week will work. We would urge parents of children in any of our year groups to watch this.

Warm regards,

Mr Knight and the School team

Esme won the Oxfordshire Preparation Grade 2 Gymnastics Competition, which took place on Sunday 9th March. She took Bronze on beam, floor, and range & conditioning, and after a brilliant competition all round, she was crowned best overall. Esme also scored highly enough to be awarded 'Working Beyond'.



On Sunday 9th March Leila in year 4 had the opportunity to be a mascot for Oxford United Women's team. Leila has been playing football with the Cholsey Bluebirds U9 girl's team since September and absolutely loves it! The Bluebirds had fun training with an Oxford United coach and walking onto the pitch with the players before their game.



Freddie C in year 6, had his third trial yesterday for Oxford United Football Club Under 11's. He got in! Well done, Freddie.



Friday 21st March

Years 3 & 4
5pm to 6pm



Years 5 & 6
6:30-7:30pm





Red Noses on sale now from the school office £2

FRIDAY 21 MARCH

News from Cedar – Year 3

Cedar class enjoyed learning about the Christian festival of Shrove Tuesday recently. We discovered the reason why pancakes are eaten specifically on this day, and we discovered that Wallingford and many other places celebrate this day with a pancake race! Armed with our pans (tennis bats) and pancakes we held our very own pancake race. The first race was the fastest team, but the second race was the team whose pancakes were the most intact at the end of the race. There were also some very peckish students that day...Well done to all of our enthusiastic runners - great teamwork, Cedar!



Watching and Browsing Online - Internet Matters

According to Ofcom, 90% of children are watching online videos and browsing the internet regularly. Children may love to stream videos and look up information,



it's a fun way to learn and relax after all but it is important that they are guided. The e-space is filled with inappropriate content and dangerous material. It is important that parents and even teachers, are able to steer their pupils and youngsters, towards the right places when online.

Internet Matters has published a guide dedicated to supporting adults in setting digital boundaries for children, so that they can make smart choices and build healthy online habits. In the Internet Matters guide you'll find practical tips on managing content access, the use of safety controls, advice on setting boundaries and ways to educate children on how to stay secure online. If interested please follow the link:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/by-activity/watching-and-browsing-online-a-parents-guide/>

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 19 th March	Year 5 Swimming
Wednesday 19 th March	IMPS visit to school - Silver Birch
Wednesday 19 th March	Willow Parents Evening
Thursday 20 th March	SWIFT Course
Thursday 20 th March	Parents Evening – all except Willow
Friday 21 st March	Red Nose Day
Friday 21 st March	PTA Silent Disco
24 th – 28 th March	Travelling Book Fair in school
Wednesday 26 th March	Year 5 Swimming
Wednesday 26 th March	IMPS visit to school - Cherry
Friday 28 th March	Berkshire Primary Images Class Photos
Monday 31 st March	Year 4 Production
Tuesday 1 st April	Year 4 Production
Friday 4 th April	End of term 4 – 25:15pm finish
7 th – 17 th April	Easter Holidays
Friday 18 th April	Good Friday
Monday 21 st April	Easter Bank Holiday Monday
Tuesday 22 nd April	Term 5 begins
22 nd – 25 th April	Year 6 Woodlands Residential

News from Cherry – Year 6

We have had an exciting start to Term 4 learning all about the circulatory system. We began by looking at the different parts of the heart and where the blood enters and leaves the heart. To understand this, we played a game outside where some children were oxygenated blood leaving the heart (represented by red bibs) and some people were deoxygenated blood entering the heart (represented by blue bibs). This helped us to understand which blood vessels are responsible for transporting which type of blood.

After this, we got to dissect a lamb's heart – this was a little bit gory but very exciting. We were able to see the different valves and chambers which helped us to understand how the heart is constructed and what the different types of blood vessel look like. From this, we have been writing explanation texts and doing observational drawings of the heart.



News from Willow – Year 3

Year 3 had a great time at Crocodiles of the World in Brize Norton. We enjoyed learning about the different species of crocodile, their natural habitats and diet. In addition, we got to see other animals including meercats, snakes and other small reptiles. Our guide Colin was very informative. Interestingly, we learnt that crocodiles have bumpy skin because their skin acts like solar panels, helping to regulate their temperature. We loved feeding time and getting to see the crocodile's jaws and teeth up close. Year 3 had a brilliant day out learning about these fascinating creatures.

These are some of our reflections:

"I loved seeing the meercats being fed, they are so adorable!" Edie

"I liked to see how really big the the crocodiles were!" Leyton

"I liked seeing the crocodiles being fed, and watching them leap out of the water." Alex

"I enjoyed learning about how crocodiles have eyelids that act like goggles to help them to see underwater." Isobel

"I learnt that crocodiles keep cool by keeping their mouths open." Pippa

"I learnt that you can tell the difference between crocodiles by the way their teeth hang out of their mouth." Emily C

"My favourite bit was watching the crocodiles being fed, especially when they jumped up to catch the food." Misha

"I learnt the difference between crocodiles and alligators, alligators are slightly small and crocodiles are bigger." Emily M



Mace has been busy in the garden. He has planted up a half barrel with daffodil bulbs and is so well mannered and enthusiastic in his work, reports Mel, our gardener. There will be more jobs too as he can keep planting things for the pollinators to attract more wildlife into our school garden. Keep up the good work Mace!



On 1st March, members of our singing group performed a number of songs, which were all linked to the biblical story of Jonah and the Whale, to a packed audience. This was a collaboration between St Nicholas School, St Johns School, ourselves and St Mary's Parish Youth Choir and was led by Judith Ward, who is also our piano and keyboard teacher in school.

The church was decorated beautifully with artwork provided by Ash, Maple, and Cedar Classes and also Fir Tree Fun Time. The children learnt a lot of songs, (some were really quite complex in nature), yet they rose to the challenge and put on a terrific concert. We were extremely proud of them, as always.



News from Year 5 – Ancient Mayan Workshop

To help us deepen our knowledge and understanding of the Ancient Maya people and their customs, we took part in a whole-day workshop led by 'The Red Queen'. During the day, we used drama to investigate more about Mayan death rituals as we 'sacrificed' 5 of our students as an honour to the gods in a range of gruesome and painful ways, as well as finding out about the 'Cha'ac' festival, how to make a Maya hot chocolate and a horror story about the terrifying Goddess of Death!

We discovered how important cacao beans were to the Maya (who used them for currency as well as food) and learned about how they would prepare the beans to make a special drink; we even got the chance to taste some dark chocolate which was very bitter and didn't have milk or sugar added to it.

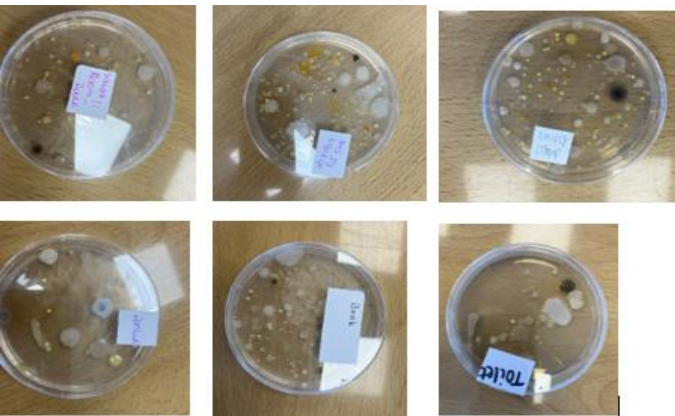
'The Red Queen' brought lots of artefacts with her which we investigated with lots of curiosity; we had to predict what they might have been used for, by whom and when and then compared this to the information cards and see how close our ideas had been.



News from Silver Birch – Year 4

Before half term, Silver Birch class performed an experiment to investigate which areas contained the most bacteria. We took samples in different places and on different items around the school. These areas were: Mrs Jackson's laptop, the staffroom table, the boys' toilet, the Silver Birch door handle, a light switch, and a book. We then left the petri trays in the cupboard over half-term

On the 27th February, we took them out of the cupboard, and they smelled really bad! Once displayed on the table, we examined them. Surprisingly, the toilet was the cleanest! But Mrs Jackson's laptop ...



A SWEET VICTORY FOR FREDDIE

On Tuesday 4th March, year 5 and 6 pupils went to the town centre to watch the extraordinary, annual, traditional pancake race.

The annual event, which brings all the pupils of Wallingford together, started at 10:15 when the organisers gave out the instructions. The children had to run one lap to the pizza café then back to the centre.

Furthermore, the adults had to flip the pancake then do five minutes of the same route.

Around 10:15, the Cherry class started their race with Zeph winning, followed closely by Silverbirch. Harry had a strong start, but Freddie came zooming past me close to the pizza café. Harry said, "I was disappointed that I only came second, but Freddie deserved it."

Well done everybody that competed in the pancake race, long stay the Wallingford pancake race. **Written by Harry E**



Sporting News

We took a Year 3 and a Year 4 football team to the Wallingford partnership tournament recently. There were 12 teams taking part and the teams were split into two pools, with the winner from pool 1 playing the runner up of pool 2 and vice versa. Our teams played with heart and demonstrated great skill and overall, we came 3rd and 7th. We were really proud of both teams, especially our Year 3 team as it was their first time in representing our school. Well done to all.

