

Fir Tree Newsletter



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November 2024 Issue 368

Dear Families,

I hope this communication from the school, written at the halfway point of the term, finds you well.

School is, as ever, thriving and busy. There have been several notable sporting performances recently, alongside a number of enrichment visits. We thank our committed staff for putting these opportunities in place.

Like all schools who are part of the ODST trust, we receive half-termly visits from a School Improvement Advisor. I am pleased to say that our most recent visit went well, with our visitor remarking on the calm, friendly and purposeful environment we have in place here at Fir Tree.

I hope you found the Parent/Teacher meetings which took place this week, useful in understanding how your child is doing and as to what their next steps are. During the final couple of weeks of term, all of our pupils will be undertaking some assessments which will allow teachers to gather information on which areas of the curriculum they need to revisit when the spring term starts in January. There will be further Parent/Teacher meetings in March, when you will get further updates on attainment and progress.

With Christmas fast approaching we hope to see lots of you at the Christmas Fayre next Friday, 6th December. Our PTA have, as ever, worked very hard on this event and we know we can count on your support. It wouldn't be Christmas at Fir Tree without a delicious Christmas dinner which we are all looking forward to.

School finishes for the end of the autumn term at 14.15 on Thursday 19th December. We very much look forward to welcoming children back to school for the spring term on Monday 6th January 2025.

With warm regards,

Mr Knight



Well done to Sinead in Year 5 who is featured in the British Spotted Pony Society 2025 calendar.



Alfie (year 6) recently appeared on BBC news (with his Grandad) after setting up his own woodworking business. An entrepreneur in the making!

Visit:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m00257np/south-today-evening-news-19112024> to watch the news article (22:39 minutes in).

Some gentle reminders:

DO:

- remember a water bottle and fruit snack
- warm winter coat/hat/gloves
- spare socks/shoes in case they get wet on the way to school
- homework book (if you are unsure which day this is due, please ask class teacher)
- remember to wear a safety helmet if you are riding a bike or scooter to school
- pay extra attention when driving to/from school and park appropriately whilst respecting our neighbours

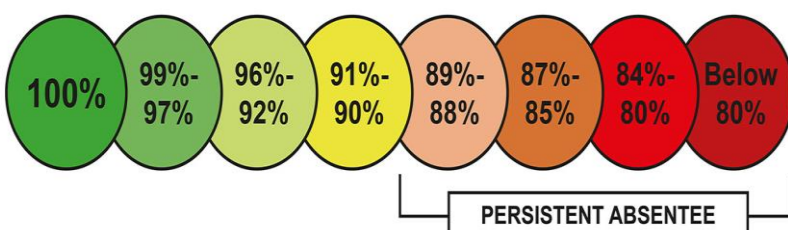
DON'T:

- forget to name all your uniform and items
- wear make up to school
- wear jewellery apart from plain studs if needed (these need to be removed or covered on PE days)
- bring valuables into school
- ride scooters and bikes on the school grounds
- walk on the school access road, please stick to the paths

THANK YOU

ATTENDANCE MATTERS

On Time: First Time, Every Time



Which CIRCLE are you in?

Active Leaders

Our 26 Sports Leaders are really enjoying their Active Leader course this week. In addition to learning over 70 playground games and inventing our own games, the leaders will be working with year 3 and year 4 to develop their leadership skills and put into practise what they have learned about being a great leader. We are determined to make our break times as active as possible!



News from Ash – Year 4

In PE this term, Ash class have been learning about the skills of hockey. We have learnt how to correctly hold a hockey stick and are beginning to learn about effective use of space, in the hope we can play some matches as the term progresses. One popular game involves hitting a ball using a hockey stick towards cones, if a cone is hit successfully that becomes a point. The team with the most cones at the end of the time is the winner. This encourages children to ensure they are holding the hockey stick correctly and gives the opportunity to practise a Push Pass.

Here is a picture of George showing how to correctly hold a hockey stick – stronger hand in the middle of the stick, other hand at the top and you must keep the hockey stick below the knee.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 29 th November	PTA – non uniform day
Tuesday 3 rd December	Cherry swimming
Wednesday 4 th December	Silver Birch swimming
Friday 6 th December	PTA Christmas Craft Fayre 5-7pm
Monday 9 th December	NO CLUBS THIS WEEK
Monday 9 th December	Y3/4 Carol Concert – 9:30am Y5/6 Carol Concert – 11:00am
Tuesday 10 th December	Cherry swimming – last session
Wednesday 11 th December	Silver Birch swimming – last session
Friday 13 th December	Y3 to St Nics to watch Nativity
Monday 16 th December	Christmas veg help needed
Tuesday 17 th December	Y5/6 Christmas lunch
Wednesday 18 th December	Y3/4 Christmas lunch
Thursday 19 th December	End of term – 2:15pm finish
Friday 20 th December	INSET Day
Monday 6 th January 2025	Term 3 begins – 8:45am



Friday 6th December
5-7pm

Please sign up for a slot to help on the evening. We can't do it without you!

ONLINE TOY AUCTION
FIND US ON FACEBOOK

2ND-4TH December

Bid on a fantastic selection of toys just in time for Christmas! All proceeds will support our school. Winning lots can be collected at the Christmas Fayre.

HELP NEEDED

Volunteers urgently needed to help keep our PTA alive. If you are able to help or to find our more information please email:
firtreeschoolpta@gmail.com

A great afternoon of football was played at the Wallingford Partnership Tournament on Monday. Three amazing teams represented our school and played their hearts out, demonstrating great skill. It was a very close tournament, and it came down to the very last match of the day... Thankfully, our B Team won their match against Cholsey, which resulted in our A Team winning overall! Thank you to Mr Shah for looking after one of our teams. I know you were super impressed with their supportive teamwork and their overall enthusiasm.



News from Cherry – Year 6

We have been learning about all things WW1 in Year 6. Cherry Class began by researching the causes of WW1 and trench life, as well as key events such as The Battle of the Somme and The Christmas Truce. Building on this, we then started reading *War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo and have been writing letters from the perspective of a cavalry soldier in WW1. Really interestingly, we were able to look at some actual letters sent by the relatives (great grandparents) of some Cherry Class members. This gave us such a good insight into what life was really like in the trenches, and what soldiers actually wrote about in their letters.

We have also created some scenes from No Man's Land using silhouettes and paint. To do this, we carefully mixed acrylic paint to create sunset colours and then made an ombre background by blending the colours as we painted. On top of this, we did a solid black line for the ground and cut out black figures to create the silhouettes. The results were incredibly effective. We will be writing WW1 poems over the top of these and then recording Cherry Class performing these over the coming weeks.



News from Sycamore – Year 5

Sycamore had a fantastic time at The Black Country Living Museum last week! We explored the museums many shops and asked their characters about the lives of the people who would have visited and worked in them. Some of our favourite stops included the chemist, hardware and sweet shop. We were also able to enter the Victorian cinema and had our own showing of a short Laurel and Hardy comedy. This was followed by watching one of the chain makers use the fire to wield metal shapes and a short stop at the sweet shop! All of year 5 were very excited to take part in their own Victorian school lesson. We learnt the importance of the 'Three Rs' and practised chanting our times tables and alphabet backwards. We also witness some of the way's teachers were very strict and how children were treated they misbehaved. We finished off our visit by taking a trip around the village in one of the old-style buses and asking questions to some of the characters in the different Victorian homes.



News from Chestnut – Year 5

Black Country Living Museum Visit

Chestnut class have loved learning all about the Victorians this term; to deepen our understanding of Victorian life, we visited the Black Country Living Museum and explored real Victorian artefacts, homes, shops and even a school. During the visit, we took part in a Victorian lesson and we were shocked at how strict the teachers were; we learned that all children had to write with their left hand, they would spend much of their time chanting (this was called learning by rote) and we discovered that children would have to pay for school (2 pence for a week) which was more than lots of families could afford. It was amazing to step inside real Victorian buildings full of artefacts and ask lots of pertinent questions to the museum adults who were in role as Victorian shopkeepers, chemists and local people.

Wallingford Museum Visit

To learn more about what life would have been like in Wallingford during the Victorian era, we were very lucky to visit the Wallingford Museum. During our visit, we explored Victorian attitudes towards rich and poor through a painting by George Dunlop Leslie; we made comparisons of clothing, objects and even positioning of figures in the painting (the richer, higher status figures were standing at the top of the painting, whereas the working class figures were at the bottom of the painting). Upstairs, we thoroughly enjoyed using our detective skills to uncover the location of Victorian artefacts by reading clues on cards and during this, we were fascinated to see photographs of Wallingford town square in the Victorian period. By studying a floorplan and a real census from the time, we discovered that Wallingford had a workhouse of it's own and we learned about the lives of real people who had spent time there.



News from Silver Birch – Year 6

For those not participating in Active Leaders this week, it seemed the ideal time to do some baking. Initially, there was some debate as to whether you pronounced it scone (s-gone) or scone (s-cone) and then it was time to get started. We measured, mixed, rolled, egg-washed and finally taste-tested. Verdict: delicious!



Over the past few weeks children in Silver Birch have been learning about WWI. This week they evaluated a variety of poems and then wrote their own. They also did some lovely artwork to accompany them. I think you will agree they look very effective.

WW1 Poem

Alone yet surrounded by others.
Death swirling around,
choking on an endless piece of yarn.
Yelps of pain hoping to be saved
Then silence.

Alone yet surrounded by others.
Hope swirling around,
Filling my head like a Ferris wheel.
Telegraph arrives, hands shaking,
Then silence.

Alone yet surrounded by others.
Sadness so many lives lost
But never forgotten.
Tears running down their eyes
Then silence.

By Tom and Harry Silverbirch

DEATH IS NEAR

I've enlisted there's no turning back,
Travelling to my new home in the trenches,
Death is near.

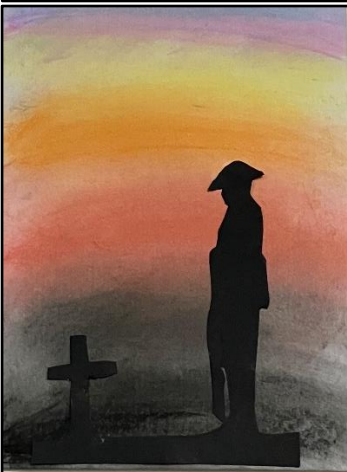
Explosions, smoke swirling like a black mist,
Descending down upon us,
Injured soldiers' helpless cries,
Filled with hope,
Then SILENCE.

A silent scream within me,
Wanting to escape from this hell on earth,
Death is near.

Now I sit, helpless and alone,
Perhaps one day I'll make it home,
Full of death is my mind.

A gas bottle opens, everyone shouts,
Then the darkness descends upon me,
Good riddance you hellish nightmare,
Death is here.

By Finley, Freddie and Freya



News from Willow – Year 3



In Art this week, we've been developing our observation skills. We closely observed and analysed the wonderful painting, 'An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump' by Joseph Wright Derby (1731-1797).

Willow class were asked to consider the following questions in order to deepen their thinking, and help to develop their own ideas and opinions.

- What do you think is going on here?
- Who or what does the artist want us to look at first?
- What do you notice about the people in the painting?
- Can we learn anything about their different characters?
- What time of day is it?
- How can you tell?
- Does the lighting create a certain mood or feeling?
- Is it an interesting or frightening experience for the people gathered at the table?
- What do you think you would be able to smell if you were transported into the painting?

We had a brilliant discussion. Many children empathised with some of the characters in the painting. Below are some of our wonderful observations:

"I think it is night because there is a moon in the corner of the picture." Ronan

"I can see a bird, I think it is dead. If I was there I would be able to smell bird blood!" Kole

"I think the wooden pole holding the bird spins, and the man's hand is pointing at it to make it spin." Callum

"The bird has flown in and they are trying to rescue it." Alex

"This picture is from a long time ago, and a long time ago they used to capture birds." Archie

"I can see somebody crying and it looks like there's lemonade in the glass so it's a new painting." JJ

"I think the tall man is sprinkling something on to the bird."

"I think the girl is sad because the bird is going to die."

"If I was there, it would smell woody because there's lots of wooden things around."

"They could be in a treehouse because it looks like it at the top of the picture." David

"Some people in the picture are really looking at what's going, on some are looking in the other direction." Phoebe

"Everybody in the picture looks serious and worried." Emily M

"The man's face looks like a skull, it's frightening." Amelie

"The arm does not look connected to the man." Harvey

"I think the glass is a lantern and it's creating the light; the painter wants us to look at the part that's not in the dark." Bodhi

News from Cedar – Year 3

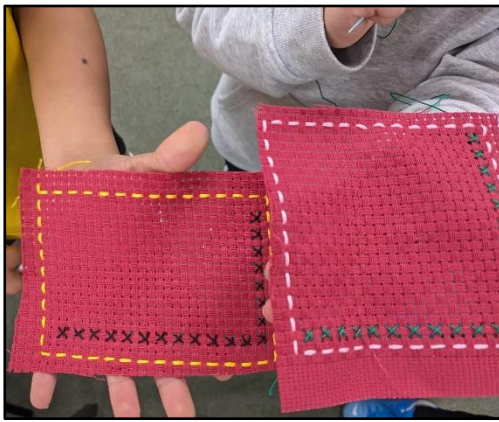
What great fun we have had this week exploring what makes shadows and how light travels through different materials. We have learnt the meaning of the words opaque, translucent and transparent and been able to explain the meaning of these words with confidence and give examples. We have investigated what makes shadows darker, lighter, blurry or clear, bigger or smaller.

In the playground we drew around our shadow in the morning, then stood in the same place after lunch only to discover that our shadow was no longer in the same place! This was linked in explanations and observations to the movement of the sun in the sky.

Mrs Downs and Mrs Hall have been busy teaching running stitch and cross stitch sewing skills. We can't wait to see what they are going to make using these skills.

Dance with Emma Seymour is exciting! Ideas have been brainstormed for a Stone Age Dance which links into our project from last term.

Emma was very impressed with what the children could remember about the Stone Age and excellent ideas are forming for a dance festival masterpiece. Please send your reply back Year 3 if you want to be involved with this amazing opportunity.



News from Maple – Year 4

Maple Class thoroughly enjoyed their trip to Wallingford Museum. They found out about the history of Wallingford Castle, explored many artefacts and enjoyed wearing the chainmail head pieces. Children also used clues and artefacts to answer questions based around the Roman, Anglo Saxon and Norman times.

In addition to this, the children have been learning about the digestive system and enjoyed a demonstration of food passing through different areas of the digestive system. It was pretty disgusting. They have written some amazing diary entries, imagining they were a piece of food on its travels!



Christmas Fundraiser

Date: December 1st

Location: Outside St. Mary's Church, Wallingford Town Centre

Kick off the Christmas season with amazing deals on toys and a limited selection of cozy Christmas jumpers! Every purchase helps raise funds for families in need.

Highlights:

Raffle: Win high value, in demand toys!

Festive Wish Tree: Make a festive donation in lieu of gifts this year. We'll be stationed outside St. Mary's Church.



December Christmas Swap Shop

Monday 9th December
12pm-2pm

AT WALLINGFORD FAMILY CENTRE

BRING A DONATION OF VERY GOOD
CONDITION TOYS AND GIFT ITEMS AND
SWAP FOR OTHER ITEMS AVAILABLE.

MAXIMUM OF TWO BAGS A PERSON



Wallingford Christmas Event

Sunday 1 December
12pm to 4pm, St Mary's
Lantern Making Workshop followed by
Procession at 4pm. Plus refreshments.

Family Service

Sunday 8 December, St Mary's
Crafts from 9.45am, service starts 10.15am

Crib Service

for families and children

Tuesday 24 December
3pm and 4.30pm, St Mary's

