



Dear Families,

We hope you are well and that you have enjoyed the spring weather this week.

Thank you for supporting the recent Parent/Teacher meetings. We hope you found them informative. Our committed group of PTA volunteers recently met for their AGM. Through their hard work and generosity of the school community we are able to provide each class with £500 towards enrichment activities and equipment. In these challenging financial times, this makes a huge difference to our pupils. Look out for future events, including the PTA quiz which is scheduled for Friday 24th April. Watch this space for further details!

All best wishes to our Y6 team of pupils and colleagues who will be heading off on their residential visit straight after the Easter break. A special mention for the members of staff who will be accompanying and who will be away from their own families and friends for the duration of the visit.

Primary Transition

As you will know, we are gearing ourselves up for a significant and exciting change for our school community from September 2026, when we will be converting from a two-form entry (2 classes per year group) Junior School to ultimately a one-form entry (1 class per year group) Primary school. We currently have 8 classes and this will increase to 9 in September. We are pleased that there will be some pupils joining us from St Nicholas in September. A cohort of pupils currently in Year 1 will join us in Y2 and a cohort of pupils currently in Y2 will join us in Y3. Going forward, aside from transferring from another school, admissions to Fir Tree will only be into Reception.

The class makeup in September 2026 will be as follows:

One Reception Class	One Year Two Class	One Year Three Class
Two Year Four Classes	Two Year Five Classes	Two Year Six Classes

On your travels around school you will have seen that there is significant renovation work happening. Specifically, the 2 classrooms which housed Y5 pupils is being converted into an Early Years unit. From September 2026 there will be a cohort of up to 30 Reception age pupils in this building. We do not yet have a firm date, but it is expected that during 2027 we will welcome a cohort of Nursery age pupils to Fir Tree. In preparation for this important change, we recently recruited an Early Years Lead, a colleague who will teach Reception class from September 2026 as well as eventually overseeing the opening of the Nursery class. We received a very strong set of applications but the outstanding candidate was Mrs Helena Grant who will be joining us from Monday 13th April. She will not teach a class at this point, but will work closely with colleagues in the school and ODST teams to ensure that everything is in place for September. Mrs Grant is an experienced Early Years professional who currently works at a large school in Oxford. We are sure you will provide her with a warm welcome to the Fir Tree community.

Mrs Tremlett will be leaving Fir Tree at the end of April, after almost two years with our team. After much reflection, she has opted to gain some experience in Early Years/Key Stage 1, phases of education she has been interested in working in for some time now. Her last day at Fir Tree will be Thursday 30th April 2026. I am sure you will join me in thanking her for her contribution and in wishing her well for the future.

We have begun the process of mapping out teacher deployment in other year groups and our plan is that we will communicate this to you in advance of the May half term break.

School Social Media

Like many schools, we are keen to explore how we might use social media to communicate with families and the wider community. It goes without saying that if we decide to do this, we will do so in a safe manner. Please look out for some survey questions we are planning on asking you so that we know where our community is on this.

National Assessments

As you may know, as we approach the summer months, most of our pupils will be taking some national assessments. Most year 6 pupils will be taking some tests, sometimes called SATs, during May. The timetable is below:

Monday 11 th May	Tuesday 12 th May	Wednesday 13 th May	Thursday 14 th May	Friday 15 th May
Grammar, punctuation and spelling	Reading	Arithmetic Paper Maths Reasoning Paper 1	Maths Reasoning Paper 2	No tests

All tests take place in the morning. The papers are marked externally and we will get to find out how our pupils did in early July. You can find out more about this process by clicking [here](#)

During the early part of June, our Y4 pupils, like their peers nationally, will take part in a multiplication check. You can find out more about this process by clicking [here](#). As ever, please contact your child's Class Teacher if you have any queries.

Attendance

For context, overall attendance at Fir Tree for the current academic year stands at 95.5%. This compares to 94.8% nationally and 95.1 for Oxfordshire schools. We know that sometimes pupils cannot come to school because they are really unwell - and that's the right thing to do for them and other students. Medical advice is clear however that children with mild illness will often be well enough to attend - for example if they have a cough, or cold, without a temperature. The NHS guidance [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk) is

designed to support parents in their decision making about mild illness.

We also know that pupils fall behind their friends and classmates when they miss school. At Fir Tree we want the amount of missed education to be reduced as much as possible. We believe that our community is stronger together, with all of our pupils in school, on time, every day. We are building life skills, life-long friendships and preparing your child for future success. We also know that you can have a significant effect on your child's absences this academic year and we would really appreciate your help and support ensuring that they come to school every day so that they can get the best possible outcomes. We want to work with you to achieve this – please call or come in and meet your child's Class Teacher, Mrs Stockley or I if there is anything we can do to support you or your child. We appreciate that every family's situation is unique

What you must do:

- Telephone the school before 8.50am each day of your child's absence.
- Tell the school in advance, of any medical appointments by completing an absence form
- If you are not sure whether your child is well enough to attend school, send them in anyway as they often perk up on arrival.
- If you and your child are experiencing difficulties with school attendance then talk to us as a first step so we can help.

What we will do:

- Check your child's attendance every day.
- Phone home to discuss your child's attendance with you.
- Invite you into school for attendance meetings if we are concerned.
- If we cannot establish a reason for absence, then we may make a welfare home visit.

End of the Spring Term

The spring term comes to an end at 14:15 on Friday 27th March. The new term begins for pupils on Monday 13th April. The next half term runs for 6 weeks and finishes on Friday 22nd May.

We wish you all a relaxing and peaceful Easter break.

With warm regards

Marc Knight
Headteacher

A few weeks ago, Emily from Chestnut was in a production called the Oxfordshire Gang Show. It is a variety show featuring members of Guiding and Scouting up to the age of 30. There are some famous traditional songs that always feature including the famous "Crest Of A Wave", but mostly the show is made up of pop music through time. This is grouped into themed 'items', for example Heroes, Monsters, Photographs – each featuring a combination of songs, dances and acting. The finale (pic below) is a "megamix" of the best songs with everyone back in their uniforms. It is a very special moment and was Emily's favourite part of the show.

The performance was at Radley College in February half term. Gang Show then provides opportunities to meet up with new friends through an after-show party and activity camp! It is a really uplifting experience and a great chance to develop your skills in a friendly, inclusive environment, make friends and take part in something big! So if you are in Girlguiding or Scouting and enjoy performing, Gang Show is definitely for you!

If you want to give it a try, there are taster workshops for the next Gang Show monthly through the Spring and Summer, starting from next weekend 28th March. See advert below!

"We're riding along on the crest of a wave and the world is ours!"



Sunday Sessions '26

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26 Apr
17 May
28 Jun
26 Jul
23 Aug

Open to ages 10* to 100!
Existing and new cast and crew members
No ongoing commitment
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£4 per session
New routine/theme each session
*Year 6 and above from Sept 2026
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PTA QUIZ NIGHT & CURRY NIGHT
FRIDAY 24TH APRIL 2026
Follow the QR code to buy your tickets



Jesse from Cherry class and his brother Buddy from Cedar class competed in the last leg of the 4 Nations kickboxing tournament.

Travelling all the way to Kilkenny for the Irish open, Jesse tried 'kick light' for the first time, coming away with 3 silvers. Buddy came away with 4 golds and a silver, also coming 5th in the top ten athletes of the day - out of 239 fighters. Well done boys!



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Mon 23 rd - Fri 27 th March	Travelling Book Fair in all week
Thursday 26 th March	Class photographs
Thursday 26 th March	Easter cake sale
Friday 27 th March	End of term 4 – School finishes at 2:15pm
Mon 30 th March – Fri 10 th April	Easter Holidays
Monday 13 th April	Term 5 begins
Tuesday 14 th April	Year 4 swimming
Tues 14 th – Fri 17 th April	Year 6 Woodlands residential
Tuesday 21 st April	Year 4 swimming
Friday 24 th April	PTA Quiz Night
Tuesday 28 th April	Year 4 swimming
Monday 4 th May	Bank Holiday
Tuesday 5 th May	Year 4 swimming
Tuesday 12 th May	Year 4 swimming
Monday 18 th May	Year 4 Earth Trust visit
Tuesday 19 th May	Big Summer Sing

News from Maple – Year 4

In Term 4, Maple Class have been thoroughly enjoying their learning about the Ancient Egyptians. The children have been getting hands-on by creating their own canopic jars out of clay, learning how these were used to store mummified organs. To bring this topic to life even further, we have also set up an exciting experiment to mummify a tomato using methods similar to those used by the Ancient Egyptians. We're looking forward to seeing the results—perhaps after the holidays!

In PE, we have all been learning a new sport—Mrs Durman included! The children have shown great enthusiasm as they have developed their resilience and confidence, while also learning how to manage disagreements positively. With the arrival of some nicer weather, these sessions of handball have been especially enjoyable.

In Maths, the children have been working hard on fractions, which can be quite a tricky topic. Alongside this, we have continued to practise our times tables, and it's fantastic to see how much progress has been made.

For Science Week, all of Lower Key Stage 2 (Years 3 and 4) took part in an exciting investigation to build the strongest "backbones." Using paper, the children explored how changing different factors affected strength and stability. Some groups even managed to design structures strong enough to hold the weight of 100 books—an incredible achievement!

It has been a busy and rewarding term, and we are very proud of all the hard work and enthusiasm shown by Maple Class.

News from Ash – Year 4

In Ash Class, we have been learning about sound, including how sound travels, how different sounds are made and how we hear sound.

We started our learning this term focusing on different instruments make different sounds and the vibrations which are caused to create sound. We then learnt about how the sound travels from the vibrations causing the noise. As part of this, we did 2 experiments; one was rice on a drum and a tuning fork in water. We observed that the bigger the sound we made using the drum, the bigger the vibration, and the further the rice moved. With the tuning fork, we discovered that when the tuning fork hit metal and was placed in the water, the vibrations would cause a ripple effect in the water. If the tuning fork touched the drawer the water was in, we discovered the vibrations would stop.



News from Silver Birch – Year 6

Silver Birch recently took part in first aid training with IMPS, where they learned a range of important life-saving skills. During the session, they were introduced to CPR and the DRS ABC approach, helping them understand how to assess danger, check for a response, and provide appropriate care in an emergency. They also practiced placing someone in the recovery position to keep an unconscious person safe and breathing. The training covered important safety rules as well, such as never picking up sharps like needles and understanding why objects, like pieces of glass, should not be removed from a wound. We are looking forward to our visit to Junior Citizens to find out other vital information about keeping safe.



Needles
Never touch or dispose of a needle if you find it outside. Call emergency services or tell a trusted, safe adult.

DRS ABC
If you see an unconscious person check for: Danger, Response, Shout, Airway, Breathing, Compressions.



Burn = 20mins in cold water **IMPS**

News from Willow – Year 3

In our writing lessons this term, Willow have been learning how to write non-chronological reports. Our reports have focused on pangolins.

We began by researching these fascinating mammals, discovering key facts about their scales, diet, behaviour, and defensive mechanisms.

By using subheadings, technical vocabulary, and generalisers such as most, many and some, we have made our writing more informative for the reader. We have also been practicing complex sentences using when and if. In addition, we are developing detailed noun phrases to make our writing more interesting and engaging.

When survival depends on quick reflex action, it bravely coils into a ball before secure, though ball to escape from by all predators. The alarmed pangolin flutters his its head and tail and whips into a ball and lashes and whips its long, scaly, around tail to ward off predators the hunters. Not even the mighty King of the savanna can struggle to reach the its supper, scaly pangolin. Even while all its night, at the ball of armour refuses to unroll in the face of danger!

Super Scales!
Different to other mammals, the pangolin is covered in overlapping scales. However it might look like these scales are not an exoskeleton, they are! Believe me when I tell you pangolins are vertebrates who with a endoskeleton! Wow!
When it senses danger, it skillfully coils into a strong ball to survive an attack. The agitated pangolin protects its face with its legs and uses its scaly tail to cover its body. Its scaly swinging tail to slash the predator away. SMACK! Even the powerful King of the jungle gets frustrated when their dinner refuses to open.

News from Sycamore – Year 5

Sycamore enjoyed taking part in Science Week which investigated air resistance. We followed along the live webinar and made our own experiment based on what we had learned. This involved measuring the distance travelled up with our own made rocket launchers. We have great fun testing these out and measuring our results! We have also been looking at WWII and created silhouette art based on the London skyline during the Blitz.



In addition, our very own James Brown is taking part in a marathon challenge in the lead up to the London Marathon week this year. James will be running the equivalent distance of a marathon across the week of 19th April 2026 in order to raise money for Alzheimer's Research UK. James and his family have organised for some of his friends and teachers to come along to run with James at points during this week.

If you would like to donate to James' challenge, please see the just giving link here: <https://shorturl.at/xz24V>

We wish James the best of luck with his training for this busy week coming up!



News from Chestnut – Year 5

In Chestnut class, we've loved practically exploring the different parts of flowers and, this week, we learned about the process of pollination. We created our own stamen (consisting of the anther, pollen and filament) using Wotsits and spaghetti and had to explain to our partner how pollination worked. When we had confidently applied all of the scientific vocabulary on the board (including pollen, fertilisation, ovary, ovules, stigma and style) we enjoyed eating our nectar marshmallows and Wotsit anthers. Yum!

We also did a live draw on World Book Day of Dave the Pigeon. Look at our fantastic creation below.



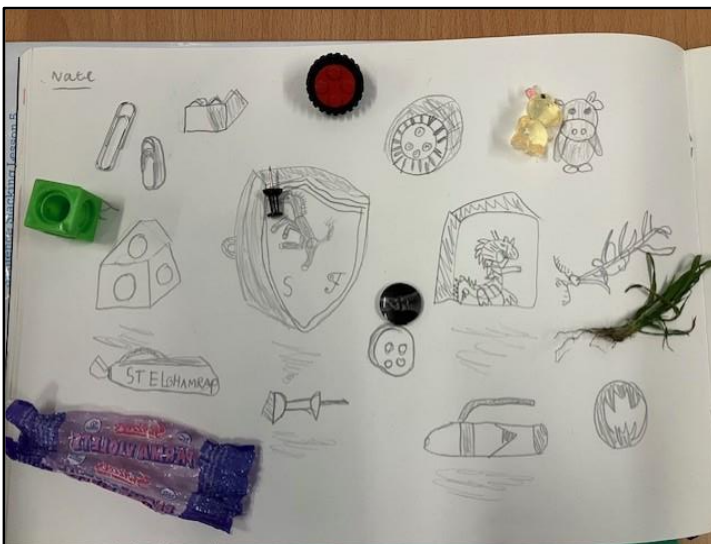
News from Cedar – Year 3

In art, we have been keeping our sketching skills sharp with a variety of quick activities. Our most recent task was sketching a number of small objects such as a button, paper clip, drawing pin, Lego piece, a coin, wheel from a construction set, small stick, pencil sharpener etc... We were looking attentively at each object and moving our hand to draw as we moved our eye to look. The fantastic collection of small things below is by Nate. Why not gather a number of small items from your house and do the same? Regular sketching practise helps us to further develop our art skills.

In writing, we have focused on one particular animal to help us learn to write in the style of a non-chronological report with all its recognisable features. The pangolin has become a firm class favourite and we now know many interesting and somewhat quirky facts about them. We also had a go at drawing one using a tutorial on [Welcome To Art For Kids Hub](https://www.welcome-to-art-for-kids.com/). This is a website that all children seem to love whatever their art ability.

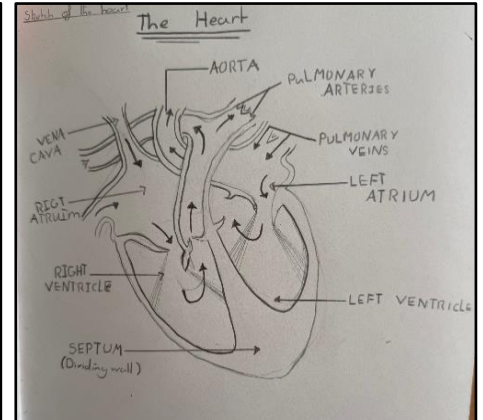
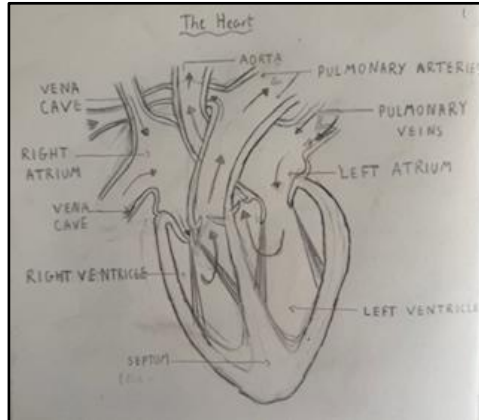
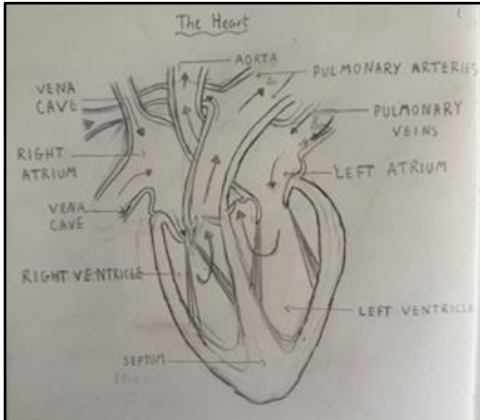
Often, when we are drawing, we listen to music. The most recent piece that has been introduced is a Classical piece called 'Rondo Alla Turca,' a movement from a piano sonata by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, which was written in 1783. We always appraise what we listen to in terms of dynamics, articulation, instrumentation, tempo, style and how it makes us feel. This piece always make the class want to join with the melody and dance; it's a feel-good piece of music.

One book that we read every day in class to support our knowledge on non-chronological reports is, 'An Intriguing Anthology of Animals' by Ben Hoare. This book is incredibly popular with all children for its stunning illustrations, fascinating facts, and it is guaranteed to nurture a love, wonder and curiosity for animals.



News from Cherry – Year 6

Cherry Class has been busy learning all about the circulatory system as part of our current science project. We spent time carefully studying the human heart and creating our own realistic scientific diagrams. Using pencils and shading techniques, the children worked hard to sketch the shape of the heart and add detail to make their drawings look as realistic as possible. Once the drawings were complete, the children labelled the key parts of the heart, including the atria, ventricles, and the major blood vessels. The finished diagrams look fantastic!



Rory in year 5 did recently took part in a 'swimathon', swimming 1500 meters in one go.

The swimathon raises money for Cancer Research UK and Marie Curie. Rory has so far raised £185! This is an amazing achievement and we're really proud of him.



WALLINGFORD
FAMILY CENTRE

- REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1173241 -

Easter Holiday Activities

We've got some great **free activities over the Easter holidays** thanks to funding support.

Visit: <https://www.wallingfordfamilycentre.com/events-courses/easter-sessions> for more information.

Archie in year 4 has recently earned his two yellow stripes in judo and has also been awarded best beginner.

Well done Archie!



Active Communities Easter holidays

30 MARCH - 11 APRIL

Low cost and free activities during February half term:

- New Age Kurling
- Football
- Boccia
- Family Dance Parties
- Xplorer
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and more.



SCAN ME



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/ActiveCommunitiesSouthandVale



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Price: £3.50 per participant

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MORE INFORMATION

Book your tickets via Eventbrite:



Polite notice: Please remember the Castle Gardens allow Easter Rabbits but have a no dogs policy. (Your dogs can join you around town if you choose to do the more challenging option). Also note there are no toilet facilities on site.



Hill End is 100 in 2026! We need your help to celebrate a century of fun & learning

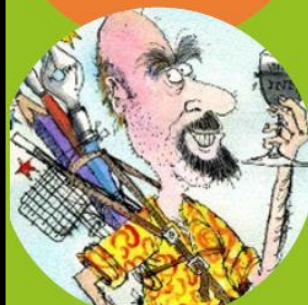
DESIGN AN AWESOME LOGO COMPETITION

Fab prizes to be won - for children, families and schools!

Enter by Thurs 30 April 2026

In our special birthday year we are inviting children aged 4-12 years to create a new centenary logo.

Winnie the Witch illustrator Korky Paul will choose the winning design!



Hill End
A place of possibilities

Full details at:
www.hill-end.org/news/logo-comp

