



Dear Families,

I hope this email finds you well as we head towards the half term break (term 3 ends at 15.15 on Friday 13th February).

Attendance Update

I think there is a shared understanding across our community around the importance of regular school attendance. With this in mind, we are pleased to say that overall attendance at Fir Tree currently stands above the national average and has done during each of the previous two academic years. There is always more we can all do though, so please get in touch with us if you would like to discuss any challenges you face.

Primary Conversion

Despite the recent weather, good progress is being made with the project to convert existing space into a Early Years Unit. A recruitment process is currently underway which we hope will result in us appointing an Early Years Lead. This colleague will teach Reception from September 2026, as well as undertaking work to incorporate a Nursery cohort (we expect this to take place in 2027). We are planning on the basis of the following class makeup in September 2026:

x1 Reception class
x1 Year 2 class
x1 Year 3 class
x2 Year 4 classes
x2 Year 5 classes
x2 Year 6 classes

Contacting School

We always recommend talking to school if you have any worries or queries. In the first instance, you will contact your child's class teacher. This is because they are best placed to respond. A large volume of emails come into school each day and that is why we say it may take up to 72 hours for your child's teacher to respond. Similarly, you might find it convenient to contact school in order to request that your child's teacher calls you back. Again, this response may take up to 72 hours. After communicating with your child's teacher it may be that you need to speak with a member of the school's leadership team. At Fir Tree I am very lucky to be supported by school leaders including:

Mr Wilcox – Assistant Headteacher

Miss Lloyd – Upper Key Stage 2 Lead (Y5/6)

Miss Hutchings – Lower Key Stage 2 Lead (Y3/4)

Ms Fox is our school's SENCo. After the half term break she will be in school every Friday and every other Tuesday.

Term Dates 2026-27 - Some families have queried our term dates for the academic year 2026/27. Please follow this link <https://fir-tree-junior-school.secure-primariesite.net/term-dates/> and note the slightly earlier finish times at the end of terms 2, 4 and 6.

Goodbye, Mrs Atkins

We are sorry to say that after over twenty years serving the Fir Tree community, Mrs Atkins will be retiring at the end of this half term. She has contributed hugely to our school, making a real difference to countless young lives. We will all miss her determination to go the extra mile, her infectious enthusiasm and her kindness. It goes without saying we will all miss her, and I know you will, too. Here's to a relaxing retirement filled with lots of new adventures!

With warm regards,

Mr Knight


Happy Retirement



Fir Tree have been extremely lucky to have known the lovely Mrs Atkins for the last 21 years! She will be greatly missed by staff, children and parents alike. We are sorry to see you go Mrs Atkins but we wish you a happy and peaceful retirement



Here are some of the messages from the children...

- *I love it when you teach our class, you have so much kindness in your heart*
- *I remember when I showed you my work and you were so proud of it*
- *Your IT lessons are the best and make me feel like an able leader*
- *Now I am safe because you taught me how to be safe online*
- *Thank you for all you do. You always try your best to be nice all the time*
- *You always help others in need, for that you're a very great teacher*
- *I remember when you helped me when I was stuck on the Ipad*
- *I remember when you helped me and my brother because we had had an argument at home*
- *You are one of the best teachers ever and I will really miss you*

If you were lucky enough to get tickets to this year's amazing performance of Hansel and Gretel at the Corn Exchange, you may have spotted two of our Year 5 students performing; both as maids, then as a fox (Leila) and as a magpie (Minnie). The girls spent many evenings and weekends in rehearsals, but thoroughly enjoyed the experience of performing in the pantomime this month!



A big shout out to Kole in year 4, who also took part in the pantomime. Well done everybody!



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 13 th Februaury	Wear Pyjamas to School Day
Friday 13 th February	PTA Cake Sale – 3:15pm
Friday 13 th February	End of Term 3 – School finishes at 3:15pm
16 th – 20 th Februaury	Half Term
Monday 23 rd February	Term 4 begins
Thursday 26 th February	PTA AGM online – all welcome
Thursday 5 th March	World Book Day
Friday 6 th March	Author visit
Friday 6 th March	PTA Quiz night
Friday 20 th March	Red Nose Day
Mon 23 rd – Friday 27 th March	Travelling Book Fair in school
Friday 27 th March	End of Term 4 – School finishes at 2:15pm
30 th March to 10 th April	Easter Holidays
Monday 13 th April	Term 5 begins

Penny in year 4 has been attending an art class outside of school since September and has loved learning the techniques. The children trace the outline of the animal and then they use specialized pencils to do the texture, shading and colour.

Here are her two favourite pictures completed to date:



Looking for art inspiration? Feel free to contact Hana on:

hanafitzsimmonsart@gmail.com

Winnie and Rosalyn from Y6, Emily from Y5 and Imogen from Y3 performed in a Stagecoach Performing Arts production of 'Beauty and the Beast Jr'.

Imogen played a wolf, Rosalyn and Winnie were villagers and Emily was Chip the teacup.

Each part had multiple lines and solos. Although there were some changes along the way, they excelled.

Well done girls on your 5 star performances!



News from Silver Birch – Year 6

Silver Birch class had an unforgettable history experience when they attended an embalming workshop led by the legendary Tutan-sian-mun, Claire-o-patra and Akenathan, stepping back into the world of Ancient Egypt. With impressive focus and enthusiasm, every child successfully achieved their Level 2 mummification qualification, confidently extracting the brain, making neat incisions to remove the organs with precision, and approaching each task with calm curiosity. They showed remarkable patience during the most time-consuming stage, carefully wrapping every finger and toe in layer upon layer of bandages, proving that no detail was too small. By the end of the workshop, the class had demonstrated excellent teamwork, steady hands, and a mature attitude toward this fascinating and unusual historical practice.



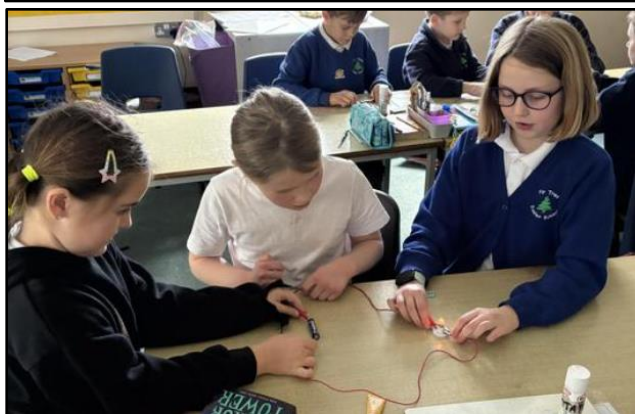
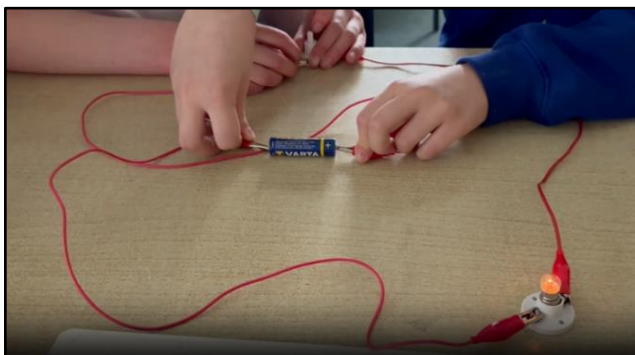
New from Cherry – Year 6

Cherry Class had a great day visiting the Ashmolean Museum as part of our history learning. In the morning, we explored different galleries and came across a wide range of fascinating objects. These included Saxon coins, Guy Fawkes' lantern, the gloves of Elizabeth I and even a full suit of samurai armour. Cherry had a great time exploring and seeing what the Ashmolean had to offer. In the afternoon, we took part in an *Egypt Explorers* workshop. The children searched for artefacts linked to everyday life in Ancient Egypt and learned how historians and archaeologists use objects to find out about the past. They also had the opportunity to handle real artefacts, see mummies, and explore a shrine dedicated to a pharaoh. The trip was an excellent way to introduce our new Ancient Egypt project and gave the children some great first-hand experience of historical artefacts.



News from Ash – Year 4

In Ash class, we have been learning about electrical circuits. We have learnt that in order for the bulb to turn on, you need a cell (battery) and a continuous flow of electricity. Therefore, the circuit needs to be complete with no gaps. On the class page of the website, there are pictures and videos from our circuits lesson. Once we had created a successful circuit, we added in a switch to the circuit so we could turn the light bulb on and off.



News from Chestnut – Year 5

As part of our project 'Our Planet, Our Choices', Chestnut class were lucky to be visited by local wildlife expert, Pim Young. We looked at lots of different birds nests and learned that each species of bird create their own unique nests (depending on materials available, their beak design and their location).

Outside in the forest and at the bottom of the school field, we listened as carefully as we could for the different bird sounds around us. Then, we used the Merlin App to detect and identify lots of different birdsong in our local environment; we heard lots of birds including Robins, Blue Tits and Great Tits. We also used binoculars and a magnifier to investigate nature in the distance and up close. We are going to try to listen more for birds on our way to school as they are really active in the mornings!

Written by Cora



News from Maple – Year 4

This term in Maple Class, the children have been thoroughly enjoying their history topic on the Tudors. They have been learning all about the monarchy and what it meant to be a king or queen during this fascinating (and often brutal!) period of history. We have studied the six wives of King Henry VIII and explored their unfortunate fates. To top it all off, this week we have learned about Tudor crime and punishment. Many of us agreed that we are very glad to be alive today and not living back then! However, the children did enjoy discussing the idea of "time travelling" just to experience a day or two either in the royal court or as a member of Tudor working-class society.

In RE this term, our focus has been on Jesus and his teachings. We have looked at several stories from Luke's Gospel, exploring their meanings and the morals behind them, and considering how these lessons can still apply in our modern world today.

In Maths, the children have been working hard on short multiplication and developing a strong understanding of why knowing their times tables is so important. I have been really impressed with the progress they are making and how much more confident they are becoming.

In English, the children have been having great fun learning the art of persuasion through letter writing. They have explored techniques such as flattery, boasting, highlighting benefits, and even a little (tongue-in-cheek!) blackmail and bribery to strengthen their arguments.

Please continue to support your child as much as possible with reading, times tables, and spelling at home—it really does make a huge difference.

Active Communities Summer of Fun

17 - 19 FEBRUARY

Low cost and free activities during February half term:

- New Age Kurling
- Football
- Boccia
- Family Dance Parties
- Xplorer
- Born to Move

and more.



SCAN ME



For more information and to book, visit southandvale.gov.uk/holidayactivities or scan the QR code

[/ActiveCommunitiesSouthandVale](https://www.facebook.com/ActiveCommunitiesSouthandVale)



Attendance

There are 190 days in a school year



100% >> Perfection

% equates to

4

Missed school days

98% >> Impressive

8

Missed school days

96% >> Good

9

Missed school days

95% >> Nearly there

11

Missed school days

94% >> Needs to improve

19

Missed school days

90% >> Concerns

29

Missed school days

85% >> Serious concern

February Half Term

The North Wall Arts Centre

NW Explorers

Under 8s

Family Dance Party

14 February
10.30am & 1pm

Join us for a 'hip-hopping, toe-tapping' daytime disco for all of the family. Featuring bubbles and balloons, movement activities and dance games, sensory play and face painting! With DJs playing party classics, for you and your little ones.

Tickets Pay What You Feel



NW Inventors

Ages 8-11

Character Creations

16 - 17 February
9am - 12pm

Invent your own characters in this fun, interactive drama workshop: describe and design them, and bring them to life with physicality, facial-expression and voices – then see what happens when they all mix and meet!

Tickets £40

Full bursaries available

Email participation@thenorthwall.com to apply



Book now: thenorthwall.com

PART OF WALLINGFORD WINTER BLUES

Funky Friday

AT WALLINGFORD FAMILY CENTRE



1.30pm – 2.30pm

Doors open at 1.15pm

Friday 20th February

SCAN TO BOOK



Book your FREE tickets here:
wallywinterbluesjazz.co.uk/whatson

February Half Term

THE STORY MUSEUM

Scan to book



- Author events: Malorie Blackman, Bethan Woollvin
- Family Theatre Shows: *Two Young Dragons* & *Snow White*, *Rose Red*, *Brown Bear*
- Story Explorers: Skills workshop days for 8-12 year olds
- Family workshops: design a video game character!
- Visit the Galleries - Narnia, Wonderland & The Story Arcade ...and lots more

Tel: 01865 807600 storymuseum.org.uk

Registered charity no. 1107809

THE GREAT WALLINGFORD PANCAKE RACE!

TUESDAY 17th OF FEBRUARY



HOME OF THE LEGENDARY Golden Frying Pan

THE PANCAKE RACE
WALLINGFORD MARKET PLACE,

Registration from 10am,
Childrens races start 10:15am, Adult Race 10:30am
Bring a Frying Pan to Enter.



GRAPE & MINDS



For info call John on 07981 328326