



Dear Families,

I hope this newsletter update from school finds you well as we head into the second half of term 2.

Contractors are now on site and are making good progress with the work to convert existing classroom space into an Early Years Unit which is due to open to Reception age children in September 2026. Perhaps you or someone you know is looking for a Reception place for next September? We will be hosting our fifth parent/carer tour on Thursday 8th January (9.30-11). Please contact us to arrange a space on this. A reminder that the deadline for applications is Thursday 15th January. Applications are made via the Oxfordshire County Council website.

Recently, a learning walk was carried out by our school's ODST Advisor. I am pleased to report that it was noted our school is a calm and purposeful place in which to learn. Relationships are underpinned by kindness and respect and work is generally well presented. A big thank you to our wonderful pupils and staff for creating such an environment.

This term's value is kindness. We unpick a different value each half term in assemblies, in lessons and in other shared settings. The value for term 3 is aspiration.

Our committed group of PTA volunteers have been working very hard behind the scenes in preparation for the Christmas Fayre on Friday 28th November – we hope to see lots of you there.

You will have received some communications from school recently about an event that will be taking place in school on Thursday 11th December (16.15-17.15). This is linked to the Smartphone Free Childhood campaign which we are very much in support of. We hope to see you on the 11th when we aim to provide you with information to enable you to make informed decisions about your child and their use of technology. We hope that lots of you can attend to find out more about this very important work.

Other important events are coming, including our carol concerts on Monday 15th December and Christmas dinners, which are scheduled for Tuesday 9th and Wednesday 10th December.

A reminder that school finishes for the Christmas break at 14.15 on Friday 19th December. Monday 5th January is an INSET day so term starts for pupils at the usual time on Tuesday 6th January.

With warm regards,

Mr Knight

A proud moment for Benjamin in Silver Birch who carried the flag for the Remembrance Parade for Cubs on 9th November.



**Christmas Craft Fayre
Raffle Tickets on sale
now!
Scan the QR code to
buy**



A massive thank you to Huw, Ellie, Katie and David, (the saxophone quartet members) for performing a brilliant mini-concert for our children on Friday 14th November. It was engaging, through audience participation, reflective, educational and responsive to our children's reactions and interests. The children enjoyed clapping along to 'Hornpipe from Fantasia on British Sea Songs', listening out for specific rhythms in 'Libertango' by Astor Piazzolla and also joining in with 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow' which they know from our Friday singing sessions.

We are extremely grateful to Elinor Carter for organising the event, and Wallingford Chamber Music for funding this live and memorable experience. Quotes from the children:

"During the show, I felt like I was being told a story and I felt calm, relaxed, happy and warm inside"

"I felt really happy and excited. Thank you for that performance, it was the best music I have ever listened to!"

"My favourite piece was Over the Rainbow."

"I was so excited I was buzzing! I love music!"

"I didn't know that the sax came in different sizes. The biggest one made very low notes."

"I had heard and seen the clapping piece before at the Proms on TV."

If your child is inspired and interested in learning to play the saxophone, they can learn during school time with Judith Atkins who can be contacted on Judith.MusicTeacher@gmail.com



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

| | |
|---|---|
| Friday 28 th November | PTA Christmas Craft Fayre |
| 1 st – 3 rd December | Y6 Bikeability – Group 2 |
| Tuesday 9 th December | Y5/6 Christmas lunch |
| Wednesday 10 th December | Y3/4 Christmas lunch |
| Monday 15 th December | Christmas Carol Concert – time tbc |
| Friday 19 th December | End of term 2 – School finishes at 2:15pm |
| Monday 22 nd December – Friday 2 nd January | Christmas Holidays |
| Monday 5 th January | INSET Day – School closed |
| Tuesday 6 th January | Term 3 begins |

News from Willow – Year 3

This half term, Willow have been exploring poetry. First, we identified key features like onomatopoeia, alliteration, repetition, and similes. We looked at some good examples of poems to see how these techniques are used effectively. Then, we experimented with them in our own writing. It's been exciting to see the creativity emerging as everyone explores how language can create sound, rhythm, and vivid imagery.

We focused our poems around Bonfire Night, using these techniques to capture the crackle of fireworks, the sparkle of flames, and the excitement of the night.

Here are some examples:

Whoosh, Zip,
Crimson sparks spiral,
Like ribbons spinning in the sky,
On Guy Fawkes Night.
By Tejiri



Bang, Whoosh,
Twisting rockets twirl,
Like stringy spaghetti,
On Fireworks Night.
By Alex



Crackle, Bang,
Shimmering sparks shower the sky,
Like a pride of lions pouncing,
On Bonfire night.
By Matilda

News from Silver Birch – Year 6

Year 6 have been looking into the history of World War I, researching what life was like for people both at home and on the front line. Pupils explored a range of sources to build a deeper understanding of the experiences of soldiers, families, and communities during this time. As part of their learning, the children produced powerful poems written from different perspectives, including those of someone waiting at home, an English soldier, and a German soldier. They also created thoughtful artwork inspired by the period and wrote detailed non-chronological reports to share the knowledge they had gained.



I've had a day so good
I've had a long day, stood on my feet, my work is getting
my work getting, shells is finally coming
No stars turning so low my chest is tight
but im playing my part to help this fight

My thoughts turn to you and the revolutions here in
my worries and fears being me to tears
Is the glue that he survived?
Thoughts of you make me cry
my skin itches the thought of him in the ditches
he has sent me a letter
no being and better

His blood for a cross
because the death of his boss
I go to bed head full of thoughts
I picture him in a grave taking his breath
I hear distant booms it fills me with a loom
While laying in bed with an empty room
I hope up to see planes flying high
in the rainy night sky

I fall asleep hours pass
I wake to the noise of footsteps on the path
could it be you at last?
I ran to the edge and open it
and i fall to the floor
I see the hand reach down with missing a piece

☆ Love
peter

News from Year 5

During our visit to the Black Country Living Museum, Year 5 discovered what life was really like in Victorian times. These were some of our key learning reflections from our visit:

1. **Hard Work Every Day:** Many Victorian adults – and even children – worked extremely long hours in factories, mines or workshops. Jobs were tough, noisy and often very dangerous; we learned about canaries being used to detect poison in the mines and about mine collapses leading to lots of deaths.
2. **School Was Very Strict:** Victorian children went to school where teachers used chalkboards, sat pupils in rows, and expected perfect behaviour. Punishments were common and included the cane which was used for hitting children.
3. **Homes Were Small and Simple:** Most families lived in small houses with no electricity, no bathrooms (the toilets were outside and the only water came from a pump in the street) and only a coal fire to keep warm.
4. **Playtime Was Different:** Victorian children didn't have electronic toys. Instead, they enjoyed simple games like skipping, marbles, hoops and homemade toys.
5. **Shopping Was Old-Fashioned:** Instead of supermarkets, people visited small shops like the bakery, the sweet shop and the hardware store—just like the ones at the museum. We discovered sweets were coloured with really unusual ingredients (such as arsenic to make them green and rust to make them orange!).

The museum helped us step back in time and really understand how different Victorian life and childhood were from today; thank you to the adults who accompanied us on the visit and to the families for their financial support.



News from Year 6

After an amazing week of training, led by Mr Mule, our Sport Leaders are now officially qualified and ready to run breaktime activities. Not only did they think about the qualities of a good leader, they learned over thirty games to teach the younger years and also invented their own games. Their final task was to teach the Year 3 classes their invented games and what a successful morning it was! The year 3's were incredibly complimentary about the games they played and they all agreed that the Sport leaders did a terrific job of leading. The enthusiasm and positive encouragement from our older pupils was a delight to see, and we are looking forward to see the Sport Leaders in action on a regular bases.

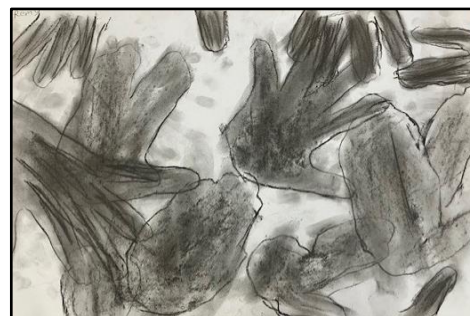


News from Cedar – Year 3

In writing recently, we have been exploring poetry examples to do with Halloween and Fireworks Night. We rehearsed performing examples with expression and suitable pace to create pictures in the listeners head, before having a go at writing our own. We focused also on learning about effective writing techniques, including the use of onomatopoeia, alliteration and similes. See if you can find examples of these in the poem below written beautifully by a member of our class.

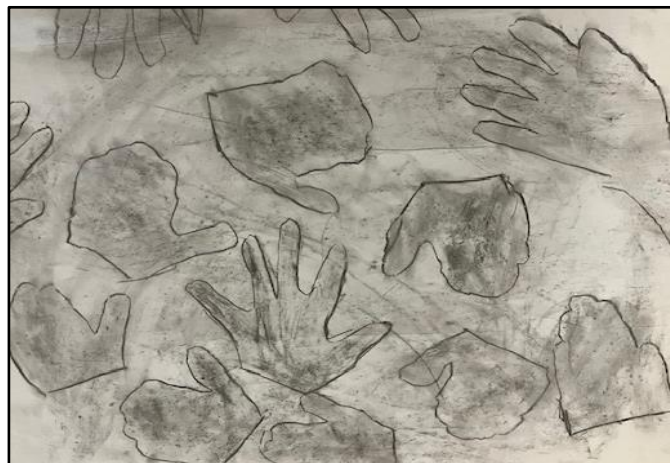
Firework Night

Boom! Crackle! Spit! Tumbled the beautiful fireworks
Bang! Pop! Spat the fire to roast marshmallows
Fizz! Pop! Spins the Catherine wheel
Fizz! Whoosh! Scarlet red rockets soar, delicate diamonds showing in the sky
Whish! Bang! Watch the Roman candle flicker and flash
Shooting into the air like a bullet
Bang! Boom! Fireworks zoom in the sky like a rocket zooming high
Whoosh! Spit! Popping bits whoosh from the musical fire. By AH – Year 3



As part of our Stone Age project we have been reflecting on early drawings. We imagined how people in the Stone Age communicated, what they had to say and even what they had available to use. Some of the real earliest works were in deep caves and featured bison, horses, hunting scenes and handprints. They were generally created using natural earthy colours from minerals and charcoal, and applied by using fingers or twigs. Many real examples can be seen in France, Spain and Africa and can be over 40,000 years old.

Armed with a piece of charcoal, piece of paper and the instruction to use a hand only, children created many different hand shapes, shades and different messages. What do you think these pictures communicate?



News from Ash – Year 4

Year 4 recently visited Wallingford Museum to learn about Wallingford Castle. During the visit, everyone had a talk about the model of Wallingford Castle, handled replicas of what people living the castle would have used day to day, and used clues to find artefacts from the Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Norman time period. Following this, we walked to Castle Meadows to see the remaining part of Wallingford Castle. It was a fantastic trip and want to say a huge well done to all the children for their fantastic behaviour and contributions throughout.



News from Maple – Year 4

In Maple Class this term, we have delved into the digestive system, a vital aspect of our Year 4 science curriculum. This topic enhances students' understanding of human biology and its relevance to health. Our creative writing project, where students write from the perspective of food, has ignited their imagination and enriched their scientific vocabulary. We encourage parents to discuss these topics at home to further enhance learning.

Additionally, our trip to Wallingford Museum provided hands-on historical engagement, allowing students to explore artefacts and deepen their understanding of history. Children were able to explore artefacts, try on some costumes and explore the 'castle' model (and the real one).

We are also proud to showcase the high-quality homework completed this term, highlighting our commitment to reinforcing learning outside the classroom. Finally, we have been mastering our times tables, a crucial skill that supports problem-solving and overall achievement in mathematics. Please continue to support your children with learning their times tables; this is crucial for not only the Year 4 Multiplication Check but also for fluency with more complex maths in Upper Key Stage 2.



Sleeping Beauty

Pantomime

Cholsey Great Hall

Friday 12th December at 7pm
Saturday 13th December 2025 at 2pm and 7pm

Tickets Now on Sale

www.cholseygreathall.co.uk/events-1

Support is available 24/7 even during Christmas...

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|--|---|---|
| Call: 0800 1111 <small>Call anytime if under 18</small> | Call: 116 123 <small>Call anytime</small> | <small>Because no one should face death or grief alone</small> sueryder.org <small>Visit anytime online</small> |
| Call: 111 <small>Call anytime*</small> | Call: 0800 9951000 <small>Call anytime**</small> | Text: 8528 <small>Call anytime</small> |

FIR TREE JUNIOR SCHOOL

SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

An open and supportive space to discuss the challenges and pressures surrounding children's smartphone useage

THURSDAY 11TH DECEMBER
16:15 - 17:15

We aim to give parents and carers clear, balanced information to support informed decisions for their families. Parents and carers from both Fir Tree and St Nicholas are welcome, though we cannot accommodate children. All Fir Tree teaching staff will be attending, and we hope as many families as possible can join this important conversation.

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