

Fir Tree Newsletter



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September 2025 Issue 376

Dear Families,

I hope this update from school finds you well.

The new term has started well. Pupils are settling well into life in new classes with new routines and expectations. Indeed, tours for prospective parents have commenced, with many commenting favourably on the calm and purposeful environment my colleagues have developed. Further parent tours are planned and you can arrange to join us for one by contacting our school office.

This term, we are focusing on the value of respect, and have been sharing definitions and other thoughts with our pupils. Try to ask your child(ren) about this when you get the chance. Values are important positive principles which guide our behaviour. Each half term we focus on a different value, while not discounting the value from the previous term. The value for term 2 is kindness. We have a seventh value, sustainability, which is overarching which means it is a something we unpick and place 'under the microscope' at regular intervals.

Our School Council will resume shortly, with newly elected school councillors keen to take up their new roles! We will update you on their activities as the term progresses.

There are lots of opportunities for you to find out how your child is doing, including settling in reports and parents' evenings. We look forward to working in partnership with you during these important moments and beyond.

Our dedicated team of PTA volunteers are working hard behind the scenes organising important upcoming events. We thank them for their commitment and we look forward to sharing dates with you in the coming weeks.

Please contact the school office if your child has an achievement or accomplishment from outside of school – we will take great pleasure in mentioning it in our newsletter!

You will see me on the school gate most mornings and afternoons – please approach me if you have any questions or queries.

Best regards,
Mr Knight

During the summer holidays, Harry in Sycamore class was determined to climb up Snowdon to raise money for cancer research in memory of his grandad who sadly passed away in February. He raised a massive £400 for Cancer Research UK charity to help others. We are incredibly proud of you Harry.



Huge congratulations to Ronan in Year 4 whose story, The Burglar, has won joint first prize in the 8-12 category in Wallingford Bookshop's Mystery Writing Competition. Great work, Ronan!



News from Ash – Year 4

During our netball PE lessons we have so far learnt the importance of bringing the ball to our chest once caught, different passes and how to successfully 1:1 mark during a match. We have explored being an attacker, feeder and defender. Going forward, we will begin playing High Five Netball with 5 positions. We look forward to continuing our learning in Netball and practising our shooting skills.

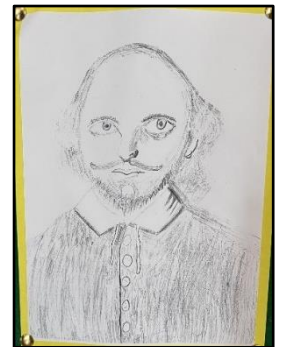
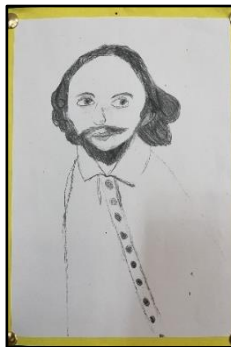


DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Mon 29 th Sept – Fri 3 rd Oct	SEN review phonecalls
Thursday 2 nd October	9:30-11:30am Parent Tour
Tuesday 7 th October	3:30-6:00pm Parent Meetings
Thursday 9 th October	4:00-6:30pm Parent Meetings
Friday 10 th October	Whole School Flu Immunisation Programme
Thursday 16 th October	Berkshire Primary Images – Individual Photographs
Thursday 16 th October	9:30-11:30am Parent Tour
Friday 24 th October	End of term 1 – 3:15pm finish
27 th – 31 st October	Half term
Monday 3 rd November	ODST INSET Day – School closed
Tuesday 4 th November	Term 2 begins
Tues 4 th – Fri 7 th November	Cherry Class Bikeability
Tues 11 th – Fri 14 th November	Silver Birch Bikeability

News from Sycamore – Year 5

Sycamore have had a fantastic start to Year 5 and have been enjoying exploring Hamlet by William Shakespeare. We have held class debates and are about to start writing our first discussion piece which considers a tricky decision for Hamlet to make. In addition to this, we have created our own Shakespeare portraits which have focused on observational drawing and mark-making.



Smartphones

Over the coming weeks and months, we will be sharing important information with parents around internet safety, with a particular focus on smartphone use among children and young people. We encourage you to take a moment to view our new display outside the school office. Your thoughts and feedback are always welcome, and we'd love to hear from any parents who may be interested in forming a group to explore this topic further together. Miss Lloyd

Considering giving your child a smartphone?

Why Pause and Think?



Children's smartphone use is on the rise. The average child has a smartphone by the age of 11. This is a significant increase from just a few years ago. The average child has a smartphone by the age of 11. This is a significant increase from just a few years ago.

What the research tells us:

Research shows that children who use smartphones are more likely to be cyberbullied. Children who use smartphones are more likely to be cyberbullied. Children who use smartphones are more likely to be cyberbullied.

What can we do?

Parents should have a conversation with their child about smartphone use. Parents should have a conversation with their child about smartphone use. Parents should have a conversation with their child about smartphone use.

Join the movement Smartphone Free Childhood

Smartphone Free Childhood is a national campaign to encourage parents to limit their child's smartphone use. Smartphone Free Childhood is a national campaign to encourage parents to limit their child's smartphone use.



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News from Year 3

At the start of the year, both Year 3 classes read the book, *The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds.

This book tells the story of Vashti, a girl who believes she cannot draw but is encouraged by her teacher to simply make a mark and see where it leads. Vashti makes a single dot, signs it, and is surprised when her teacher frames it. This inspires her to create many more elaborate and colourful dots, realizing her own creativity and artistic spirit. The book is a modern classic about self-discovery and confidence, emphasizing that everyone has a creative spirit and that creativity can start with the smallest spark. We used this stimulus in an art lesson to encourage mark making and to talk about growth mindset and believing in yourself. This work is also symbolic of the start of their journey at Fir Tree and making their own mark. Our resultant display can also be seen in the school hall.



Year 3 have had a brilliant beginning to their very first term at Fir Tree. In Science, our topic this term is Rocks. To start our learning journey, Year 3 drew on their own experiences. Working with a partner, they explored their ideas and answered some key questions:

- Where did they find their rock?
- What does it look and feel like?
- Where did they put it?
- Why did they pick that one?
- What do they already know about rocks?



This activity encouraged the children to share their curiosity, make connections, and begin thinking like scientists! In addition, the children have been developing their observation, reasoning and discussion skills. Using an image as a stimulus, we zoomed in very closely before slowly stepping back. At each stage, Year 3 were asked: What do you think the image is? Why? Does it remind you of anything?

They carefully considered the colours, shapes and textures, and reflected on whether their ideas changed as more of the picture was revealed. This led to some wonderfully thoughtful and often surprising responses!

"I think it's ice with a fish on it. The fish is frozen, it is at the market." Imogen

"I think it's moon rock. I watched something about Space, and I think it's something to do with the moon or part of a meteor." Jude

"I think it's salt, but now I have changed my mind and I think it is sand." Gioia

"I think it's a rock pool, before I thought it was ice. There are rocks around it. I can't tell what the white things are." Beth

"My brother has a shelf full of crystals and rocks, it looks like something you'd find in a rock on the beach." Beth

"I think it's grains of rice. It's all white and kind of looks like rice." Teddy

"I think they have zoomed in on a bit of sand. Sand has different colours and crystals." Dot

Year 3 have begun recorder lessons and it is very exciting. We are learning to play with control to make a pleasant sound. To do this we have to play gently, blowing just enough air to make a candle flicker gently from side to side. We have learnt how to check that we are holding the recorder correctly with the left hand at the top. The first note we learn is note B, this is played with the top finger and the thumb at the same time. We should be able to feel the holes under our finger tips. It is also important to sit with good posture, never leaning on a table in case we bash out our teeth! The first piece we are learning is called 'Strictly B'.



We are on a mission to become vocabulary ninjas. We have been exploring synonyms, (words with the same meaning) for 'cold'. We brainstormed many examples and then agreed their place on a scale of intensity from least to most intense. This is the order we decided on.

cool nippy/chilly cold/shivery frosty bitter icy/freezing glacial

Do you agree that these words get colder?

Why not explore other words and their synonyms and become a vocabulary ninja too? E.g synonyms for happy, dark, tired?

Make an application to secondary school



Parents of children born between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2015 (inclusive) need to apply for a secondary school place for September 2026.

Applications can now be submitted for children to transfer from Year 6 to Year 7 at secondary school for September 2026 start.

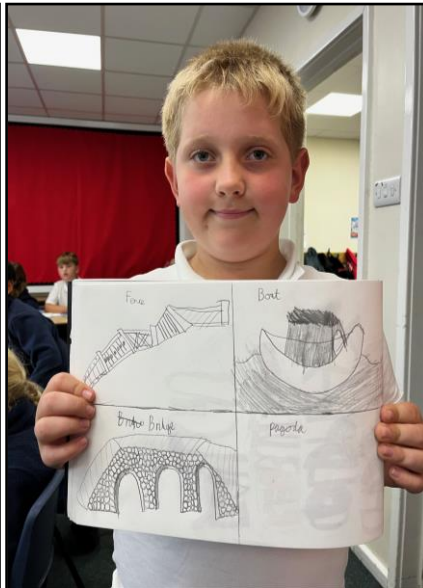
Parents/carers should visit the secondary school webpages for all relevant information and to apply online at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/secondaryadmissions

The deadline for receipt of completed applications is 31 October 2025, any applications received after that date will be late. Admissions will notify parents of the outcome of their application on National Offer Day 2 March 2026.

News from Chestnut – Year 5

Chestnut Class have settled brilliantly into Year 5 and Mrs Ash and Mrs Tremlett have been impressed with their creativity, perseverance and teamwork as they've explored new topics, books and experiences.

In Art, we developed our sketching skills to design our own willow pattern plates using key images from the story.



The class have enjoyed exploring the origins of the Willow Pattern plate through a beautiful picture book by Allan Drummond. We unpicked the vocabulary of the story, summarised and sequenced the events and used this knowledge to help us create our own comic strips of the tale.

We loved applying our maths skills to count in tenths whilst learning how to pick up (and eat!) mini marshmallows with chopsticks.



Jesse from Cherry class and his brother Buddy from Cedar class competed in the 3rd leg of the 4 Nations Kickboxing Tournament representing England in Glasgow during the summer holidays. Jesse achieved bronze in his category and Buddy placed 5th in his first category but then fought back in his second category bringing home a gold. Well done boys.



Echo-coding at Wigod Way Family Centre

Wigod Way Wallingford Family Centre would like to share an exciting opportunity for pupils who are curious about coding, technology, and the natural world.

They are running a **free hands-on workshop**:

Echo-Coding: Wildlife Meets Technology!

 Wigod Way Wallingford Family Centre

In this engaging session, children aged 7–11 will:

- Learn to code a **micro: bit** (a pocket-sized programmable computer).
- Explore how **bats use echolocation** and why they're vital to our ecosystems.
- Discover how technology can help us **understand and protect wildlife**.
- Experiment with **secret radio messages through coding**.

No prior coding experience is needed – just curiosity and enthusiasm!

The event is free to attend (donations welcome). Please note: spaces are limited, and we ask families to cancel if they can't attend, otherwise a £25 no-show fee applies.



 Booking link: <https://batcodingclub.eventbrite.co.uk/>

News from Silver Birch – Year 6

Year 6 have thoroughly enjoyed our Take One Picture topic this term, where we used a painting by Henri Matisse as the inspiration for our learning about bees.

Over the week, the children carried out fascinating research into bees and used this knowledge to write detailed reports. They also produced some superb sketches, capturing the delicate detail of these amazing insects.

As part of our art work, the children explored batik, using the shapes of honeycombs and warm yellow and orange tones to inspire their designs. The results were vibrant and creative pieces of art that really showcased their talents.

We were especially fortunate to welcome a local beekeeper into school. The children were captivated as they observed a live hive – complete with a queen bee! To finish the session, they even took part in a honey-tasting activity, comparing the flavours of local honey with shop-bought varieties.

It was a fantastic week of learning that brought together science, art, and real-world experiences, leaving Year 6 truly buzzing with excitement!



News from Cherry – Year 6

Cherry Class have been busy making our own pumpkins in the style of the artist Yayoi Kusama. She is famous for using bright colours and covering her work in spots.

We started by shaping our pumpkins out of clay. When they were dry, we painted them carefully and then added black dots to make them look just like Kusama's.

Our finished pumpkins look amazing – colourful, spotty and full of personality! We loved learning about a new artist and linking it to our Take One Picture project.



WANTED

Do you have any of these items cluttering up your cupboard space? We can make use of them!

Wool, fabrics, buttons, beads, sewing needles, threads and yarn, newspapers, clean men's shirts to be used as painting aprons, jam jars, old magazines with colour pictures for collage, clean old socks suitable for sock puppets, string or ribbon



Please hand any items to Mrs Giles or the office
Thank you