

PRESTLEY POST

Spring Term - 14.02.2025



HORIZONS
EDUCATION TRUST



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Dear Families,

2025 is now well underway, and while our vision and aspirations for our learners remain unchanged, the new year has brought a definite progression in feelings of community and belonging. I am very lucky to be able to visit our learning spaces on a daily basis and have felt a great spirit in the air since pupils and staff returned to school. Though we are still a young school, our community feels so much more embedded. Routines have been established and a deep understanding of our pupils' needs has led to significant learning and progress.

You will see in the following pages that in class, pupils are busy and working hard, while staff refine our curriculum to enable meaningful participation for all pupils. I am sure you are all happy to see the regular updates on Earwig of all the progress they are making towards their targets.

This term continues to be exciting, with more opportunities for our pupils to engage in community learning and partnerships developing with local schools and businesses. Our School Council is collaborating with the community garden project and partnering with Spring Common School on joint projects, fostering unity and shared learning. We are grateful for the donation of bikes from the local community and businesses in Alconbury Weald, promoting physical activity and outdoor learning. Special thanks to AM Fresh for their weekly fruit donation and assistance in planting 150 tree saplings planned for March, creating a vibrant forest school area (despite it being miniature!). Local businesses are offering work-related learning sessions for our KS3 and future KS4 students, providing valuable career insights and practical skills.

I want to thank you all for your continued support. Parental partnership is crucial, and we are blessed to have such supportive families. Very much looking forward to seeing you all at our open classroom day, parents evening or parent workshops next term.

Have a lovely half-term break!

Caroline



Our Prestley Family



Prestley Parent and Carer voice

We are grateful for all the communications received and any feedback you share as Parents and Carers. We are excited to invite you to the following events after the half term:

- 13/03 - Parent/Carer Makaton Workshop
- 19/03 - Parent/Carer Coffee Morning
- 25/03 - Parent/Carer Evening
- 04/04 - Parent/Carer Engagement Afternoon

Further information regarding these events will be shared with you closer to the dates.

Prestley Wood AAG



Our Academy Advisory Group

In order to ensure the safety and well-being of all students, all AAG members must complete safeguarding training. This essential training is conducted online via the NGA and is a requirement alongside having a DBS check. Additionally, Tom Dougherty, our Assistant Head Teacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead, delivered a comprehensive talk at this term's AAG meeting. He discussed safeguarding within the unique context of Prestley Wood Academy, highlighting our ongoing commitment to maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment. We appreciate everyone's cooperation in these vital efforts to protect our students.

Meet the Team

Squire Moorhouse

Having grown up in Peterborough, I moved to Huntingdon over 20 years ago and previously lived in Alconbury Weald for nearly eight wonderful years with my wife, Amanda, and our two amazing children—one of whom attends PWA and absolutely loves it! I'm truly honoured to serve on the board of governors and am genuinely excited to support the school's growth and development in the years ahead.



Our pupils have been with us for half of a school year and are gaining confidence and learning new skills all the time. In Cherry class they are exploring using their own initiative and developing fine and gross motor skills alongside.

In Apple class, we have been improving our focus and concentration. We have been learning about and discovering about different cultures supporting our numeracy and counting at the same time. We have also been utilising our interactive smart board to increase our knowledge of numbers and quantities.

In Pear class, we have been extending and challenging ourselves. We have been learning about 2D shapes and matching them to an outline of that shape. In My Movement, we have been developing our fine and gross motor skills and our persistence to keep trying even if we don't succeed the first time. We have also looked at quantities and fluids filling and emptying containers that our sea creatures can float in.

I wish you all a good break and we will see you for the second half of the year for more learning, and enjoyment and to continue all the exciting work the children have been doing.

Mandy

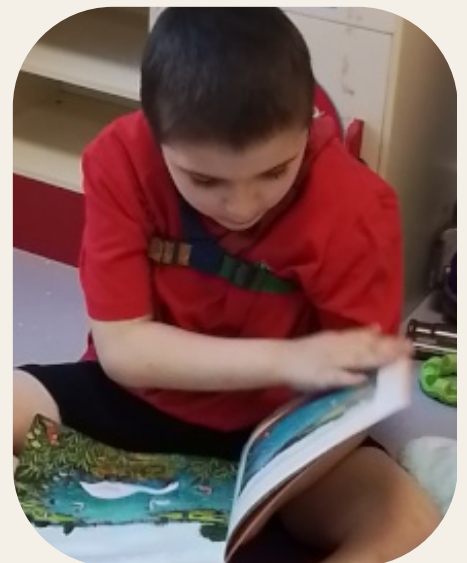
Puzzles: Problem Solving



Yoga: Mind relaxation



Reading: Exploration



A fantastic first term at Prestley Wood

This half term has been filled with exciting and enriching learning experiences across our Key Stage 2 and 3 classes!

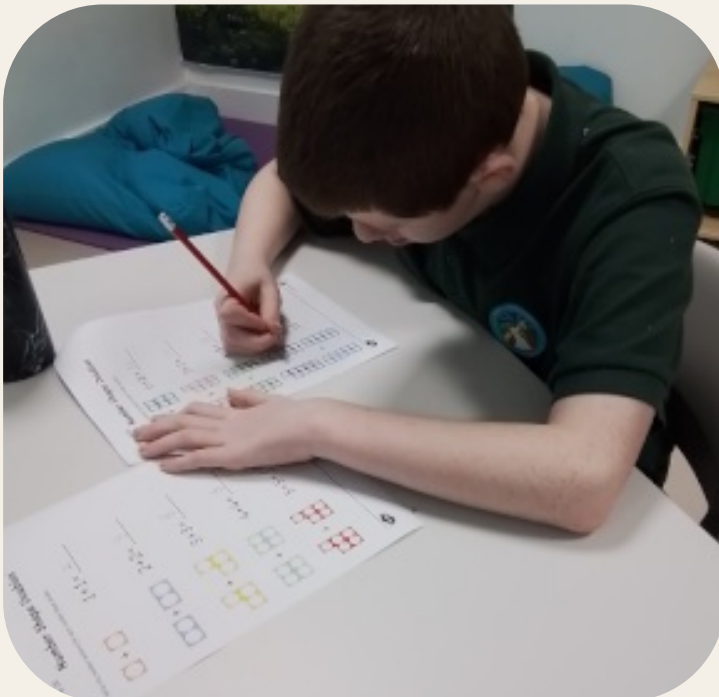
It has been wonderful to see Ash Class exploring Handa's Surprise, where they developed key sequencing and communication skills—an essential part of our curriculum framework. In Magnolia Class, it has been heartwarming to witness the continued strong relationships developing, especially as two new students have settled in so well this term. The Jungle Book is a timeless piece of literature, and using Makaton alongside dressing up as animals brings the story to life for our students in a truly immersive way. Magnolia Class enjoyed their first outing to Pets at Home, which was a resounding success, offering valuable opportunities to develop life skills and explore the concept of pet care.

Meanwhile, Key Stage 3 students have been diving into Katie Morag stories and exploring folklore tales from across the British Isles. I have been particularly impressed by their effort and resilience as they take part in a weekly Pedals bike session at Hinchingsbrooke Park, embracing outdoor learning and developing key skills.

A fantastic half term of growth and engagement—well done to all our pupils!

Tom

Math: Addition in doubles



Nature trip: Wildlife watching



A Parent's Guide to Recognising Signs of Mental Health in Children

During Spring Term 1 we focussed on "Children's Mental Health Week" where students explored a number of activities to support their wellbeing such as memory boxes, mindfulness and emotions activities. As a parent, your child's well-being is your top priority. Recognising signs of mental health issues early can make a significant difference in their development and overall happiness. This guide provides insight into common signs of mental health concerns and how to offer support.

Common Signs of Mental Health Issues in Children

1. Emotional Changes

- Persistent sadness or frequent crying
- Excessive fears or worries that don't seem to go away
- Sudden mood swings or irritability
- Increased anger or frustration over small issues
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness

2. Behavioral Changes

- Withdrawing from family, friends, or social activities
- Sudden changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Engaging in risky or self-destructive behaviours
- Frequent tantrums or excessive defiance
- Avoiding responsibilities such as schoolwork or chores

3. Physical Symptoms

- Unexplained headaches or stomach aches
- Chronic fatigue or lack of energy
- Noticeable weight gain or loss
- Decline in personal hygiene or self-care

5. Self-harm or Suicidal Thoughts

- Expressing thoughts of self-harm or suicide
- Unexplained cuts, bruises, or burns
- Talking about death or making statements like "I wish I weren't here"
- Giving away belongings or saying goodbyes

How Parents Can Offer Support

1. Open Communication

- Create a safe and non-judgmental space for your child to communicate.
- Ask open-ended questions and listen actively.
- Avoid dismissing their feelings; instead, validate their emotions.

2. Encourage Healthy Coping Strategies

- Promote physical activities and outdoor play.
- Teach relaxation techniques like deep breathing.
- Model positive ways to handle stress and emotions.

3. Monitor Social Media and Online Activity

- Be aware of their interactions online, as cyberbullying and exposure to harmful content can affect their mental well-being.
- Encourage face-to-face social interactions and limit excessive screen time.

4. Seek Professional Help When Needed

- If concerns persist or worsen, consider seeking help from a pediatrician or mental health professional.
- Therapy, counselling, or support groups can provide children with essential coping tools.

5. Foster a Supportive Environment

- Ensure your child feels loved, valued, and supported.
- Encourage positive relationships with friends and family.
- Help them build resilience by praising efforts, not just achievements.

Final Thoughts

Recognising and addressing mental health concerns early can lead to better outcomes for your child. By staying attentive, fostering open communication, and seeking support when necessary, you can help your child navigate challenges and thrive emotionally and mentally. If you ever feel overwhelmed, remember that professional resources are available to guide both you and your child toward well-being.



Cherry Class

Cherry class has had a great half term our main topic being 'animals'. We started the term by looking at pets, learning the Makaton signs for 'cat' and 'dog,' and discovering what pets our peers have at home.

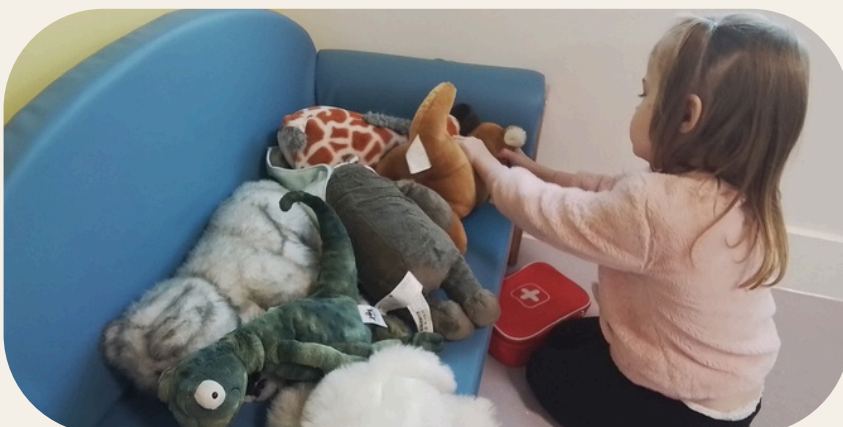
Next, we explored birds and engaged in activities around 'Understanding the World' by making chocolate bird's nests. The children enjoyed the different sensations from this activity, such as the warm melted chocolate on their hands and crumbling up the shredded wheat. We also practiced our number knowledge by counting the chocolate eggs in the nests and ensuring they all had the same amount.

We then moved on to animals that live under the sea, getting very messy with cornflour goo and lots of bubbles (sorry parents!). Some children completed a wooden fish puzzle independently, showing real perseverance and fantastic problem-solving skills. The whole class enjoyed the sand tray, investigating the variety of sea creature molds in the sand, using different sized spades to fill the molds, and working on their hand-eye coordination by gently sliding the molds off the sand.

In our sensory session, we introduced a few new instruments and songs, including a beater. The children were keen to explore the different sounds they could make.

This term has seen some big steps in the independence learning of our children. Many children have been confidently using photo visuals to communicate the need for sensory breaks and have developed good strategies for self-regulation. It is heartwarming to see lovely friendships blossom as the children develop their social skills learning to play with each other and take turns.

Amy



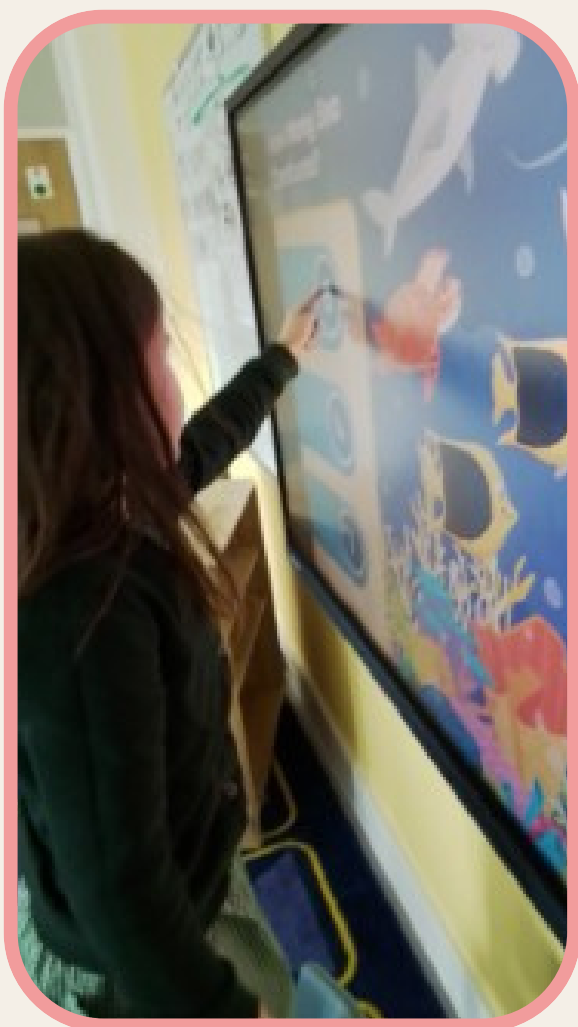
Apple Class



Apple class have based their learning this half term around the topic of 'Under the Sea' and the story of 'Rainbow Fish' by Marcus Pfister. We have enjoyed and responded to the sensory story, anticipating the actions of each story prop items, or beginning to recall what happens next. We have got a little messy with paint and glue to create under the sea art pieces, learning to participate in adult led tasks, as well as strengthen our hand dexterity for fine motor control. We have used our sea creatures to support our reasoning skills, of matching, sorting and counting.



Danielle



Pear Class

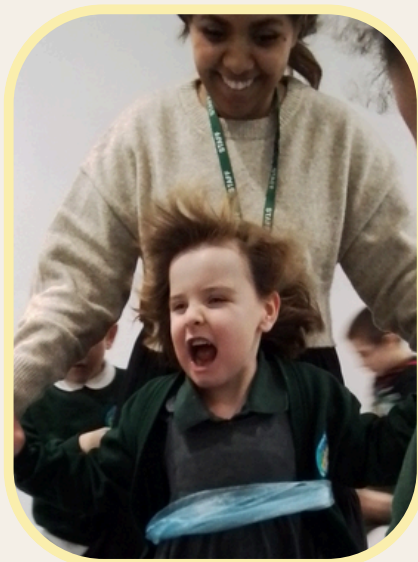
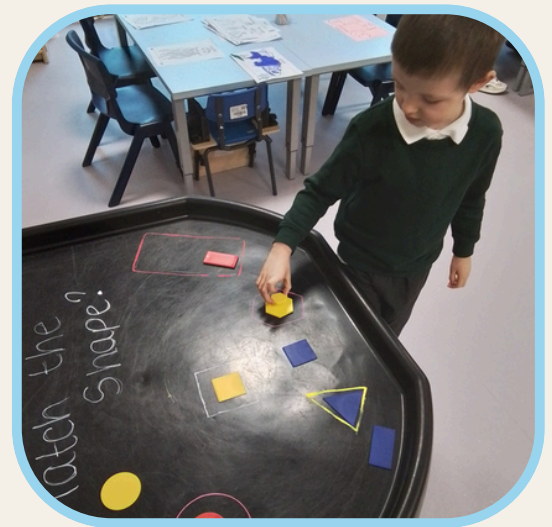


Pear class have had another very busy half term!

This half term our topic has been 'Under the sea' and we have relished learning about all the different sea creatures and have been exploring their habitats and learning their Makaton signs. Our focus story has been based on 'The Rainbow Fish' Pear class have enjoyed listening to the sensory story, looking at all the beautiful colours of the rainbow fish and even taking turns sharing our own shiny scales using our ordering skills to organise these. We have created fantastic art, practicing our fine motor skills by carefully dipping the paint into the pots and squeezing it back out to decorate the rainbow fishes' lovely scales. In addition to this, we enjoyed creating the other characters from the story making a paper chain octopus, tissue paper fish friends, and even a beautiful starfish developing our creative literacy. A few of the children in Pear class confidently took turns to read parts of the story, they managed to get some of the super tricky words in the story right which was very impressive using all our phonic knowledge and skills and we are very proud!

On top of this, we have been learning about the world around us, and celebrating the Chinese New Year! We practised our mark-making skills in glitter by writing numbers 1 to 5 in Chinese, practised our fine motor skills by using tweezers to pick up the noodles and move them into the bowls and even made some lovely lanterns and super scary Chinese dragon masks!

Shirelle



Ash Class



This term in Ash Class, our learning has been focused on the story of 'Handa's Surprise.' written by Eileen Brown.

In 'My Communication,' pupils have been sequencing the story, discussing events, and matching symbols to words.

In 'My Reasoning,' we have been focusing on addition and subtraction, exploring vocabulary and number sentences, and using objects and number lines to support our learning.

'Handa's Surprise' features many fruits, so we have tasted a variety of exotic fruits, including passionfruit, avocado, and mango! This activity encouraged pupils to express their preferences through symbols or verbally.

+ = Have a fantastic half term!

- x

Sinead



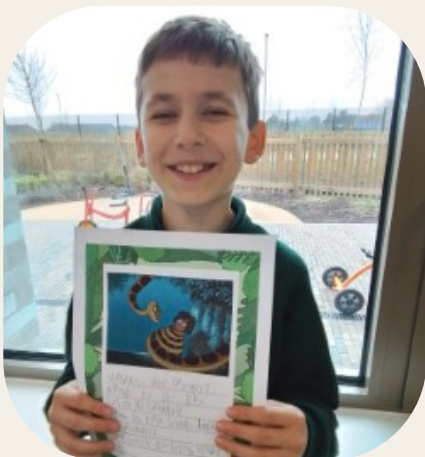
Magnolia Class



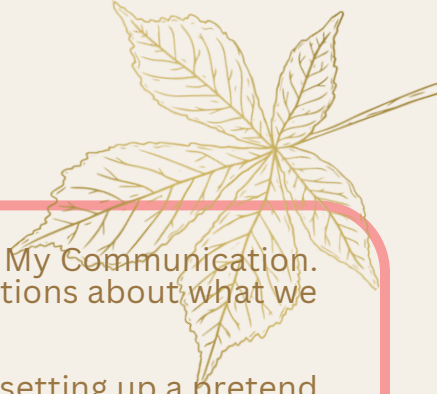
Magnolia class have been learning all about India! We read 'The Jungle Book' by Rudyard Kipling and explored jungle habitats. We sang our jungle song and learnt the Makaton signs for the animals in our song. We were also able to identify the sounds that each jungle animal makes. We dressed up as jungle explorers to explore the forest school area (though we didn't find any tigers!). Additionally, in 'My World' we have looked at how plants grow, including their life cycles, and followed instructions to plant and grow our own plants.

As part of developing functional life skills and exploring 'pets' in our 'Myself' topic, Magnolia class also took a trip to Pets at Home, where we viewed a variety of animals including, rats, fish, hamsters and guinea pigs. In preparation for the trip, we read a social story together and discussed as a class how to stay safe on our trip. All of the children made us very proud by being super listeners!

Katie



Chestnut Class

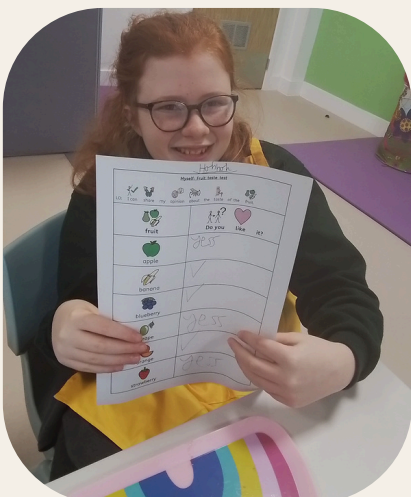


This term, we have been focusing on two Katie Morag stories in My Communication. We explored the plot, setting, and characters, and made predictions about what we think will happen next in the stories.

In My Reasoning, we have been developing our money skills by setting up a pretend shop. We chose and priced items and used fake money to make transactions. We also conducted experiments to see how different materials react in water and participated in a fruit taste test.

Additionally, we have recently started accessing Pedals at Hinchingsbrooke Park, as part of our 'Learning Outdoors' program getting us closer to nature and out of the class room and in to our community.

Rae

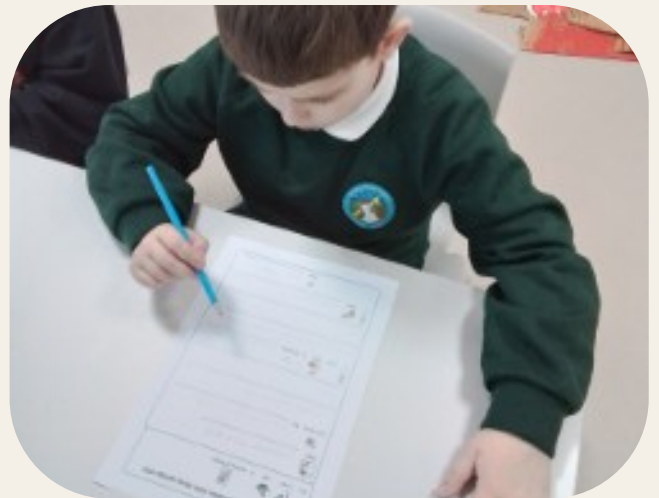


Silver Birch Class



This half term we have started our new topic of The British Isles. We have been exploring two Katie Morag books; Katie Morag Delivers the Mail and Katie Morag and the Two Grandmothers, which are based on a fictional Island of the cost of Scotland. For our My Communication lessons we have been focusing on reading comprehension, and we have made great progress, we have also been looking at different styles of writing such as diary entries and letters. In My reasoning, we have looked at money and used this to support our understanding of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. We have been able to explore the British wildlife in Our world when exploring local nature reserves as well as developing our resilience and personal safety skills in Myself with PEDALs at Hinchingsbrooke Park.

Mili





The School Council has been doing an amazing job engaging with diverse and enriching activities! The Raptor visit and the silent disco were not only fun but also valuable in terms of building social skills and linked in with our learning areas. Conducting a poll to gather student feedback is a great way to ensure that upcoming events and activities resonate with their interests. With charity fundraising, visits out, and visitors in as potential options, you have a fantastic range of opportunities to explore. Here are a few ideas for each option:

Charity Fundraising:

- Organize a themed walkathon.
- Hold a talent show with ticket sales going to charity.
- Arrange a bake sale with homemade treats.
- Plan a charity dress up day

Visits Out:

- Plan a trip to a local areas or historical site.
- Arrange a visit to outdoor and indoor experiences.
- Set up a visit to a nearby school.

Visitors In:

- Invite guest speakers from various professions to talk about their careers.
- Arrange for local artists or musicians to give workshops or performances.
- Host a animal day with hands-on experiences and demonstrations.
- Invite representatives from local community to talk about their work and how students can get involved.

Meet Our School Councilors



Forest School



This term in forest school, we have been exploring ways to encourage more wildlife to Prestley Wood Academy, aligning with our Eco Schools criteria. From 24th to 29th January, we participated in the national 'Big Bird Watch,' which we thought would be a great way to introduce wildlife to our outdoor environment.

To attract birds, we made different types of bird feeders and placed them around the school grounds. We looked at many varieties of bird feeders. Cherry, Apple and Pear made bird feeders from pinecones. The pupils used their fine and gross motor skills to mix the bird seed with lard and then focused on pushing it between the pine scales.

Ash, Magnolia and Chestnut made bird feeders using conkers. There is no indentation in conkers, the pupils had to problem solve and use their fine motor skills to stick the lard mixture and keep it in place.

During our Big Bird Watch, we noticed a rise in the appearance of birds, we spotted some sparrows, long-tailed tits, robins, and crows. This was exciting and we hope to encourage many more!



Beth



Making Bird Feeders



Term Dates 2024 – 2025

*Autumn Term 2024 (3 September to 20 December)

Staff training day: Tuesday 3 September
Staff training day: Wednesday 4 September
Autumn term opens: Thursday 5 September
Half term: 28 October – 1 November
Staff training day: Monday 4 November
Autumn term closes: Friday 20 December

Spring Term 2025 (6 January to 4 April)

Spring term opens: Monday 6 January
Half term: 17 - 21 February
Staff training day: Monday 24 February
Spring term closes: Friday 4 April

Summer Term 2025 (22 April to 23 July)

Summer term opens: Tuesday 22 April
Early May Bank Holiday: 5th May
May Half term: 26 May – 30 May
Staff training day: Friday 11 July
Summer term closes: Wednesday 23 July



Key Dates Spring Term

06/01 Spring Term Opens
08/01 Coffee Morning for Parents/Carers
Interested in Forming PTA
22/01 Parent/Carer Coffee Morning
11/02 Safer Internet Day

Half Term – 17th February to 21st February

24/02 Staff Training Day

25/02 Pupils Back To School
07/03 World Book Day
13/03 Parent/Carer Makaton Workshop
14/03 Red Nose Day
19/03 Parent/Carer Coffee Morning
20/03 Easter Enterprise Community Stall
21/03 World Down Syndrome Day
25/03 Parents Evening
31/03 Autism Acceptance Week
04/04 Parent/Carer Engagement Afternoon

Easter Break – 7th April to 21st April

22/04 Summer Term Opens

