

PRESTLEY POST

Autumn Term - 25.10.2024



HORIZONS
EDUCATION TRUST



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Hello Prestley Wood families,
Welcome to our first ever Prestley Post!
As we wrap up our very first half term in our beautiful, brand-new school, I wanted to share some thoughts and highlights with you.

Highlights of the Term:

- **Our Shiny New Home:** We were very aware of the level of change our pupils faced and knew these changes could cause significant anxieties. We understood that it would take time for them to trust us and feel comfortable in their new surroundings. However, the calm, uncluttered design, sensory rooms, and spacious areas have provided our learners with many opportunities to find peaceful areas to focus and reset. This has been invaluable in ensuring positive learning behaviours are already well established.
- **Amazing Progress:** Our staff have truly come together to embrace our values of challenging our pupils to be the best they can be, all while fostering an environment of curiosity and fun. By focusing on individual needs and celebrating individual differences, we have already built a strong sense of trust. Our pupils feel safe and valued, which means they are ready to learn. It gives me great pleasure to share that all our pupils have made incredible starts. Some who were not accessing full-time education are now not only attending full-time but are thriving and eager to come to school each day. One parent shared with us that her child, who previously never talked about her day, now can't stop sharing stories about what she has done and her new friends. Because every pupil has been able to settle so well, teachers have been able to baseline all our learners and get stuck into teaching and learning, working towards learning and EHCP targets. I hope you have seen evidence of this on Earwig, our electronic progress reporting system.
- **Joyful Activities:** Our curriculum has to be tailored to our learners' interests and needs and closely interlinked with life and functional skills. It has been great to see learners embrace our enrichment opportunities, such as joining the school council, providing hospitality for the Macmillan coffee morning, and supporting each other in our reading and buddy schemes.

Caroline



A Heartfelt Thank You:

Finally want to extend a huge thank you to all our families. We know what a difficult journey it has been to get to our school, and we understand how hard it must be to trust new people to look after your amazing, wonderful children—especially those who are not always able to communicate their experiences. Thank you for not only trusting us but also for working so closely with us to share the unique needs and traits of your children. This collaboration has been incredibly helpful in making the pupils feel seen and understood when they are on site.

The class teams, senior leaders, and I warmly invite you to continue sharing information, achievements, and updates on your children, as well as any ideas you may have to make our community even greater. This is just the start of our journey, and we hope to build our curriculum, community opportunities, and lifelong learning based on the needs of our learners. This requires the voices of our families as well as our pupils. You will see opportunities for this in our Pupil Voice and Parent Voice pages each half term in this newsletter, and we will send termly surveys about your and your pupil's experiences so that we can respond effectively.

Looking toward the future, we are excited to build on the incredible foundations laid in this first half term. I hope your child feels they are already an integral part of our Prestley Wood community, which I, for one, am very proud to belong to.

Wishing you all a great half term.
With warmest regards,

Caroline



Our Prestley Family



Prestley Parent and Carer voice

What a fantastic turnout we had for our first parent and carer coffee morning! It was wonderful to see so many connections being made, networks established and contacts shared.

Moving forward, attendees felt it would be highly beneficial to have repeat opportunities to meet throughout the year, please see the dates of future coffee mornings below. We also discussed the potential for the school to organise meetings around subjects which may be of interest.

Already we have a Makaton afternoon for parents and carers to sign up to but other subjects may be of interest going forward. Suggestions ranged from workshops from the speech and language therapy team to the funding information sharing, and use of visual supports for transitions to sensory regulation strategies. Feel free to email our office with any suggestions you would like to attend and we can look at arranging these in the future.

- Makaton workshop date: Thursday 21st November PM
- Parent/carers coffee morning: Wednesday 22nd January AM
- Parent/carers coffee morning: Wednesday 19th March AM
- Parent/carers coffee morning: Wednesday 11th June AM

Parent and Carer support opportunities

A huge thank you to everyone who has so kindly offered to support us! From raising funds for vital projects to volunteering to read with our pupils, and even helping with ground maintenance (a special shout out to MB's grandparents for their incredible effort in making our turning circle bay usable – it is greatly appreciated!).

We now have a fundraising wish list of vital projects, which we will be sharing with those of you who have pointed us towards potential grants, places you work, or people you know.

There has been some interest in setting up a Parent Teacher Association. The PTA would develop and lead on fundraising opportunities for small projects or pupil events and opportunities (such as a silent disco just before Christmas as requested by our school council!).

We understand it can be challenging to set up such a committee for a special school, as many of our pupils come by transport and families are located some distance away. However, if you are interested in attending an initial meeting, please contact Mandy Walker, assistant headteacher, who will coordinate dates for the first meeting should there be enough interest and parent/carers who can commit to the group.

Thank you once again for your incredible support.

Prestley Wood AAG



Our Academy Advisory Group

We are pleased to have held our first official AAG (Academy Advisory Group) meeting this term. We would like to introduce our AAG members below and please look out for the next newsletter where we will have further information:

Caroline Place – Head Teacher
Squire Moorhouse – Parent Member
Ella Heather – Parent Member
Natalie Leigh-Brown – Community Member
Alison Priddle – Community Member
Amy Dabo – Staff Member
Jo Tregent – Clerk



Since opening in September, it has been a pleasure to welcome all our pupils having already seen them settle in and starting to explore, engage and grow in confidence.

Our first school council meeting was an ideal opportunity to develop the pupil voice and for them to ask questions and make suggestions.

The younger children have settled quickly and making full benefit of all the resources and expertise we have in school. They have been learning across all areas evolving and discovering new ideas. Their confidence has grown to allow them to take risks within their learning environment.

Our staff despite being new have developed well as a team and are looking forward to welcoming you all to events such as our Macmillan coffee morning and Yayday. I hope you all have a restful half term, and we will see you for more fun and learning in November.

Mandy



Online Safety

As your child spends more time online for learning and recreation, it's important to ensure their online safety. The internet is a valuable resource, but it comes with challenges, like exposure to inappropriate content and cyberbullying.

There are some great resources available in the UK to support parents in navigating these concerns. Websites such as **Internet Matters**, **NSPCC Online Safety**, and **Childline** provide guidance on setting parental controls, having open conversations with children about online behaviour, and dealing with any issues they may face. These sites offer practical tips and advice to help keep children safe while making the most of the online world. Let's work together to ensure a safe and positive online experience for all our students at PWA!



Tom

Key Stage 2

It has been a joy to see both Magnolia and Ash classes embrace their new routines and school environments. New friendships have blossomed between students and staff, contributing to a smooth and successful settling-in period. Magnolia class has impressed me with their engaging classwork centred around my favourite novel and film, *Oliver Twist*, as well as their exploration of the Victorian era. Their morning movement activities have also been a highlight, helping them prepare for each day's learning. Meanwhile, Ash class has been actively exploring the school environment through treasure hunts, familiarising themselves with routines, and building strong friendships. It's always a pleasure to witness the kindness and care they show towards one another.

Key Stage 3

Chestnut and Silver Birch classes have been thriving with creative learning, particularly through their theme of Castles and Knights. I've especially enjoyed seeing students use recyclable materials to construct castle models around the tables and chairs in their classrooms. Additionally, the multi-sensory session using *The Colour Monster* book written by Anna Llenas was a fantastic way for students to explore emotions. I have also enjoyed taking the Silver Birch class to local forest locations each week, where we have delved into survival skills. It has been equally rewarding to see them excel alongside Chestnut class during our first Macmillan Coffee Morning, where students developed their work-related learning skills and celebrated the sense of community within our school.

Tom

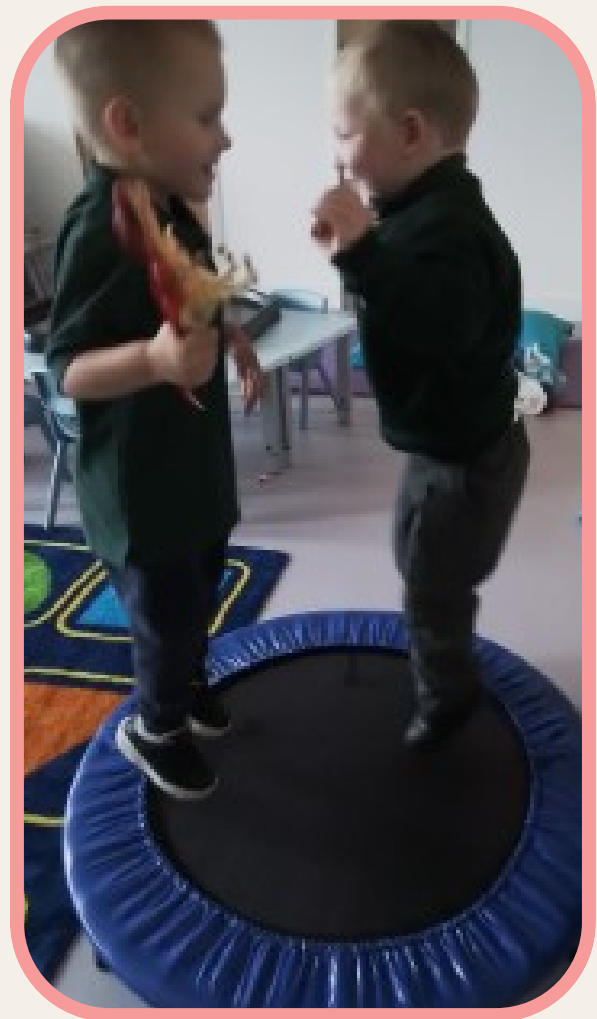


Cherry Class

This term in Cherry class our topic was "All About Me".

The children have enjoyed exploring indoors and outdoors, showing us what they can do and what they enjoy. They have learnt our routines well, and we have focused on introducing a "Hello" song in Circle Time, helping us learn each other's names, and began introducing some Attention Autism sessions. We are really proud of all they have achieved in such a short space of time and will spend the last few weeks exploring with our senses and experiencing some Halloween activities such as making playdough, decorating cookies and painting some bubbly cauldron pictures!

Amy



Apple Class



Apple class have had an amazing start to our new class and school this first half term!

We are so proud of how they have settled so quickly into our class routines and activities. The children are building their confidence and social interactions with opportunities to explore and learn through play activities. We have also been extending our time spent engaging in shared whole class sessions. Here we are engaging some of our Attention Autism sessions.

Danielle



Pear Class

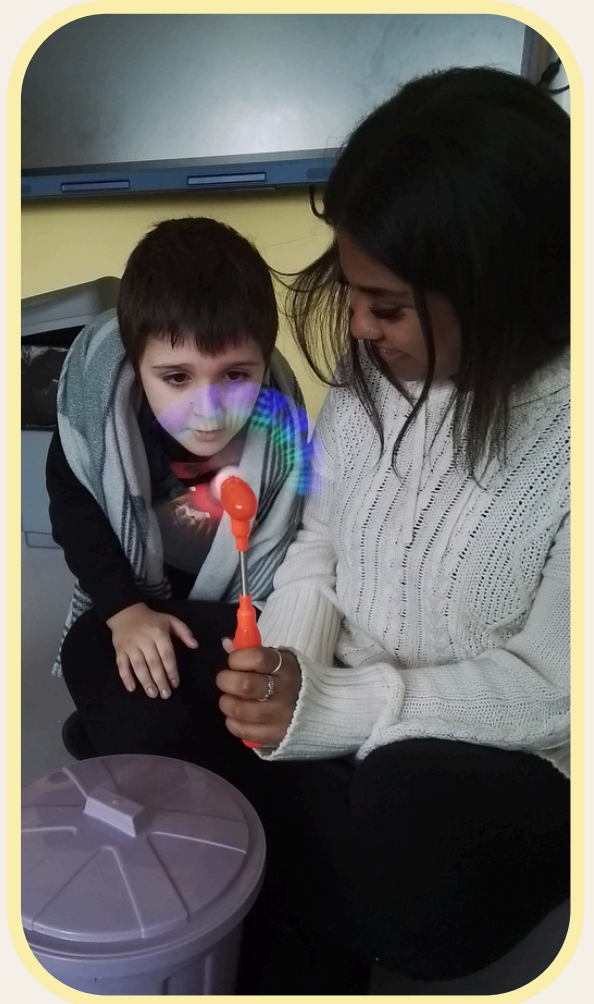


Wow, what a fantastic start Pear class has had at Prestley Wood Academy. They have all settled so very well into the new routines and surroundings and have begun to develop positive social skills with their peers.

This half term our topic has been dinosaurs, and we have had a rawsome time learning all about them. In creativity we made fantastic dinosaur footprints, then stomped through the shaving foam in explorative play. In understanding the world helped rescue them from the ice and even used paint dabbers to dab around the dinosaurs to create their own, then counted them in numeracy. We have had so much learning and exploring in our first half term.



Shirelle



Ash Class

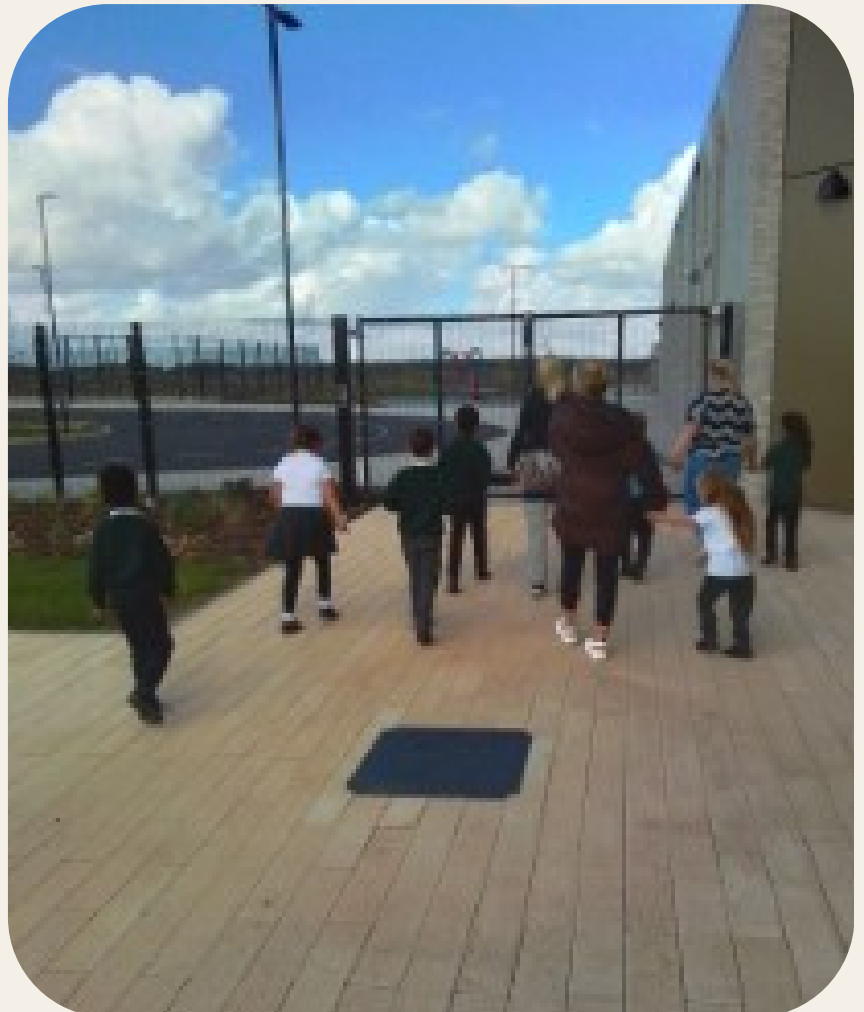


Wow, what a fantastic start to our first half term at Prestley Wood Academy. All pupils in Ash class have settled into the daily routines so well, are developing friendships and working really hard!

Something we would like to share from Ash class is when we went on a treasure hunt around school! We focussed on developing student's skills around navigation, teamwork and problem solving by finding symbols in different areas and working out which rooms or areas they represented. The treasure hunt ended with a box of stickers and bubbles in the playground area. Have a lovely half term!



Sinead



Magnolia Class

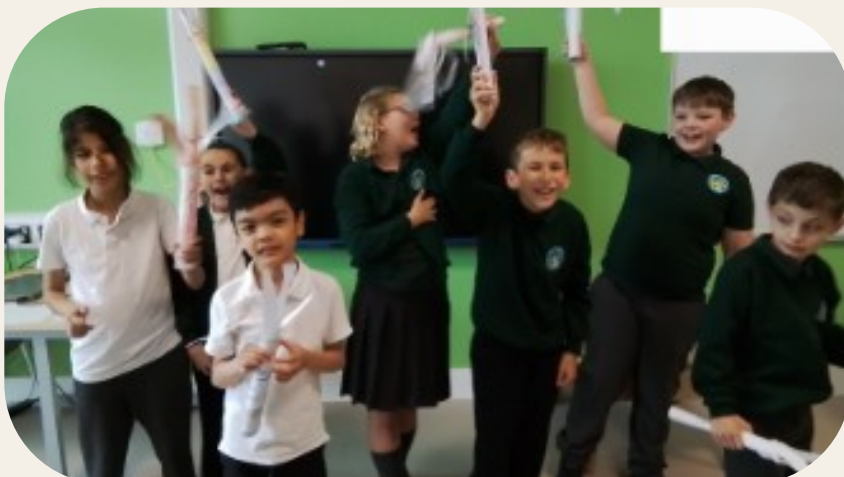


Magnolia class have settled really well into life here at Prestley Wood Academy. They have formed some wonderful friendships and have made some fantastic memories already.

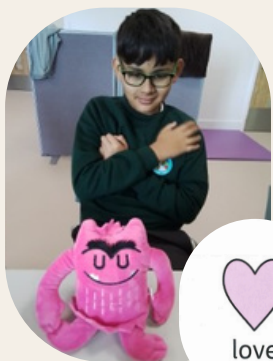
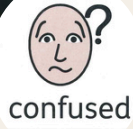
A key highlight has been learning all about the Victorians. We have explored a variety of different Victorian toys and other objects and created our own toy models. We looked at food from the Victorian times and tried gruel, just like Oliver Twist would have eaten. We crafted chimney sweep brushes as we learnt about Victorian jobs, and then used these to create a brilliant class dance.



Katie



Chestnut Class



Chestnut Class have made an excellent start to their first half term at Prestley Wood Academy; settling in well and making new friendships.

For our main topic we have been exploring Knights and Castles; making our own castles out of a variety of materials. We have also been exploring emotions using The Colour Monster story and matched our facial expressions to the different emotions presented throughout the story.

Rae



Silver Birch Class



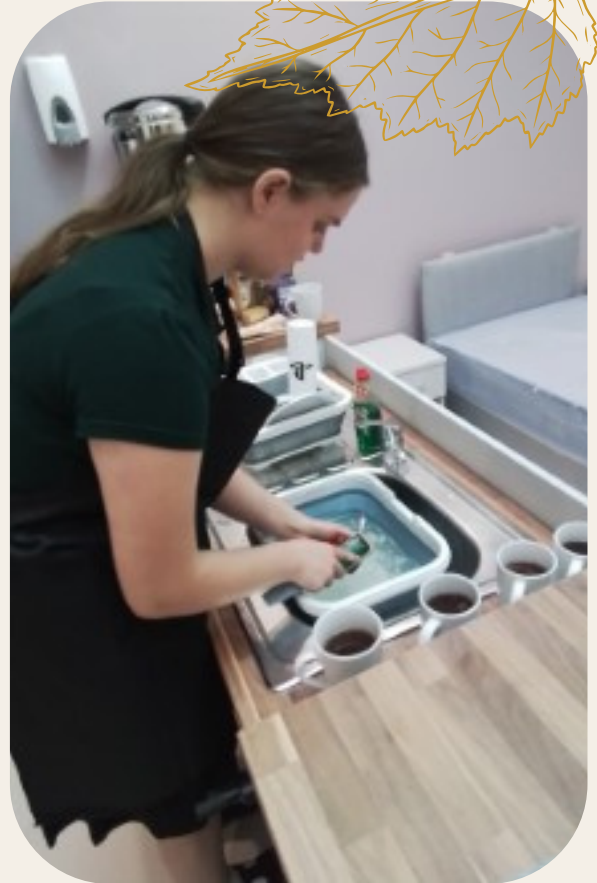
We have had an amazing first half term at Prestley Wood Academy. Silver birch class have settled in really well developing some lovely friendships. We hosted our first key stage 3 charity event, Macmillan coffee morning, where students had the opportunity to develop their work related learning skills such as interacting and serving customers, working as a team and gaining insights into a working environment.

We have been on adventures through weekly forest school sessions, exploring the local forest areas, developing survival skills and identifying how to utilise the natural resources and surroundings available when placed in a survival situation.
Have a great half term!



MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT

Mili



Prestley's School Council



After an exciting start to our very first term, during our democracy week, we put into action the experience of an election, canvassing to put their points forward and then voting and electing for their class council members to share their

Pupil Voice,

empowering our pupils to feel ownership over their school.

Each class representative was awarded with an official Prestley badge and lanyard in assembly in front of their peers, who gave a huge applause. They have participated in our inaugural meeting and have already made several decisions, one of which included creating a connection with the local school on Alconbury Weald, Ermine Street Academy, along with several proposals submitted to Caroline our Headteacher about future events We are all keen to hear her response in the next meeting. Our school councilors then had the important task of relaying back to the classes what was discussed.

I'm looking forward to our next meeting and being able to move ahead with some of the many suggestions and fantastic ideas proposed.



Mandy

Meet Our School Councilors



Forest School



Describing plants by our senses.



Making conker garlands for the garden.



Painting with conkers.



In Forest School, we have been doing a range of different things, exploring the outside area, going on scavenger hunts and looking around for bugs and insects. Even participated in some whole school planting to make our bug hotel look more appealing to the bugs.

Recently, we have used conkers to roll in paint, pushing them across white paper to explore what different patterns they might make. In our older classes, we used the conkers to make conker chains and hung them around the gardens.

We utilised our magnifying glasses to inspect a variety of leaves, using our senses to see if they were big or small, green or brown. We tested our touch senses and sight senses to feel and see the differences between the leaves and discuss this with our peers.

Chestnut class had the project of planting two trees that had been donated to the school. After the children made the executive decision of where the trees would be planted in the garden, they then took to the task of digging the holes deep enough for each tree, ensuring that everyone got involved and took part in this.

Beth

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

