

THE OTTER

THE NEWSLETTER OF OTTERBOURNE CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL.



Dear Families

What a fantastic half-term we have had here in school. Yes, there has needed to be a greater focus on the way that children are playing with each other outside but there have been so many wonderful positives to focus on even more, including the incredible Young Voices choir trip to the O2 in London. This really is becoming one of the highlights of the school year and the children seem to really enjoy their trip to the big city. Even in a choir of 9000, I could still hear our children singing together beautifully.

Windsor Castle was the venue for the Year 1 trip, linked to their curriculum unit of Queen of the Castle. The children visited a lot of different parts of the castle, including the stunning state rooms, St George's Chapel (where the children showed the highest levels of respect) and the room that holds Queen Mary's dolls house, which wins the award for eliciting the most 'ooohs' and 'aaaahs' - it really was quite impressive.

This week we have been exploring different ways to 'Be Happy, Be Healthy' and I would like to thank all of the volunteers and parents who gave up their time to support the school with this important week of personal development. THANK YOU!

You may or may not have seen recent news about attendance in schools and the drive to improve overall attendance across the country. As this is a current topic, I've outlined the routines and expectations we have at the school to avoid any confusion going forward.

I would like to wish Mrs Rees, one of our incredibly hard-working LSAs, all the very best as she starts her maternity leave ahead of the arrival of her new baby later this spring.

And best wishes to you all for a relaxing, if potentially wet, half-term.

Mr Geraghty

CHANGE OF DATE

**FOS QUIZ NIGHT
22nd March 2024**

**Doors 7:30pm for
an 8pm start**

Join us for our first ever...

**JIGSAW
FESTIVAL**

**1 - 4pm, Saturday 10th February
St Matthew's Church, Otterbourne**

We have an incredible collection of puzzles available to buy, ranging from 500 to 3,000 pieces!
Along with refreshments, competitions & kids' activities. **£1 entry, children free.**

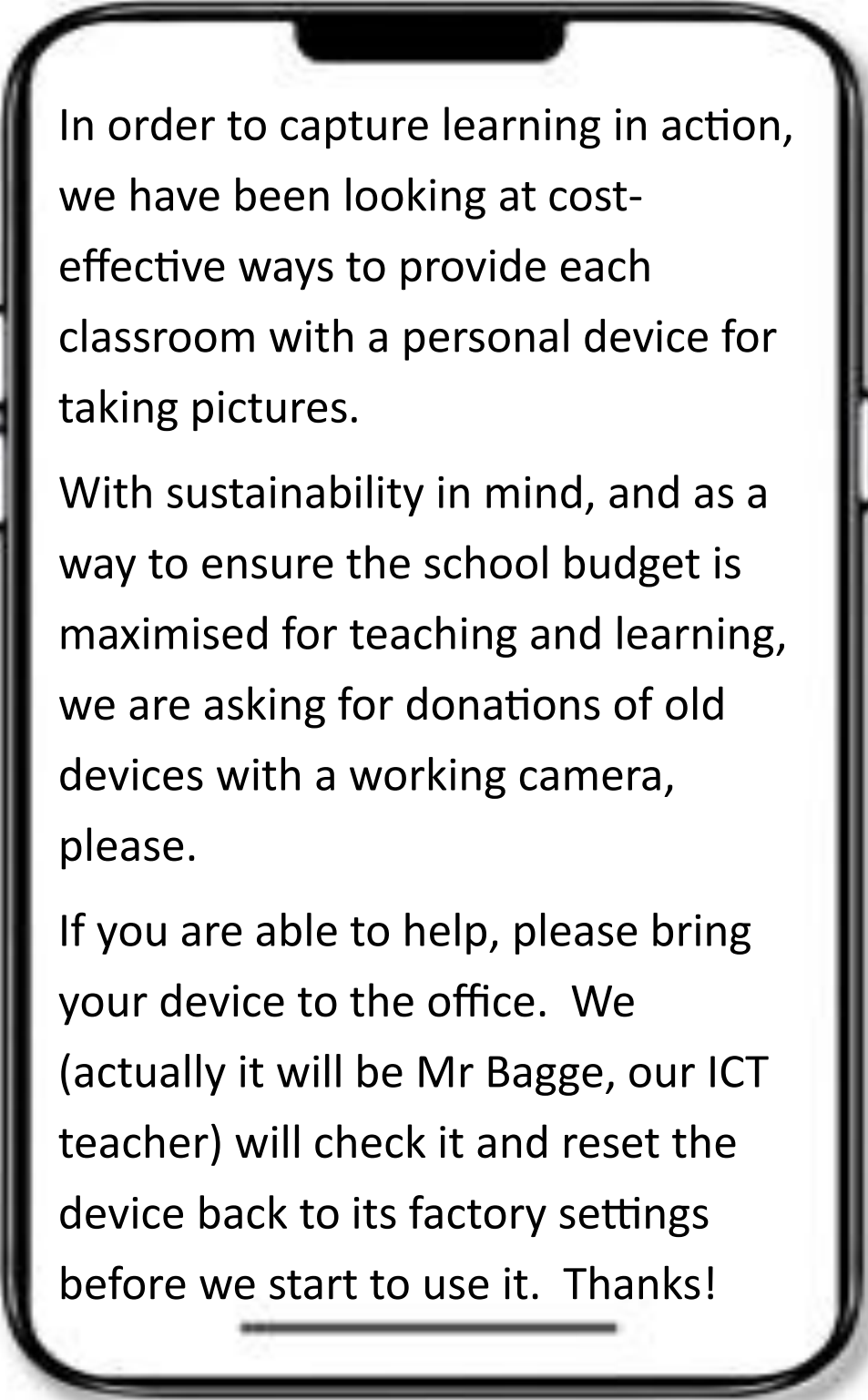


St Matthew's
Otterbourne

www.chobenefice.co.uk

DOES YOUR PRELOVED TECH NEED A NEW HOME?

Wanted: old iPads, iPhones (series 5 or above) or other tablets.



In order to capture learning in action, we have been looking at cost-effective ways to provide each classroom with a personal device for taking pictures.

With sustainability in mind, and as a way to ensure the school budget is maximised for teaching and learning, we are asking for donations of old devices with a working camera, please.

If you are able to help, please bring your device to the office. We (actually it will be Mr Bagge, our ICT teacher) will check it and reset the device back to its factory settings before we start to use it. Thanks!

We will be buying new cases, in the school colours, to identify the school devices as personal phones are not allowed around the school.

Many thanks in advance for any donations you are able to provide.

Mr Geraghty and the teaching team.

Spotlight on School Attendance

Driving up attendance and tackling persistent absence is at the centre of new stronger measures launched today as pupils return to school.

- The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP and the DfE (January 2024).

*It is usually appropriate for parents and carers to send their children to school with mild respiratory illnesses. This would include general cold symptoms: a minor cough, runny nose or sore throat. However, children should not be sent to school if they have a temperature of 38°C or above. **It can be tricky deciding whether or not to keep your child off school, nursery or playgroup when they're unwell.***

The NHS have produced the following guidance for parents: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

From a letter by The Chief Medical Officer and leading health professionals.

Across the county, there are changes being put in place to help families where persistent absence is an issue that needs further support; there are also indications that the penalty system is being reviewed.

Our school attendance currently exceeds the national average which, by comparison, is excellent but the impact of lost learning is something that is felt by children, families and school staff so it is something that we will continue to work with families to improve, where necessary. Where we have a concern about the level of attendance, starting with children with an attendance figure of 95% or less, we will be in touch to see what help we can offer to support children and families.

SIGNING IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL

It is important to make clear that it is not just a day away from school that can affect a child's attendance. Late arrivals, those children who arrive at school after the register has closed at 9:05, receive a 'late' mark. We are also being asked to monitor...but **not yet** report on... 'early leavers' and we need to follow the appropriate procedures for safeguarding children who are attending alternative venues, for any reason, during the school day.

If your child is regularly being taken out of school early, we will need to understand the reason for this as well as undergo a risk assessment with the appropriate organisations (which might involve us having to visit them ourselves).

If your child is to attend a medical appointment, I need to encourage you to try and make these after school or during holidays.

We are currently exploring remote options for signing children out of school, but for now I must ask you to come in to the school to sign children out. This needs to be a parent/guardian as the process of signing out means that the children are then out of our care and control.

WhatsApp Worries

As a parent of a primary-aged child myself, I know that social media can be incredibly useful when it comes to sharing news and information with other parents, especially when it comes to trips, or the incredible work of our amazing FOS representatives. It is a powerful tool that we can all benefit from.

The flipside of that though, is that what children come home saying is sometimes a personal interpretation of the core message that was given to them, which is then easily lost as it bounces around social media platforms. I always want there to be clarity though, and feel that this is something we can work on together to improve, as sadly, any misinterpretations can easily turn in to negativity about the decisions we are taking for the greater good or the safety of the children.

From conversations we have had with parents in the past 48-hours, there are a couple of things that seem to need some clarification:

1 - The children are not banned from running around school. As highlighted in the last newsletter, we are seeing far too much 'rough play'; children are getting hurt from 'bundling' on each other; we have had an incident of a coat getting ripped as children are pulling at each others clothes, and there is a kicking game that children are all too happy to play.

However, there are places around the school, mostly the paths directly adjacent to the building where children must walk, which is a decision I've made to reduce the risk of accidents and to give children quiet spaces. Children can run on or between either playground. They can even continue to play light-touch 'tag' games but otherwise we do have a rule of 'hands and feet to yourself' so the game where they push each other over has been banned.

2 - Star Parties. We all want the children to enjoy celebrations as a whole class throughout the year, but the children need to feel that they are contributing to star parties going ahead as they are a way of developing positive learning behaviours and promoting quality contributions or collaboration. The teachers will always strive to ensure children get star parties regularly, but we don't set a particular day for them as this would lead to the children expecting them, which essentially defeats the object of having extrinsic rewards. I will be working with the teaching team to ensure that the approach to all rewards is consistent across the school but they all need to be able to respond to the needs of their own cohort of children each year.

There will always be decisions that divide opinion but if you would like to seek clarity on any points of confusion, whether that is from social media or other sources, I (or a member of SLT) open the gate each day (with few exceptions) and my door is always open, or you can call/email me at the school on 01962 712020 / headteacher@otterbourne.hants.sch.uk.

If you have other suggestions for how we can improve communication, please do let me know. All I ask is that the new 'clearer' message be shared amongst parent groups too please.

Mr Geraghty

Support for parents

Whatever family life brings, we're here to help

NSPCC

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/>

A message from Winchester Basics Bank

Winchester Basics Bank has been operating in the territory for 20 years and has been running a holiday lunch scheme since 2016. Our last scheme, which ran at Christmas, provided 10 days' worth of lunches for some 250 children in the area. We are running the holiday lunch scheme this Easter and we rely on your help in identifying those children who are eligible and approaching their parents or carers on our behalf.

The criteria is as follows:-

ANY child who is receiving free school meals during term time and whom you believe may not receive a nutritious meal at lunchtimes during the school holiday (this may include school aged siblings who are not at your school).

ANY child whom you believe, as an outcome of current, difficult family circumstances, may not receive a nutritious meal at lunchtime during the school holiday (this may include school aged siblings who are not at your school).

We are willing to discuss with you any queries you may have, either by telephone or by making a brief visit to your school. Please telephone one of the numbers below to discuss further.

The food supplied is designed to replace the hot meal and will be tinned/dried; we do not have food items suitable for packed lunch style meals. We can offer food suitable for most dietary requirements.

We have 4 locations for parents to collect from; Bar End, Highcliffe, New Alresford, Weeke, – operating on specific days (Mon – Fri). The family will be asked to nominate which location they will be collecting your food from.

Bar End (Vineyard Church, SO23 9NR) – Mon 18th, or Thurs 21st March @ 10am – 12pm

Highcliffe (21a Penton Place, SO23 0PZ) – Tues 19th, or Fri 22nd March @ 10am – 3pm

New Alresford (St Gregory's Church, New Alresford) – Weds 20th March @ 10am – 12pm

Weeke (St Barnabas Church, SO22 6EF) – Thursday 21st March 10am – 1pm

We are also able to arrange deliveries for families who are housebound, who are disabled or who have disabled children, and do not have anyone who can collect on their behalf. Deliveries will either be made on the 19th or the 22nd March 2024. Closing date is **Friday 15th March 2024**.

Parents/carers can simply go online and complete the form at the following address:

<https://winchesterbasicsbank.co.uk/easter-lunch-scheme/>

We sincerely hope that you will be able to give your support to this project and that in partnership, we will be able to ensure that this group of children have a healthy, nutritious lunchtime meal during the school holiday.

THE OTTER

THE NEWSLETTER OF OTTERBOURNE CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL.



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT!

The following pages include extracts from previous newsletters, just in case you missed some of the more important messages we are trying to share. This suggestion came from one of our families - thank you!



We are looking forward to seeing the actors from M & M back in school on the 28th March for their version of Alice in Wonderland. These shows are really enjoyable and suitable for all ages. A voluntary contribution (£3) will be added to Scopay for this magical experience.

Crisp recycling...

Up until recently, we have always asked any of the children having a packed lunch to take everything home afterwards so that parents can see what has or hasn't been eaten. As an eco-aware school, we have changed this slightly recently and are now allowing children to leave their empty crisp packets at school. These are being collected and taken for recycling by the Eco-council. I need to give my thanks to the Eco Councillors for doing this for us.



HEALTHY EATING AT BREAK TIME.

This is always a difficult topic to raise as there is divided opinion. We all want children to eat healthily, but the main thing has to be that they are eating something to get them through the day. It would be remiss though to not mention that we are seeing a lot more crisps at breaktime and anything you can do to ensure the morning snack is a healthier option which would be appreciated. I know that many other schools are still asking for purely healthy options, and this is something that is hard to balance, so it is something I'm continuing to keep an eye on, and we still ask that children don't come to school with sweets or chocolate for break time. Thank you.

SOMETHING WE ARE HAVING TO TACKLE...

From time to time, we see certain spikes in terms of how the children (and I don't include all children in this) are playing. It's hard to say where these things come from and no doubt it can often be down to children simply copying each other.

At the moment, we are having to remind a lot of the children about 'hands-off' play as there is a noticeable increase in the number of children pulling at clothes, especially hoods, and sometimes with great force, which can easily hurt or upset others.

We are going to be focusing on this for a while and ensure there are more 'toys' out for the younger children to play with at breaktime, but please help by talking to your children about the rules at break and lunchtimes.

Thank you