

THE OTTER

THE NEWSLETTER OF OTTERBOURNE CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL.



Dear Families

It's been an interesting start to the final half-term of the year. I just need to thank you for the way everyone was able to respond to the unfortunate need to close the school early on Tuesday. I fully appreciate that this would have been an inconvenience for some of you, but with great reluctance I was left with no other option, and we were able to get all children out of school before our emergency back-up systems closed down which was my main reason for making the tough decision.

I am sure that you will be asking what the plan would be for any other events of this type, and I can assure you that we are working with Hampshire Property Services to improve our internal emergency lighting (especially in the toilets), purchasing back up batteries to ensure our communications can continue in a way that is more in line with what you are used to, and we will be investigating other options to understand the feasibility of ensuring our emergency back-up systems can last to the end of a normal school day.

If nothing else, this event proved to me just how amazing the staff at the school are – everyone really pulled together on the day, with the teachers quickly reverting to different teaching methods and the LSAs working brilliantly to get the children out to you in the quickest time. Let's just hope this doesn't need to be tested again any time soon.

Year 6 – end of school rite of passage

On Wednesday of this week, whole school worship was filled with colour as the Year 6 children were given their new 'Leavers 2025' hoodies. My thanks to Debbie Tear for organising these. These will stay at home until the Year 6 team enjoy their geography and celebration trip to Legoland later in the year, and then we look forward to seeing them being worn to school every day.

Worship Council

Since we launched the Pupil Parliament in September, we have continued to look for ways to build this up and give the children who are part of the eight council more opportunities to be involved in the wider life of the school. Our Worship Council, with the incredible support of Mrs Welch, have been busy recently planning and delivering the Easter Worship at St. Matthew's Church and helping the children understand more about the importance of Ascension and Pentecost in the school.

A message from the Friends of Otterbourne School (FOS)

We will be running our Hero shop on Friday 13th June. The children can buy a gift for the special person/people in their lives who they want to celebrate for Father's Day on Sunday 15th June.

Your child can visit the sale in the hall during the morning and can choose from a wide range of gifts. They will come home with the presents already wrapped on Friday 13th June.

Each gift costs £3 and you can purchase any number of gifts. You can buy tickets for more than 1 child in the same transaction.

Bookings close on Thursday 12th June at 8pm so we have time to print off the lists of children by class. Thank you and we hope that the children enjoy the experience.

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Smartphone use in schools.

Recently, there has been a noticeable increase in the volume of research, media focus and incidents related to the use of smartphones by children. It's something that we have all become more and more aware of, and schools across the country are accepting the role they play in supporting our young children as they navigate through what is becoming something of a minefield. We have been working with other local schools to develop a cohesive message, which will be followed by a consistent approach to our policies to ensure that, where we are able to, we can provide a safe environment for all children. Ultimately, the choice of which technology to provide to children will be the responsibility of parents and carers, but we hope to be able to keep you more informed about the potential risks so that you can make informed choices and be more prepared to answer the question, "When can I have a smartphone?"

CHANDLER'S FORD AREA APPROACH TO SMARTPHONE USE IN SCHOOLS

As a cluster of schools we have been concerned about the impact of smartphone use for children and young people. We are concerned about the impact of smart phone use on young people's emotional and physical wellbeing as well as their mental health. On their ability to stay safe as well as the impact on their ability to communicate effectively with adults and peers.

There have been a huge number of studies, research and evidence reviews. For example, this [House of Commons Committee](#) report from May 2024 was recently put to the government with recommendations. Some of the statistics are shocking;

- 79% of young people encounter violent pornography before the age of 18 with the average age that they first see pornography is 13 years old
- 81% of girls aged 7 - 21 have experienced threatening or upsetting behaviour online
- Sexual crimes committed against children online have risen 300% since 2013

Smartphone use can distract learning with it taking up to 20 minutes to refocus on learning after receiving a notification or similar and more than 2 hours a day of recreational screen time can worsen working memory, processing speed, attention levels and executive function.

The report, however, is also balanced in terms of highlighting the positive aspects of being online such as LGBTQ+ children and young people being able to reach out to a wider community and some gains in terms of online learning in mathematics in particular.

As a group we want to support our children and young people to learn but we also must keep them safe and want them to thrive and be happy. We have decided to have a common approach across the area in order to achieve this. We are also fully aware that schools should not be tasked with solving all of society's ills - we recognise that this is an issue that reaches well beyond the school gates so we want to support parents and carers as well as recognise that they are ultimately responsible for their children's upbringing.

All of our schools have policies that mean that phones are not allowed to be used within school. The logistics of this differs depending on the school but we all agree that, on balance, this is the right approach. Parents should never feel that a smartphone is an essential item for a young person to have and it is certainly not an essential part of school equipment. This may mean that parents decide to purchase a 'brick phone' that can make calls and send text messages, they may decide not to purchase a phone at all or they may decide to provide a smartphone with parental controls and restrictions. We would strongly advise parents to not allow children and young people unfettered access to the internet via their smartphone. We would recommend that parents do make an informed choice and we will support this by offering information events - more details to follow.

We hope that, by coming together, we can support parents and the wider community to tackle this issue for the good of all of our children whilst still maintaining healthy boundaries between the school and home.



Chandler's Ford Infants, Fryern, Otterbourne, Knightwood, St Francis, Merdon, Scantabout, St Withuns Wells Catholic School, Hittingbury (Infants and Juniors), Toynbee, Thornden

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Smartphones? Smart Choices? – an event for parents

We are excited to invite you to "Smartphones? Smart Choices" at Thornden Hall on Thurs 26th June 6pm - 8pm. This is a parent presentation and workshop focussing on how to support your children - either primary or secondary aged - regarding phone use.

There will be guest speakers from a range of organisations and there will be the opportunity for you to speak to other parents. The event is being hosted by Thornden School.

This will be a popular event so spaces are strictly limited to two per household. If you would like to attend, please email me directly (headteacher@otterbourne.hants.sch.uk). By doing so, you are agreeing to me sharing your details with Thornden Hall for the express purpose of registering and confirming your space at the event.

Sports afternoon at James' Place

This week, eight of our pupil parliament children visited James' Place in Otterbourne with a few 'sports day' activities that they had planned. Our children and members at this most inspirational of day care centres, took part in some friendly competition ending with some dance and good humour. It was another valuable opportunity for our children to understand more about diverse needs and important places in our community. If you would like to know more about James' Place, please visit their website at <https://jp-adultdaycare.com/>

Summer holiday lunch scheme registration now open

Miss Reid and I recently visited the new Winchester Basics Bank at Sainsbury's Badger Farm. Everyone involved recognises that reaching out for support of this kind can be difficult, but if you do find yourself in need of food and other provisions, please do contact them. With the summer holidays fast approaching, I want to share details with you of their registration page, which will be closed for new families on 6th July 2025. More details about the scheme and how to get help can be found by clicking here: <https://winchesterbasicsbank.co.uk/summer-holiday-lunch-scheme-2025/>

If you need any help completing the form, or would like to talk us in confidence about anything else we might be able to support you with, please do come and speak to Miss Reid or myself.

Learning from around the school

Recently, our Year 5/6 children were literally 'getting to grips' with the safe use of cutting equipment as they build scaffolds and frames as part of their learning about crime and punishment.



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Year 1 have been working hard on their numbers, phonics and other skills



Year 6 SATs – such an impressive show of determination

This is something I've mentioned before but even now, a few weeks after the tests themselves, we are still talking about how calm, focused and determined the year 6 children were during SATs week. I didn't share these lovely mini-celebration photos with you though as the children relaxed after what can be quite a tense week for them.



Trojans hockey coaches in school

Over the last few weeks, we have been joined by coaches from Trojans Hockey Club. It's been a fantastic addition to our enrichment opportunities and the children have clearly been enjoying it.



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Experimenting with creating stable structures in Year 5/6



Longitudinal study at the pond.

As part of their long-term learning, each class has a 'project' that they return to a few times in the year, in order to study changes over time. As we are blessed with such wonderful grounds, this is something very special to our school, and it is another way for the children to engage with nature. Here are some photos of Robin Class at our pond, studying the life within.



By now, you will have noticed a change to the format of the newsletter. I'm sure you will agree that it is the content that is more important than the presentation. Isn't there a saying about 'style over substance'? I hope the new format strikes a good balance for you all.

Kindest regards

Mr Geraghty

Please keep reading for our safeguarding update

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We are seeing, especially across our Year 3/4 classes, an increase in the number of children discussing YouTube shorts. If you let your children on to YouTube unaccompanied, please be aware that there is a section called "YouTube shorts". These have a very similar style to TikTok, Facebook Reels, Instagram and other video platforms. Sites like this do have a detrimental effect on children's mental health, and are now often referred to as 'brainrot'.

At the recent local heads group, we were discussing this in particular, as although the content might not be directly 'damaging', the children (and equally adults) can very easily lose a lot of time constantly flicking between videos and they rarely have any recollection of the things they have seen. You will start to see this being referred to as the opportunity costs associated with social media use.

Please be mindful of what your child is watching on screen and ensure you have parental controls locked down. Depending on what children watch and click on, "YouTube shorts" will then produce more videos of similar things and we are seeing this spill into school in an inappropriate way.

A Guide to Looksmaxxing – White Hatter

We often talk about the problems facing young girls in the social media space. Yet young men are also coming under pressure from the rise of social media. The term 'Looksmaxxing' is used to describe the pursuit of maximising one's physical appearance. This trend is often focused on males. At its shallowest end, the trend involves positive steps such as basic self-care instruction, personal grooming advice and physical training motivation. However, the escalation ladder can lead to increasingly dangerous advice which can impact on mental and physical health. To read more, please follow the link below:

<https://www.thewhitehatter.ca/post/the-rise-of-looksmaxxing-and-how-teen-boys-see-themselves>

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A message from Playhouse Foundation, who bring specialist SEN support to our school

*We're currently running **weekly Stay & Play early intervention sessions** at Barnabas Church, Weeke in Winchester for children aged 2–5 who are showing signs of autism or have a diagnosis – though **no formal diagnosis is required** to attend.*

*What makes our group truly unique is that we have **on-site certified early intervention therapists** who not only support each child through engaging, play-based activities, but also **work directly with parents** during sessions – offering guidance, tools, and support to help strengthen family relationships and build developmental skills in communication and social interaction.*

We keep our group small and welcoming, with a real focus on empowerment and connection – both between parents and their children, and between families who attend.

Here's a snapshot of what we offer:

- *A supportive space for parents to learn techniques from professionals through play-based interactions with their child.*
- *Structured, child-led activities designed to encourage communication, connection, and social engagement.*
- *A chance to connect with other parents navigating similar challenges – building a positive, understanding community.*
- *Regular attendance supports early identification of needs and helps families access the right interventions early.*
- *A consistent, structured routine in a warm, welcoming setting – often so beneficial for children on the spectrum.*
-

*We're running six-week blocks of sessions, starting again in the new academic year on **17th September**. The **first session is free**, and then it's just £10 per week (£50 for the remaining five sessions). Future blocks are offered at £60 for six weeks. Refreshments are provided, and parents/carers stay for the whole session.*

The application process is simple - parents just complete the online form [Playgroup Registration](#) and we will do the rest! 😊

We'd be so grateful if you could pass this information along to any families or professionals in your network who might be interested – or let us know if there's a way we can connect directly.

If you have any questions or would like more information, just let us know – we'd love to chat. T: 07964 667903

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An online talk by Jane Keyworth



Supporting a Child with ADHD

Challenging the stereotypes, offering practical support and explaining more about this condition

June 23rd 7 - 8:30pm

Talks are recorded and available to watch for up to 48hrs after the session £24



Book online
facefamilyadvice.co.uk
go to **PARENTS**
on the **Homepage**

