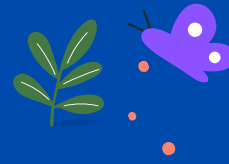


# SPRING 1 NEWSLETTER

## WITCHAMPTON FIRST SCHOOL



I would like to begin by congratulating all our families for making it through the long winter nights and the Wimborne floods! It has been a challenging start to the year, but together we have navigated our way through a very busy spring term, and we are incredibly proud of the achievements of both our staff and children. From academic progress to personal growth, it has been wonderful to see our pupils thriving in so many different ways.

This term, our staff team have been focusing on developing confident writers through dictation, helping pupils strengthen their spelling and sentence structure, while also building fluency in maths to support confidence with numbers. Children have also been fully engaged in exciting topics such as transport, fossils, and minibeasts, exploring the world around them in hands-on and imaginative ways.

We have also been working on improving our learning environment both inside and outside the classroom. New storage spaces have been created to enhance EPIC playtimes, giving children the chance to take part in imaginative and active play in preparation for the summer months. We are about to kick off the planting season with some colourful wildflowers, which will further enrich our outdoor spaces and provide cross-curricular learning opportunities.

Creating a positive learning environment is an important part of helping children focus and feel secure. Research shows that "classrooms with lower levels of visual and auditory distractions support pupils' concentration and engagement. Calm, organised spaces have been linked to better progress and reduced sensory overload, particularly for children with additional needs."  
(Brookhouse Research, 2023)

With this in mind, we are thinking carefully about how to bring the beauty of the outdoors inside, creating calm, inspiring spaces for our pupils. We would love to involve our families in this project. If you have plant cuttings at home or are able to donate a potted plant to the school, we would be very grateful. All donated plants will be labelled to show they were gifted by parents and carers. We are also collecting any old table lamps and free standing lamps to help create cosy reflection corners for pupils.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support, enthusiasm, and generosity. Your contributions, whether it's plants, lamps, encouragement at home, helping on a trip or attending a Parent Led event, help us to make our school the welcoming, inspiring place where children feel happy, secure, and ready to learn that we have all come to love.

*Sarah Fairman*

Live a life of love, just as Jesus taught us (Ephesians 5:2)

# SCHOOL VALUES

As part of our fresh start in September, the staff came together to reflect on our school values and how they link to our behaviour expectations. Our core values are LOVE, COURAGE, and INSPIRATION, and children earn Dojo points for showing these in their everyday actions, alongside our learning values of READY, RESPECT, and ENGAGED.



We have been talking with the children about what these values look like in action—how they treat each other, approach challenges, and engage with their learning. It has been wonderful to hear the children's thoughtful ideas and see them putting these values into practice around the school. Throughout the year, we will continue to explore these values and celebrate the many ways children demonstrate them. By linking everything back to our goal of learning to be the best version of ourselves, we hope to encourage kindness, confidence, and inspiration in all areas of school life.

# ATTENDANCE

Our school attendance is currently at 83.3%. Unfortunately, this is very low. While we fully understand the challenges families have faced recently with the weather and unavoidable winter bugs, this level of attendance puts us significantly below the national average.

Good attendance is essential for children's learning and overall development. Some key facts:

- Pupils who attend school regularly are more likely to achieve higher academic outcomes. Children with attendance of 95% or above tend to make stronger progress.
- Missing school can lead to gaps in learning, which can make it harder for children to keep up with their peers.
- Regular attendance helps children develop social skills, build friendships, and feel part of the school community.
- Early habits of regular attendance often continue into secondary school and later life, supporting future opportunities. \*
- Even a few days off each term can add up: missing just 1 day per week means a child misses nearly 8 weeks of learning across a school year.

We appreciate that illness and other unavoidable circumstances happen, but we ask for your support in helping your child attend school regularly whenever possible. Every day counts!

# DIGITAL LIVES

I would like to share a new guide from the Children's Commissioner for England, Dame Rachel de Souza, titled What I wish my parents or carers knew: [A guide for parents on managing children's digital lives.](#)

The guide highlights the growing challenges parents and carers face in managing children's online lives and balancing access to digital spaces with keeping children safe. It focuses on everyday online habits and the importance of clear, protective boundaries.

Written with direct input from children and young people, the guide shows that many value firm, informed limits around smartphone and online use and feel safer when adults take the lead in setting boundaries.

# CHRISTIAN VALUES

Our Christian Value this half term has been **COURAGE**

We have looked at Bible stories such as **David and Goliath.**

We have had a worship lead by Claire from the minster and also by Reverend Rob from St Stephen's Church. If you know anyone who would like to lead a worship, please do get in contact with the office.

Our Christian value next term is

**FORGIVENESS**



## PARENTS ON SITE

Please could we kindly ask that parents do not come through the gate in the mornings with their children.

If you have any messages, these can be passed on to the member of staff on the gate, or you are very welcome to go to the school office.

We understand that there are occasions when children may need additional support settling into school. If this is the case, we ask that children enter through reception so this can be managed appropriately. To ensure we are following safeguarding procedures fully, all visitors who enter the school site must sign in at the office.

Thank you for your understanding and continued support.

## SPORT

We have been very proud as some of our children have taken part in interschool sports activities. Mrs Hurlstone and Miss Murphy have worked hard to arrange transport and the children have had the best time playing alongside other children from local schools



## TRIPS AND VISITORS

We have made the most of our wonderful curriculum this half term with trips and visitors. Foxes enjoyed their trip to the Etches museum, learning about fossils and different rocks. Hedgehogs were unlucky with the weather but have still enjoyed their wheels topic with exciting experiences.

The Badgers had the wonderful Mrs Blanden's brother in school and as always the children like to get stuck in with the Jamaican music and cooking.

Thank you to the PTA for supporting our school trips and making the topic come to life and to you for topping up the trip funds to make the experiences happen.

## LUNCH CLUB

The village lunch club runs once a month and offers a soup and roll at a very reasonable price. They kindly donate some of the money raised to the school. If you can support the lunch club in the village, it would be much appreciated.

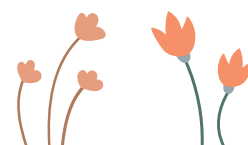
## STAFF SHOUT OUTS

While every member of our staff consistently goes above and beyond, I would like to extend a special word of recognition to Mrs Blanden, Mrs Plate, Miss Snape and Mrs Tudor-Murphy for their exceptional contributions this half term.

Their ability to pivot between classroom support and pastoral care is truly impressive.

Whether they are providing the creative spark a child needs to master an expanded noun phrase or offering a kind word and a plaster for a minor injury, they handle every situation with grace. Their commitment doesn't stop at the classroom door; they spend every lunch break braving the elements to ensure our students are active, engaged, and safe on the playground.

We are incredibly fortunate to have such a dedicated and versatile group of TAs. Thank you all for your tireless professionalism, your energy, and the genuine heart you bring to our school community every single day.



# SAFE GUARDING

Mrs Fairman, Mrs Greeves and Miss Self are all Designated Safeguarding Leads, but what does this mean? A DSL is a school of staff who has been specially trained to take responsibility for safeguarding and child protection. Their Main Responsibilities: point of contact for anyone who has a concern about a child's well-being, ensure the school follows strict safety procedures to protect children from harm, neglect, or bullying. act as a link between the school and outside support services such as social care.

# MULTIPLICATION CHECKS - YEAR FOUR

In Year 4, multiplication tests play an important role in building fluency and confidence with number facts. Secure multiplication knowledge is a key foundation for good maths understanding and supports many areas of learning as children move on to more complex concepts. Quick recall of times tables helps pupils focus on problem-solving rather than calculation. We encourage parents to support this at home by practising simple sums in everyday situations. For example, asking quick questions in the car, while shopping, or during daily routines. These small, regular moments make a big difference in developing fluency and supporting long-term success in maths.

# MENTAL HEALTH

This week in school, we have been focusing on our Place2Be. Many children shared thoughtful ideas about what it means to feel safe and how taking time to feel calm is never wasted. It was lovely to hear that the children feel safe in their classrooms and around the school. We also discussed how our words and actions can help others feel safe, and the children were, as always, reflective and considerate. From next half term, we plan to spend the first hour back in school after a holiday taking part in wellbeing activities such as games and colouring. This will help children feel relaxed, look forward to returning to school, and give them valuable time to reconnect with friends.



# LOCAL SCHOOLS COMMITTEE

We are looking for volunteers to join our Local Schools Committee. Members help the school maintain high standards and support staff in their overall effectiveness. The commitment includes three meetings a year and termly visits to school to contribute to the school development plan. If you are interested in finding out more, please get in touch with Becky Knott in the Pamphill office, or Gabby Stone (a parent at Witchampton).

