



ST KATHARINE'S
C of E
PRIMARY SCHOOL

*Friendship, Effort, Respect,
& Honesty*

Friday 21st November 2025
NEWSLETTER No: 5

Our Value This Term Is...

Hope



Dear Parents,

It has come as a bit of a shock but given that we are mid-way through November, a couple of crisp, sunny days have in fact been quite a treat! The BBC weather app doesn't offer great promise but I will continue to 'hope' for more of the same to take us up to the end of term.

We have had another great fortnight in school. Last week was anti-bullying week. We always begin this week with our odd socks day; supporting the children to think about difference and diversity as something to be celebrated. We know that bullying often has its roots in the very opposite of this idea. As part of this week, we have re-invigorated our class worry boxes. Each class has a worry box where, if needed, children can write or draw a worry that they would like to speak to someone about. We have been talking to the children about the best place for these to sit in the classroom and reminding them of all the ways they can get help if they need it. Worry boxes are not the only vehicle for this. Our worry boxes are now acorn shaped baskets. We purchased these with the donation from Mrs Crewe's family, given to the school after her memorial service last year. As a member of our small team, that many children would go to as a sounding board, we thought it was fitting that her legacy lived on in the classrooms in this way.



Oak Class had a very exciting visit from Mrs Nixon (Poppy Y1's mum) along with Bambi the pony. She brought Bambi into school to support the children with the learning they are doing in science, looking at animals and how they adapt to the environment. Health and Safety rules meant that Bambi couldn't actually venture into the classroom (*many would have wished for him to come and sit on the carpet with them*) but this did not lessen the learning or the excitement in any way! As part of our governor meeting for the parent community in Term 1 we wanted to get that message out that we are always keen to have parents in to school, either as a regular volunteer or in the capacity as an expert. You have many skills and talents and there are a wealth of different experiences and careers within our parent body. This great learning experience for Oak Class came about when Mrs Nixon volunteered her knowledge as a vet and her thinking about how it might be relevant to both our science and maths curriculums. We are very grateful to her. Please do get in touch if you think you might like to offer something; we promise not to over exploit you!

In addition to one-off opportunities like the one above we now have a great team of weekly volunteers that come in on a weekly basis to support reading, maths and other areas that need a bit of consistent practice. It does not have to be a huge commitment; half an hour at the beginning of the school day reading to a couple of children, who need a bit of catch-up, is powerful stuff. Please get in touch if you think you would like to volunteer.

Our new School Council met for the first time this week. They are busy thinking about how they would like to turn some of their manifesto ideas into actions. With the help of Mrs Ellaby, they are hatching plans... more on that in the weeks and months to come.

Ms Jones

Principal

'From little acorns, great oaks grow'



Attendance Update

Current whole school attendance data: 97.4%

Our end of year attendance target is: 97%

Our thanks to everyone for taking attendance seriously; there is lots of evidence that strong attendance correlates to great achievement and enables children to be happy and settled in school. This data which comes directly from the DfE and might be of interest to you:

At primary school, children who attend school nearly every day in Year 6 (95-100% attendance) are 30% more likely to reach the expected standard in reading, writing and maths compared to similar pupils who attend 90-95% of the time.

The link is even stronger at secondary school. Year 11 pupils with near-perfect attendance are almost twice as likely to achieve grade 5 in English and Maths GCSE, compared to similar pupils attending 90-95% of the time. In other words, missing just 10 extra days a year reduces the likelihood of achieving these grades by around 50%.

Under new DfE guidance schools are no longer able to record any time off school for a holiday as an authorised absence - there is no discretion for headteachers with the code used for a holiday - it is always unauthorised. Please be reminded that 10 unauthorised sessions (5 days) within a 10-week period would now trigger a fine. The DfE has new systems in place to rigorously monitor school attendance at a granular level. Reports are sent to us at the end of each term (6 x a year) detailing exactly where we have strengths and room for improvement at a whole school and year group level. There is very little we can do about illnesses that inevitably sweep through a school from time to time. What we can support however are strong attendance habits over time and to reiterate the message that absence from school only happens out of absolute necessity. If you are at all worried about issues relating to attendance, please do come and talk to us so that we can put things in place to support you before things escalate. Thank you for your continued engagement and support.

What to do when your child is unwell - a refresh

If your child is unwell, we ask that you call the school office on the first day of the illness to explain your child's absence. If you know that the absence is likely to be for a couple of days (48 hours for a sickness/diarrhoea bug, 24hours after a temperature spike) please let us know during the course of this telephone call /message. If you are not certain when your child is returning to school, we would expect you to keep us updated on a daily basis, before the beginning of each school day. This can be done by leaving an answerphone message or by sending an email. When leaving a message on the school answerphone or sending an email, detailing an absence, please give a brief description of the illness. If we do not receive notification about your child's absence, we will call you to enquire as to why your child is not in school. This is in line with recommended safeguarding procedures. Medical or other appointments in school time should be avoided if at all possible but if not, a Leave of Absence form must be obtained from the school office or the website. Advance notice is required for medical or

dental appointments, unless it's an emergency appointment and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment letter/email. A half day is considered sufficient for most appointments.

Thank you for your help with this.

This resource from the NHS is helpful when trying to decide if your child should or shouldn't come to school: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS](#)

Leave of Absence

If you are requesting that your child have time away from school for reasons not related to illness, please request a Leave of Absence form from the school office or access it via the website. In accordance with our Attendance Policy, a request for a leave of absence should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence.

St Katharine's Day

Don't forget that we are celebrating St Katharine's Day on **Wednesday 26th November** with a short service in church at 9:30am.

Swindon Voice Festival

Our choir children are looking forward to taking part in the Swindon Voice Festival at the Wyvern Theatre on Wednesday 26th November. It is promising to be a wonderful experience for the children with a live seven-piece band accompanying the children from the orchestra pit while they sing some Christmas songs. We expect to leave the event full of smiles and Christmas spirit.

Book Donation

A huge thank you to Fern's (Y1) mum for securing a generous book donation from Phiadon. We are delighted to have received a wonderful collection of reference non-fiction books. They will be used to enrich and support our blocks of learning. These beautiful books will be a valuable resource for the children and we are very grateful for this thoughtful contribution.

Lost Property

Please remember to call in and look through the lost property basket. Anything left in the final week of term (week commencing 15th December) will be put on a table near the school gate at the end of the day for parents to look through. Any property remaining at the end of term will be put into the donation station or given to local charity shops. Please make sure that everything is named. We can then easily return items to their rightful owner.

Nativity and Nativity Dress Rehearsal

We have our Reception and KS1 Nativity performance in church on 16th December, 5pm-6.30pm. It is a lovely event to which everyone is invited, parents and grandparents alike. We also have a dress rehearsal on the Friday before, on 12th December (**please note that this is a change of date**). Parents and grandparents are welcome to attend the dress rehearsal if this is more convenient.

Children In Need

On Friday it was a delight to see so many children covered in spots! As a school we collected £70 for the Children in Need fundraising campaign. Many thanks for your support with this.

Primary School Applications

The national deadline for applying for a primary school place is 15th January 2026. Please ensure that you have your application in by that date if you have a sibling (of a child already in school) due to start with us in September 2026.

Emergency Closures

Having defrosted my car and put on an extra layer this morning, it seems timely to remind our parent group about the school response in the event of an emergency closure due to adverse weather conditions or other situations resulting in the school being closed at short notice.

The following details are given on the school website, however, in summary, we will send an email to all parents that are set up on the school Bromcom email system. This will be followed up with information posted on our social media channels – The Friends of St Katharine’s Facebook Group, our Twitter account @St_Katharines and messages will be sent through class and whole school What’s App groups.

Also, in the event of a snow closure, we will inform our most local radio station – BBC Wiltshire radio (103.6FM and 104.3FM).

Wiltshire Council Admissions Criteria

Wiltshire Council is consulting on the proposed admissions criteria and admission arrangements for its Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2027/28 academic year. It is also consulting on the proposed schemes for co-ordination of admissions to all maintained schools and academies for the 2027/28 academic year.

If you wish to contribute, the consultation began on Wednesday 19 November 2025 and ends on Wednesday 7 January 2026.

The consultation documents can be accessed by clicking on the link below.

www.wiltshire.gov.uk/schools-learning-admissions-consultation

Message on behalf of the PTA

Hello from your new PTA!

We’re excited to begin working with our wonderful parents, carers, and teachers to enrich our school community, support our students, and help bring fun new projects to life.

We’d also like to give a big heartfelt thank you to Hannah, Pip, Kate, and Tamsyn for their incredible hard work and dedication over the past few years. They’ve done an amazing job, and we’re grateful for everything they’ve contributed.

We’re looking forward to a great year ahead!

Thank you to everyone who attended and helped with Bonfire Night!

We couldn’t have done it without you. We hope you all had a fantastic evening. It was a huge success, and we’re delighted to share that we raised £1,952.

This will go towards exciting new projects. Watch this space for more updates!

Your child should also have brought home Christmas Raffle tickets (check those book bags!). The raffle will be drawn on 18th December.

If you’d like to purchase tickets, please pop the completed ticket stubs and money into an envelope and either hand it directly to a PTA member or to Hayley in the office, if you can’t find one of us.

There are plenty more tickets available, so please don’t be shy—feel free to share them with family and friends. Good luck everyone!

Have a lovely weekend,

Kate, Sarah, Julie and Rachel

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

November	
Tuesday 25 th	Parents Evening 1 – All Classes (3.30pm-7.00pm)
Wednesday 26 th	St. Katharine’s Day Service in Church 9.30am
	Swindon Voice Festival Wyvern Theatre Choir attending
Thursday 27 th	Parents Evening 1 – All Classes (3.30pm – 5.30pm)
Friday 28 th	Mobile library visiting
December	
Monday 1 st	Year 6 height and weight check
Monday 8th	KS1 Cricket Skills Festival Marlborough Leisure Centre
Wednesday 10 th	Christmas Lunch

Friday 12 th	British Museum Ancient Egypt Virtual event – Chestnut Class
	Reception and KS1 Nativity dress rehearsal 2pm – parents and grandparents welcome NOTE CHANGE OF DATE AND TIME
	PTA Christmas cake sale 3.15pm
Sunday 14 th	Carol Service in Church 6.00pm
Tuesday 16 th	Reception and KS1 Nativity in Church (4.45pm drop) 5.00pm-6.30pm
Thursday 18 th	Christmas Party afternoon and Christmas Jumper Day <i>Children will be in Christmas jumpers, no party clothes or food needed</i>
Friday 19 th	KS2 Carol Service in Church 9.30am
	Last day of Term 2
<i>January</i>	
Monday 5 th	First Day of Term 3
Tuesday 13 th	Oak Class visit to Sevington Victorian School
Wednesday 15 th	Deadline for primary school applications

Please also refer to the **Key Dates Planner V1**, that includes all the dates that we know of for the academic year 2025/26 (at this point).

Our aim is that we give you advance warning and enable you to plan well ahead for some of the main events in the year. As events come into the school diary they will be added to the dates sections of the Newsletter and to Key Dates Planners V2 and V3 which are resent at the beginning of Terms 3 and 5.

Remaining TD Days 2025/26

20th April 2026

Please Note

We will close at 1:15pm on the following end of term dates:

- **Friday 19th December**
- **Friday 27th March**
- **Wednesday 22nd July**

Children will be ready to be collected from the playground at 1:15pm. *On these days we ask that children do not stay to play so that end of term clear-up and organisation can be planned to include any grounds maintenance that might be needed.*

Thank you

Other things you might want to know...

Fully Funded School Support Course



STUDY SMART
Free Online Courses

Fully Funded Course



www.studysmartuk.online

We are looking to fill 150+ School Support vacancies in local schools (e.g. SEN Support, Behaviour Mentors, 1-1 Classroom Support, Cover Supervisors etc). These roles are available in both full time and part time positions.

Please go to our website address given above, or scan the QR code for more information.



This is a 6 week course, full time, intensive course, with online guided learning sessions within school hours.
If you are earning less than £23,500 per annum or are in receipt of any benefits, you will be eligible for a fully funded place with us.



Being a Parent

For parents of children aged 2-11



Join us at :
The Haven Centre
Lowa road
Tidworth
SP9 7BT
Childcare Spaces Available
**Fri 20th Sept -
Fri 22nd Nov 2024**
10am - 12pm



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A 9-week course for parents
Full of practical ideas and support for you as a parent

For more information call us on:
0800 970 4669
Or visit our website:
Wiltshiretogether.org.uk/AllTogether



Wiltshire Council