



ORCHARD PRIMARY SCHOOL

NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2026

Dear Parents,

We hope you all enjoyed a restful and joyful winter break. As we begin a new term, we're excited to welcome our pupils back and look forward to a wonderful start to 2026 together. January brings fresh opportunities for learning, growth, and new routines, and we're eager to support every child as they settle back in. Thank you for your continued partnership—here's to a great term ahead!

Fiona Shields & the Orchard Team

RSPB BIRDWATCH

On Friday Jan 23rd January, EYFS and KS1 pupils will be taking part in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch and therefore it is advised that children bring in a hat, scarf and gloves as well as a warm winter coat. Thank you.

MILD ILLNESS GUIDANCE

We know that winter is one of the peak times for adults and children to come down with mild illnesses such as colds, coughs and sore throats.

This is therefore the perfect time to share a resource with you which aids in making judgements about mild illness:

[NHS Guidance: Is my child too ill for school?](#)

LEARNING TIMES TABLES

In readiness for our House Team Timestableathon at the beginning of March, we are having a big push in school on learning multiplication facts.

By the end of Year 4, children are expected to know their times tables and corresponding division facts up to 12 x 12, as stated in the National Curriculum.

They should be able to recall a multiplication or division fact within about five seconds. Pupils can access Times Table Rockstars online from home - each child has their own login. **Please contact your child's class teacher if you require more information.**

Advanced Notice: Parents' Evening will take place on Monday 9th & Thursday 12th February. A separate letter will be emailed out in due course.

REMINDER: PTA Film Night Thursday 29th January. A letter has already been circulated re: booking.

READING FOR PLEASURE & WORLD BOOK DAY

We really understand that families are very busy and that time can be limited, but if you can only do one thing to support your child, PLEASE make it reading with and to them. Reading for pleasure has huge educational benefits.

Advanced Notice: World Book Day is on Thursday 5th March. A number of pupils have again requested dressing up for World Book Day this year. We understand that families may be under significant financial and time pressures and aim to ensure that every child can participate in World Book Day, and can celebrate the stories they love, without an expectation for families to provide a costume.

Whilst pupils *will* be invited to dress as a book character, costumes will not be judged/paraded so there is absolutely no pressure to purchase or make fancy dress outfits therefore. Some characters don't require any dressing up at all e.g. Charlie (from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory); Matilda; Alex Rider There's even a book called 'Horrid Henry and the Football Fiend' for those children who want to wear their football kit!

REMINDERS

Book Bags - Please can we remind parents that children in KS1 and Y3 & 4 should only be bringing Book Bags into school, not large rucksacks. We don't have enough room for large bags in the cloakrooms and coats are constantly falling off overcrowded pegs, causing a trip hazard. Thank you for your anticipated support with this matter.

Labelling clothing - Please could you check that your child's jumper/cardigan and coat are labelled.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance during the Autumn Term was 95.8% overall. This is slightly above the expected DFE target of 95%. However, 10.8% of children had an attendance figure below 90% which is classed as 'Persistently Absent'. We would like to reduce this figure.

Often, the number of days a child is absent can accumulate without parents/carers realising just how many days have been missed. In short, all it takes is for between 6-7 days to be missed each term, and a child's attendance will fall below the 90% mark.

0 days off school in a year 0 lessons missed	100%	Perfect attendance
2 days off school in a year 10 lessons missed	99%	Excellent attendance
5 days off school in a year 25 lessons missed	97%	Good attendance
10 days off school in a year 50 lessons missed	95%	Slightly below average attendance
14 days off school in a year 70 lessons missed	93%	Poor attendance
20 days off school in a year 100 lessons missed	90%	Very poor attendance

There are strong links between regular attendance and high attainment. Missed days from school can also have an impact on the wellbeing of pupils and can result in gaps in their learning.

General ailments - Please be mindful of how many days in school are being missed due to minor illnesses, such as a cough or cold, or tummy or ear ache, for example.

Continued illness - Where absence exceeds 3 consecutive days, we would now request that medical advice is sought i.e. pharmacist, GP or 111. Absence in excess of 3 days will no longer be authorised unless medical advice has been sought in order to confirm that a pupil is unfit to attend.

Barriers - We would also like to remind parents that where any barriers to attendance are identified (e.g. anxiety), we will work with you to ensure that support is provided so that attendance is not adversely effected.

Request for Absence During Term Time - Leave of absence will not be authorised during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

A polite reminder that if your child will be absent from school, please contact school as soon as possible. 'Safe and Well' checks for pupils who are off school without any reason are undertaken by 9.20am each day and so it helps with office workload if we don't have to chase up none attendance issues. Thank you.

PUNCTUALITY

A polite reminder that all children are expected to arrive in school by 8:45am in time for morning registration, which is completed by 8:50am. Arriving late to lessons causes disruption to your child's learning and the learning of other pupils in the class.

DIARY DATES FOR THE SPRING TERM 2026

Tuesday 13th January - Choir: Young Voices at Birmingham
 Friday 16th January - World Religion Day
 Friday 23rd January - EYFS & KS1 RSPB School's Birdwatch
 Thursday 29th January - PTA Movie Night
 WB. 9th February - Children's Mental Health Week
 Tuesday 10th February - Safer Internet Day
 Monday 9th & Thursday 12th February - Parents' Evening
 Friday 13th February - School closes
 Monday 23rd February - School opens
 Thursday 5th March - World Book Day
 Friday 6th March Active Sports KS2 Bollywood Dancing
 Wednesday 11th March - House Timestableathon
 Thurs 12th & Fri 13th March - Y3 Beaumanor Residential
 Friday 13th March - PTA Mothers' Day Tea
 WB 16th March - Neurodiversity Week
 6th-15th March - British Science Week
 Tuesday 17th March - House Rap Battle
 Wed 18th to Fri 20th March - Y5 Residential
 Friday 20th March - Comic Relief & World Poetry Day
 Friday 20th March - PTA Spring Disco
 Thursday 26th March - Progress Checks out
 Friday 27th March - School closes
 Monday 13th April - School opens
 Friday 17th April - House Spellathon
 WB. 11th May - KS2 SATS Week
 Friday 15th May - PTA Rainbow Bounce
 Thursday 21st May – Sports Day
 Friday 22nd May – School closes