

2024 Autumn Term 1 - Newsletter

Dear Parents / Carers,

I am extremely proud of how well all the children have returned to school this term, ready to take on the challenges of their new year. Our new foundation stage pupils have taken starting school in their stride; we are immensely proud of how well they are embracing the start of their school journey. They have settled in extremely well and are already very much part of the Willesley School family.

We have had a busy and productive half term. The introduction of OPAL has been a real hit with the children and lunchtime play team. We have enjoyed seeing the children's play develop as their imagination and creativity has grown.

Children have already enjoyed a wide range of trips and visitors to school this term, creating lifelong memories, which are invaluable.

We have been overwhelmed by the generosity of the school community in helping us to support a variety of very worthwhile charities. The harvest festival food bank donations have been gratefully received, as well as the £150 donation that we were able to make to Leicester Children's Holiday from the KS2 church collection. Families that organised and supported the funding raising event for the playroom at Leicester Royal Infirmary raised a staggering £6200! Thank you to everyone who has supported these worthwhile causes.

We were delighted to welcome the new local MP, Amanda Hack, alongside, Catriona Ogilvy, the Founder and Director of The Smallest Things, premature baby charity, to talk about how we can support children in school. They enjoyed a tour of the school and hearing about school life from our fabulous greeters.

This half term seems to have gone in a flash! Enjoy a well-deserved break and we look forward to welcoming you all back on Monday 28th October.

Best wishes
Chloe Dilks
Headteacher

Foundation Stage

We are so happy with how wonderfully the Acorns have settled in this half term! They are all feeling much more confident with the routines of school life which is lovely to see. The children have loved exploring the FS provision where they are extending their learning daily and are also building beautiful friendships with each other. We are very impressed with how much they are enjoying their learning too, whether it is building and reading words, developing their mathematical skills or exploring the wonderful lives of us. Well done Acorns!



Year 1

Our Year 1 students have seamlessly transitioned into their new classrooms, embracing the exciting challenges of this pivotal year. They've quickly adapted to their surroundings and have shown great enthusiasm for learning - eagerly participating in various activities and exploring new concepts. They are showing great curiosity and eagerness to learn, and we're excited to see them grow and develop throughout the year. What a great start - Well done Y1!



Year 2

What a busy start the children have had in year 2! They have settled well into their new classes and have impressed us with their attitude to learning.

We started our Geography learning off with an exciting walk around our local area. The children were able to experience going into a variety of different shops and learning about what they sell and the history of the building. They behaved beautifully on this walk and we were very proud of them.

In English the children have been looking at traditional tales and performance poetry. We have been acting out our poems and changing our voices to suit the style of these poems.

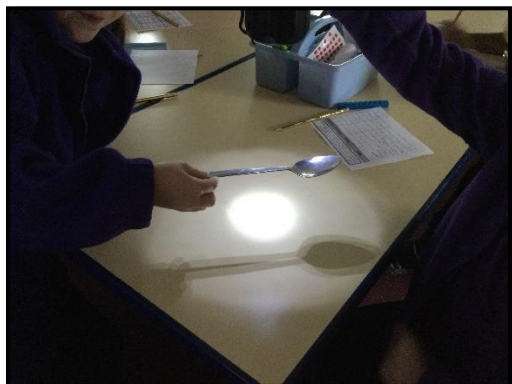
In Science the children have learnt all about living and non-living things and different habitats. We have had the chance to explore our outside areas and look for minibeasts in their microhabitats and what conditions are best for these creatures. The children enjoyed being outdoors and exploring these areas of our school. Year 2 made us all very proud with their singing in our Harvest festival and once again showed exemplary behaviour in the walk to and from church.



Year 3

We have been delighted with how wonderfully the Year 3 children have transitioned into KS2, and we could not be prouder of their enthusiasm for learning! In maths, we have taken learning outside, using natural materials to explore number place value.

In Science, we have been investigating shadows and discovering how different materials, from transparent to opaque, interact with light. What an incredible start to the year. We are looking forward for more exciting learning next half term as we approach Christmas!



Year 4

Year 4 have had a very busy start to the autumn term. In English, the children have enjoyed reading our class text 'How to Train Your Dragon' and have written some brilliant newspaper reports about the dragon initiation disaster.

In Maths, we have been securing our place value and addition and subtraction knowledge with lots of active maths sessions outside. The highlight of the term was when the children were able to re-enact a Viking battle, work as archaeologists and learn to play some popular games on our Anglo Saxon and Viking day.

We have also had a very successful start to our music lessons with the children receiving their saxophones and clarinets. They have mastered the art of positioning the reed and making sound. They can't wait to bring them home after half-term!



Year 5.

This half-term we have been learning all about World War Two – focusing particularly on how and why the war took to the skies. Year 5 have linked many of their writing skills to the two books we have studied, set during WWII.

We have recapped many important features of good, quality writing and children have become more confident in developing more interesting sentence structures and using more adventurous vocabulary.

In Maths, we have completed our place value unit and become more confident in adding and subtracting much larger numbers. In music, Year 5 have developed their own compositions using standards and non-standard notations.

Whilst in computing, we have developed our coding skills, creating advanced instructions for the Spheros.



Year 6

What a fantastic start to the term! Everyone has settled in extremely well and all pupils have shown many of our core values already. We have been busy doing exciting Science experiments, lots of active Maths activities and writing very dramatic stories as well as attending a week-long residential.

The majority of Year 6 headed off to Manor Adventure in Norfolk. Even though the weather wasn't perfect, lots of fun was had by all. Pupils took part in many activities such as: paddle boarding, kayaking, archery, climbing and caving. They have all made everlasting memories with their friends.



Focus

How are we keeping our children safe online in school?

As a school we have invested in 'SENSO' which is a software that enable us to 'Monitor. Manage. Safeguard' (Senso). We have advanced filtering in school and we are able to monitor the websites and content the children can access, as well as what the children type when working. Reports are generated, checked and monitored by SLT regularly which means any misuse can be identified quickly. The children are getting used to logging in via the senso app (in replace of Safari) on the IPads, as well as senso running on the laptops. During 'pupil voice' interviews in the summer term, each year group was able to explain how we use senso to help keep the children safe and why.

We want to encourage and foster independent use and access to the internet to enhance learning. Online safety is essential in order to ensure safe, purposeful experiences of the wonderful resources we have.

Computing update

Over the summer, we bought 30 new laptops which will greatly benefit our computing curriculum.

Harvest Festival

This year we have been delighted to have our two harvest celebrations taking place in local churches. For the first time, KS1 all went to Holy Trinity, where they sang with gusto and enjoyed their celebrations, while KS2 once again enjoyed their celebration at St Helen's Church. We were very proud of all our children, who represented our school in the best possible way.

As we remember how fortunate most of us are and celebrate the Harvest that nature brings us, we also think of those less fortunate; we have once again been overwhelmed with the number of donations we have received from our Willesley families for our local Ashby Food Bank. We thank you all for your support and your generosity.



Mental Health and Wellbeing

At Willesley, we prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff. We recognise that children of any age can experience wellbeing or mental health issues at any time and make it our aim to offer support as early as possible.

We have a pyramid of support for all members of the school, which begins with our positive whole school culture and ethos. Our 12 core values are embedded in everything that we do, including our restorative approach to behaviour.



Curriculum Focus

English

At Willesley, we are committed to nurturing a love for English in every child. Through engaging activities like reading aloud, storytelling, and creative writing, we aim to build strong literacy skills and boost confidence in communication. Our English curriculum encourages critical thinking and a passion for books, helping pupils develop both comprehension and vocabulary.

Parents can support their child's learning by reading together at home, discussing stories, and encouraging them to express their ideas through writing. By working together, we can effectively develop their English skills as the children progress through the primary years.

This partnership is lovely to see with our adult volunteers, who work in our school every week, supporting a range of pupils with their reading. The children and the adults look forward to sharing books together and seeing what adventures the pages take them on.

Well done to every one who took part in the summer reading challenge at the Ashby library. They were all proud to show off their certificates and medals for reading a range of books from the library. In addition to this, another pupil in KS2 achieved their Blue Peter reading badge, which is open to everyone and the applications can be found here <https://www.bbc.co.uk/send/u152443929>.

Well done everyone and I look forward to seeing the amazing work created in our English lessons this year.

Mrs Wilder

OPAL

What a fabulous launch of OPAL we have had. The OPAL Primary Programme is a structured process, with mentored support to enable us to permanently change both our environment and our culture to enable provision of amazing playtimes every day in all weathers.

The children have been thoroughly enjoying accessing different resources at lunch times and coming up with inventive ideas of how to use them. We've seen children going off on their holidays, building doughnut shops, creating dens and a lot of mud pies! We couldn't have had such a positive start on our OPAL journey if it wasn't for the wonderful donations and support that we have received from the Willesley community and beyond. We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for your kindness. We have some exciting plans coming up so keep your eyes out on our socials to see how our journey progresses.



Modern Foreign Languages

Children in KS2 learn French. We have adapted the 'Language Angels' scheme and teach phonics alongside topic areas with specific, progressive vocabulary in each year group. Children learn to speak in French and listen to the spoken French word; children also learn to write in simple sentences. Staff who teach French receive regular continuing professional development opportunities, led by the subject leader, Mrs Dilks.

Geography

We are thrilled to announce that our school has recently purchased DigiMaps to support and enhance children's learning in Geography across all year groups. DigiMaps is a fantastic online resource that provides interactive maps and tools to help children explore geography in a more engaging and dynamic way. This will allow our pupils to develop key skills such as map reading, understanding geographical features, and deepening their knowledge of the world around them, from local environments to global landscapes.

In addition, we have been working hard behind the scenes to ensure that our Geography curriculum is accessible to all children, from EYFS to Year 6. Staff have participated in several meetings to carefully review and refine the curriculum, ensuring that it provides a clear progression of skills and knowledge. This means that each child, regardless of their starting point, will have the opportunity to thrive and enjoy learning about geography through rich, interactive experiences.

Gardening Club

This half term the Gardening Club have enjoyed collecting and removing seed from plants that have finished flowering. In the spring we are going to sow these seeds so we can increase our stock of plants.

We had fun making 'bulb lasagnes' so again in the spring we will have a lovely colourful display.

We connected with nature and made some enticing fruit kebabs for the birds who visit our sensory garden.

We would like to say a big thank you for all the bulbs and seeds which have been kindly donated. THANK YOU!



Ashby Willesley PTFA

Firstly, the PTFA would like to welcome Harriet Rushton and Elissa Park to the committee for this coming year. We are very pleased to have you on board and are looking forward to working with you both throughout the year.

This half term we have been busy putting plans in place for the year ahead. December will see the return of the Winter Wonderland, our festive event for all the children at Willesley. We are also busy planning another Christmas Market with local traders, mulled wine and mince pies as well as our quiz which will help you to beat those January blues!

As always, we will be asking for your support in the preparation stages and during the events so if you think you can help us out, please do let us know (ashbywillesleyptfa@gmail.com).

Many thanks, Ashby Willesley PTFA

Governors

The first half of the Autumn term really has flown by, what with the new starters, the new playtime experience and everything in between time does really fly when you are having fun! The Governing Board held the first of this academic year's meetings and defined our plan for the upcoming 12 months and we look forward to supporting the school and promoting the skills development of the Governing Body for the rest of the academic year 24/25.

Key dates for Autumn Term 2

October	
Mon 28 th	School open
Weds 30 th	Individual pupil photos Y4 residential information evening – 5pm
Thurs 31 st	Closing date for secondary school applications
November	
Fri 1 st	Diwali celebrations – wear bright clothing
Fri 8 th	Remembrance assembly – Rainbow/Brownie/Beavers/Cubs uniform may be worn
Sat 9 th	Open Morning new starters for August 2025 9am-10.30am OPAL build day 10.30 - 2.00 - contact the office if you have skills and tools to help us
Sun 10 th	Remembrance service in Ashby – Y6 House Leader invited to attend
Fri 15 th	5ML class assembly – 9.15am Children in Need – Non uniform £1 donation
Wed 20 th	Y5 parents' information meeting for Y6 residential – 5pm
Fri 22 nd	5JC class assembly – 9.15am Parent forum meeting 2pm
Thurs 28 th	Sports awards evening – invite only
Fri 29 th	PTFA Christmas fair shopping evening 7pm
December	
Tues 3 rd	Y3/5 Christmas performance – Holy Trinity church 6.30pm families welcome
Weds 4 th	Y4/6 Christmas performance – Holy Trinity church 6.30pm families welcome
Fri 6 th	Decorations morning – parents welcome – 9.15-10.30am
Mon 9 th	Flu vaccinations
Tues 10 th	2CA families – Christmas production 9.30am Acorn 1 families – Christmas production 2pm
Wed 11 th	Acorn 2 families – Christmas production 9.30am 1SH families – Christmas production 2pm
Thurs 12 th	1KD families – Christmas production 9.30am 2VW families – Christmas production 2pm
Tues 17 th	Christmas dinner – pre-order required – more info to follow
Wed 18 th	Stage-Ed Pantomime in school – funded by PTFA
Fri 20 th	End of Term
January 2025	
Mon 6 th	School open

Term Dates

February 2025	
Mon 17 th – Fri 21 st	Half term
April 2025	
Fri 11 th	End of Term for Easter
Mon 28 th	School open
May 2025	
Mon 26 th – Fri 30 th	Half term
July 2025	
Tues 8 th	End of Term for Summer