

Links Journal

Autumn Term 2025

Dear Parents/Carers

As we reach the end of a long but fast-moving term, it's amazing to reflect on just how much has been achieved. The weeks have flown by, filled with hard work, determination, and plenty of memorable moments. Our children have risen to the challenge of their mock exams with maturity and focus, and we are incredibly proud of the effort they have shown.

Beyond the classroom, the children have enjoyed a wide range of trips and visits that have brought their learning to life and created experiences they will remember for years to come. It has truly been a term full of enrichment, progress, and growth.

As we look ahead to the new year, we kindly remind families of the importance of good attendance. Being in school every day ensures that children continue to make strong progress and don't miss valuable learning opportunities.

As we head into the Christmas break, we hope everyone finds time to rest, celebrate, and recharge for an exciting term ahead.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish Ms Bloom, Teaching Assistant in PSB, all the very best and to thank her for the support she has given the children during her time with us. We wish her every success in her new role in the New Year.

Mrs Backhouse, Outreach Worker, is also leaving us this week. She has been with us for five years, starting as a Pastoral Worker before joining the Outreach Team. On behalf of the staff and children, I would like to thank her for all the support she has provided, not only at Links Academy but also across our local schools. She has consistently gone above and beyond to support the children. We wish her the very best of luck in her new role starting in January.

Kind regards

Mrs Brown

Mrs Brown
Head of School



Links Academy welcomes comments from parents/carers
and families about any aspect of school life.

Please contact us via our email admin@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk

www.linksmultiacademytrust.herts.sch.uk to view Ofsted reports, key dates, journals and
school information



School Calendar

Autumn Term Ends

Friday 19 December 2025

@ 12.30pm

Spring Term

INSET DAYS

Monday 5 January
2026

No Children in school

Student Parent Review Day

Tuesday 6 January 2026

Form Tutors will arrange a convenient time to meet with parents & children

Term Starts

Wednesday 7 January
2026

Half Term

Monday 16 February—
Friday 20 February 2026

Welcome to the Autumn newsletter for the Inclusion Unit at Links Academy. We have had a positive start to the school year, with both returning and new children settling in calmly and eager to start the new term. We have already seen ample examples of our three core values (Respect, Responsibility and Resilience) being displayed daily, which is fantastic. The new children this term have been hard at work starting their learning journeys towards Functional Skills qualifications in both Maths and English, along with our returning Year 10's. Our Year 11's began by focusing on achieving their level 2 grades in Functional Skills, but also alongside completing lessons to prepare them for the GCSE's they will sit in the summer.

In Maths this term, we have focused on settling all of our new children with work on the main four operations with a view towards gaining entry level certificates and working towards Functional Skills Level 1 qualifications. To facilitate that, we have covered topics such as Place Value which has covered rounding, whole numbers, decimals and estimating. We have also covered Properties of 2D shapes which includes regular/irregular polygons, quadrilaterals, line of symmetry and calculating missing angles. For Year 11, the focus has been more connected to preparing them for GCSE with topics such as Place Value, Linear Graphs, Bearings, and Probability.

In English this term, we have been working on applying the key skills of inference to understand texts as well as exploring the purpose and audience of different text types. This has helped the children be able to answer reading questions and then apply the knowledge to write great examples of the types of text we cover, e.g. reports and/or formal letters. We have also recapped grammatical devices that help our children with creating and organising powerful sentences. Finally, we have worked on the idea of debating key events and giving our constructive opinion within a discussion.

Alongside our Functional Skills and GCSE work in core subjects, we have also been able to offer further opportunities in areas such as home cooking / catering and Science to some of our children.

**Mr Marland,
Inclusion Teacher**



Timetable

It has been a busy and exciting term at Cedars. This term, we are delighted to have welcomed three new children to our class, and we look forward to working with them throughout their two terms with us. The children have been working hard across all areas of their learning, and our timetable reflects a balance of academic, creative, and practical experiences.

A typical week includes a variety of lessons such as English, Maths, Eco School, PSHE, PE, Art, Computing and Science, as well as a cooking lesson on Fridays. To support our children's wellbeing and focus, we also include fun "brain break" activities throughout the day, including outdoor activities and Alert sessions. We also have daily Circle Time sessions where we focus on any current topics identified by staff each week, which helps support children's social and emotional wellbeing.

English

In English this term, our focus has been on the book *Kick Off* by Dan Freedman. The children have enjoyed exploring the story and characters through a wide range of engaging activities. We began by creating player profiles and designing our own football boots, followed by class discussions around *fair play vs. winning at all costs*. The children explored football idioms, figurative language, and persuasive techniques during our Explore lessons.

In our writing lessons, we focused on diary entries describing our emotions before a big match, using direct speech during a game, and distinguishing *fact vs. opinion* after watching a football match clip. Finally, in Grammar, the children applied their knowledge of verbs to write their own lively match commentaries.

Our next English units have focused on Roald Dahl, and we have read and studied two of his books, finishing the unit with an exciting trip to the Roald Dahl Museum. Our first text was *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, where we explored the characters in depth and used the story as inspiration to create and make our own chocolate bars, as well as design our very own chocolate factories. We also wrote safety information to help keep visitors safe inside our factories. In addition, we thought carefully about how Charlie's senses would have been overwhelmed as he first stepped inside Willy Wonka's magical world.

We then moved on to reading and studying *The Twits*. In this unit, we explored the characters of Mr and Mrs Twit, thinking about how the book describes Mrs Twit as not always having been ugly, but becoming ugly because of her ugly thoughts. We discussed what this meant and how our thoughts can influence how we behave. We also looked at the tricks Mr and Mrs Twit played on each other and even came up with our own new tricks. At the start of the unit, we created our own disgusting recipes by changing real ingredients into revolting ones. We then used imperative verbs to write our recipes clearly, before publishing them to go into a class recipe book!

Finally, we have ended the term studying the *The Polar Express* book.....



Maths

This term in Maths, our first major focus was on fractions. The children explored the size of different fractions through practical activities, using concrete resources and visual models to help them understand how fractions represent parts of a whole. They also worked with fraction walls and number lines to compare and find equivalent fractions and practised identifying and placing fractions on a scale to deepen their understanding of value.

We then moved on to division and multiplication. These lessons were very hands-on, using arrays, counters and repeated grouping to help the children build strong foundational skills. They practised recognising multiplication as repeated addition and division as sharing or grouping, allowing them to make clear links between the two operations. They also worked on solving simple word problems to apply their skills in real-life contexts.

Our work on telling the time focused on building confidence with both analogue and digital clocks. The children learned to read and write the time to the hour, half past, quarter past, quarter to, and five minutes past. They also practised matching analogue times to their digital equivalents and explored how to identify the correct minute and hour hands. Many have made great progress in recognising time in everyday situations.

We are currently finishing the term with our money unit. They have been learning to recognise coins and notes, count amounts of money, and compare different values. They are also beginning to work on making amounts in different ways and solving simple addition and subtraction problems involving money.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Earlier in the term, the children had the exciting opportunity to visit Pizza Express. During the visit, they learned all about the origins of the different ingredients used to make a pizza, including where the flour, tomatoes, and cheese come from and how they are prepared before reaching the restaurant. The children then had a hands-on experience exploring the dough, describing its texture, noticing how soft, stretchy, and smooth it felt, and learning how to knead it properly. Each child created their own pizza base, carefully spreading the tomato sauce, adding cheese, and choosing additional toppings to personalise their pizzas. While the pizzas were being cooked by the staff, the children learned about kitchen safety and hygiene, giving them a sense of responsibility in a real cooking environment. Once ready, we took the pizzas to the park, where the children enjoyed tasting the pizzas they had made themselves and shared their creations with friends. After lunch, they had time to play and explore the park, making the trip both a fun and educational experience that combined learning about food, teamwork, and practical skills.

Later in the term, we enjoyed a wonderful day out visiting the quiet village of Great Missenden in Buckinghamshire for our session at the Roald Dahl Museum. The children took part in an engaging workshop, learning how Roald Dahl collected trinkets, memories, and ideas throughout his life — especially during his time as a pilot — and how these experiences influenced many of his stories, including *James and the Giant Peach*, *Going Solo*, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. As a group, we even created our own story inspired by flying before exploring the museum.



Topic

Our topic work this term has covered a wide range of exciting and creative subjects. In Eco Schools, children designed and built recycling bins made entirely from recycled materials, taking inspiration from their favourite Minecraft characters. This project encouraged creativity and problem-solving as students thought carefully about how to strengthen their structures using only reused materials. They also reflected on the importance of recycling and how small changes at school and at home can have a positive impact on the environment.

In Alert, we focused on developing effective communication and listening skills. One of our most enjoyable activities was the “back-to-back” drawing challenge, where one child described a picture while their partner attempted to draw it without seeing the original. This helped children practise giving clear, detailed instructions as well as listening carefully and asking questions when needed. The activity also sparked brilliant discussions about how misunderstandings happen and how we can communicate more clearly.

In PE, they took part in a variety of team-based games that encouraged cooperation, communication, and fair play. We explored how to work effectively as part of a team and how positive encouragement can help everyone achieve their best. Alongside teamwork games, students also enjoyed practising basketball and table tennis skills. They worked on dribbling, shooting, passing and spatial awareness in basketball, while table tennis sessions helped develop hand-eye coordination, control, and quick reactions. The children have shown fantastic enthusiasm and sportsmanship throughout the term.

In Art, we explored colour in depth, beginning with primary colours and learning how to create different tints by gradually adding white. Children used this technique to produce beautiful pieces that demonstrated care and creativity. We also used tinting to create spooky Halloween-themed artwork, experimenting with how lighter and darker shades can change the mood of a picture. Watercolours were another key focus, and students enjoyed creating wax-resistant paintings using crayons to add patterned details before applying a watercolour wash. We also produced our own folk tree art, thinking carefully about different types of lines, depth, and how colour washes can bring the final piece together. To finish the term, children completed a series of festive Christmas art projects to celebrate the season.

In Science, they took part in several exciting hands-on investigations. One of the highlights of the term was our “Magic Milk” experiment, where they explored surface tension and chemical reactions by adding food colouring and washing-up liquid to milk. They were fascinated by the swirling, dancing colours and enjoyed predicting and observing the changes closely. Throughout the term, we have focused on encouraging curiosity, asking scientific questions, and using simple equipment safely to support our growing understanding of the world around us.

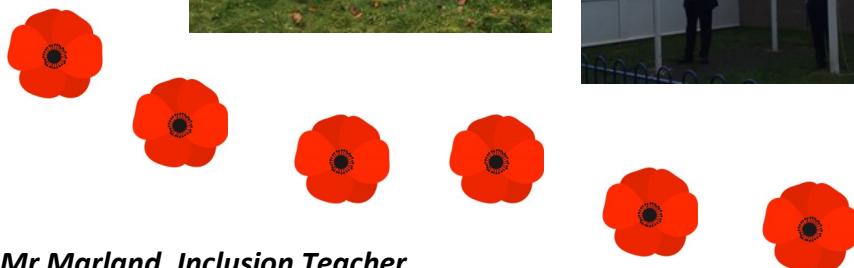
Links Academy Remembers



This term, the children across Links St Albans took part in meaningful activities to commemorate Remembrance Day. At Woollam Crescent, children from both the PSB and secondary inclusion groups worked together on a series of creative, art-based tasks. Their collaboration showed our core school values—resilience, responsibility, and respect—as they produced a wonderful collection of thoughtful artwork.

Meanwhile, at Hixberry Lane, pupils created doves of peace which were displayed outside and listened to readings to mark the occasion. Both sites joined together in observing separate minute's silences on Tuesday 11th November, demonstrating maturity and reflection.

Across all settings, the children showed exceptional behaviour and respect throughout. We are incredibly proud of the effort, empathy, and teamwork displayed by the children and the staff.



Mr Marland, Inclusion Teacher

November Mock Exams - A Successful Start



We are pleased to share that the November mock examinations have gone very well. Our children have approached the exams with maturity and focus and we are proud of the effort they have shown. Attendance and punctuality have also been strong which is especially important as they get used to the routines and expectations of the real GCSE examinations in the summer.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all parents and carers for your cooperation and support. Ensuring that children arrive on time, in full uniform, and prepared to sit their exams has made a significant difference to how smoothly the process has run.

A heartfelt thank you also goes to our staff for their continued dedication in supporting and invigilating the exams each day.

Together we are helping children to develop the confidence, consistency, and resilience they will need for their final GCSEs. Well done to everyone involved!

Mrs Uluçay, Trust Exams Officer



WEAR IT PINK DAY

Wear It Pink Day 2025 took place on **Friday 24 October 2025**, as part of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Our staff wore pink to school to raise awareness and show support for those affected by the disease.



WEAR IT RED DAY

Show Racism the Red Card is the UK's leading anti-racism educational charity. It was established in January 1996, thanks in part to a donation by then Newcastle United goalkeeper Shaka Hislop.



In the 1990's, Newcastle United were challenging for the Premier League title. Shaka Hislop was at a petrol station near St. James' Park one day filling up his car with petrol when he was confronted by a group of young people shouting racist abuse at him. After they got closer, one of the group realised that they had been shouting at Shaka Hislop. Their attitude suddenly went from abuse to admiration and instead they began asking for an autograph.

It was from this experience that Shaka realised he could harness his influence as a professional player to make a difference. Coupled with the power of 'the beautiful game' and his status as a role model, Shaka thought education could be an effective strategy in challenging racism in society.

To this day Show Racism the Red Card continues to utilise the high-profile status of football and football players to help tackle racism in society and has also expanded into other sports and involved other personalities. The majority of the campaign's work involves the delivery of educational workshops to young people and adults in schools, workplaces and at events held in football stadiums.

As Nelson Mandela said "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

The Team at Links Academy showed Racism the Red Card by dressing in red. Through our practice we empower children to explore the diversity of the human race, we encourage children to acknowledge and embrace the differences and qualities that make us unique. We teach that every person, irrespective of their characteristics or appearance, should be treated with respect and kindness.



Cedars say "No" to Racism

The children in Cedars took part in an important discussion about racism and what it really means. Together, they talked about how racism isn't just about the colour of someone's skin, but can also be linked to race, culture, and background. The children shared their ideas thoughtfully and showed a great understanding of how everyone deserves to be treated equally and with respect.



The class also explored how racism can affect people's feelings and confidence. They discussed how unkind or unfair behaviour can make someone feel sad or left out, and why it's so important to speak up and support others if we see this happening.



To help them think about real-life situations, the children worked in groups using scenario cards. They had to decide whether the examples were racist and talk about what they would do to support a friend in that situation. The children gave some fantastic ideas and showed real empathy and maturity in their responses.



To finish off the session, everyone designed their own bright and powerful "Show Racism the Red Card" posters. These posters shared messages of kindness, equality, and standing up for what is right.

We are so proud of how thoughtfully the children approached this topic and how they showed such a strong sense of fairness and compassion. Cedars truly showed that they are ready to make a positive difference in the world!

Mrs Backhouse, Higher Level Outreach Worker & Mrs Barnes, PSB Teacher

The Knife Angel comes to Hertfordshire

The impressive Knife Angel sculpture came to Welwyn Garden City for the month of October. Standing tall (27 feet tall!) in the town centre, this sculpture, made from over 100,000 seized blades was specifically created to highlight the negative effects of violent behaviour whilst solidifying our critical need for social change. Not only does the Angel act as a catalyst for turning the tide on violent and aggressive behaviour, but it also acts as a beautiful memorial designed to celebrate those lives who have been lost through these violent and thoughtless actions.

The Angel stood as the focal point of a month-long campaign of activities to raise awareness of anti-violence across the whole of Hertfordshire. At Links Academy, we seized this opportunity to engage our young people and educate them on the perils of knife crime. In small groups, all our children had the chance to visit the Angel, complete a work booklet and watch a theatre performance at Welwyn Campus West that focussed on gangs, knife crime and racism. Local Police Officers were present and eager to engage with our children and local Paramedics were on hand to demonstrate how to perform CPR and how to use a tourniquet.

During October, a month-long amnesty was in place during which time 500 knives were surrendered, that's 500 potential weapons locked up and safe. I hope that our children were able to learn something from this anti-knife campaign, a lesson that might just keep them safe and help them to make positive choices.



PCSO Richard Bunn

PSHME and RSE Programme – Autumn Term Highlights

This Autumn term, our PSHME curriculum has been delivered through a rich programme of **Friday assemblies**, supported by specialist staff and a range of external contributors. These sessions give children valuable opportunities to explore important themes related to personal development, wellbeing, safety and citizenship.

Autumn 2025 Assembly Themes

Our rota this term has covered a wide range of meaningful topics, including:

- **New Year, New You** – setting goals and establishing positive routines
- **Positive Mental Health** – strategies for wellbeing and emotional resilience
- **Careers: “The Story of My Life”** – staff career journeys and pathways insight
- **Poetry Day / Black History Month** – celebrating creativity and cultural heritage
- **Hate Crime Awareness Week** – promoting respect, equality and inclusion
- **World Food Day** – understanding sustainability and healthy eating
- **Men’s Mental Health Month** – tackling stigma and encouraging open discussion
- **Children in Need** – social responsibility and charity
- **Online Safety** – safe digital behaviour and decision-making
- **Student Voice** – celebrating child leadership
- **The Story of Christmas** – cultural and religious reflection

Looking Ahead – Parent/Carer Consultation

With new national PSHME and Relationships and Sex Educations (RSE) guidelines due in **September 2026**, we will be reviewing our curriculum over the coming year. As part of this process, we will invite **parents and carers** to contribute through a formal consultation to help shape our updated programme.

Further details will be shared later this academic year.

Mr Buckland, Assistant Headteacher/DSL

SALON INTERNATIONAL TRIP

As part of our course enrichment, on Monday 13 October 2025 some Year 10 & 11 Hairdressing students from Hixberry & Hatfield visited Salon International at the Excel London.

The event consists of three days and is attended by roughly 40,000 visitors over that period; our children attended the last day of the event which is designed for colleges and schools and has lots of goodies available.

We experienced lots of live demonstrations for hairdressing, barbering and beauty and there were many stalls with new products to look at and purchase a few bits as well.

It was a fantastic day out and a great opportunity for those in Year 10 & 11 that are interested in the hair and beauty industry.

The children represented Links Academy brilliantly throughout the day.



Miss Scoggins, Teacher of Hairdressing

ROALD DAHL MUSEUM TRIP

Our museum journey began with Roald Dahl's early life and schooling, discovering how his childhood shaped many of his later creations. We then explored his adult life and writing career, with a highlight being the chance to see inside his famous writing shed. This shed, carefully moved from his garden to the museum, contained many fascinating objects that inspired his stories. The children were excited to spot items connected to characters and scenes they recognised.

We continued our adventure in the Storytelling Gallery, where the children explored different ways of creating stories through art, costumes, word play, and live-motion photo storyboards. To finish the day, we took a peaceful walk through the village and up the hill to the church, following the BFG's footprints along the path, where the children visited the final resting place of Roald Dahl, who passed away 35 years ago. It was a thoughtful and inspiring end to a magical trip.



Ms Barnes, Teacher of PSB



A Tasty Adventure: Our Trip to Pizza Express!

On Thursday 16 October, Cedars PSB and Links Academy secondary children set off on a delicious adventure for a school trip to Pizza Express! This wasn't just about making pizzas (though that was a definite highlight), it was also an opportunity to show our school values: Respect, Resilience, and Responsibility.



From the moment we arrived, our children showed great respect for the staff at Pizza Express, for each other, and for the environment around them. They listened carefully to instructions, used polite manners, and helped each other. There was great teamwork shown from both the primary and secondary children. Everyone played their part in creating a respectful and positive atmosphere.

Making pizza isn't always as easy as it looks but the children showed real resilience. If something didn't go to plan, they didn't give up. They encouraged each other and kept trying until their pizzas were just right. The results? Absolutely delicious pizzas!



Throughout the trip, the children demonstrated amazing responsibility by staying with the group, looking after their belongings and each other. The older children acted as brilliant role models for the younger ones, showing how teamwork and maturity make all the difference on school outings. It was lovely to see the secondary children helping and engaging with the primary children.

By the end of the trip, everyone left with full bellies, big smiles, and their very own handmade pizzas. But even more importantly, they brought back lessons about working together, staying resilient, and showing kindness and respect towards each other.



Ms Crawford, Associate Assistant Headteacher



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ELF-TIVITIES THIS CHRISTMAS



Our little elves returned again this year to Hixberry Lane and Woollam Crescent and have entertained the children daily throughout December with their mischief.

Woollam Crescent Elves arrived in a postcard on our occasional day and settled very quickly by feeding the dinosaurs the following day, even when the sign asked them not to! They have been busy making dominos pizza and rolling themselves out! They have found the site a little cold at times and were very clever to either 'wrap themselves up warm' or by keeping 'toasty'.

They certainly have been very busy elves this year!



Attendance at Links Academy – Understanding Authorised vs Unauthorised Absences

The autumn term began with a strong and positive start for children's attendance across the Trust. After six weeks away, many children returned eager to get back into the rhythm of school. However, as the days became shorter, wetter and colder, some children found it harder to maintain consistent attendance. Poor behaviour choices by a small number of students also contributed to a drop in attendance as the term progressed.

Why Does Attendance Decline Over the Term?

Any child's absence from school will fall into two categories; authorised and unauthorised.

Authorised absences reasons will include:

- Illness
- Medical appointments
- School suspensions

Unauthorised absences reasons will include:

- "Too tired, up gaming all night"
- "Refusing to get out of bed"
- "Can't be bothered"
- No contact or reason provided

Both types of absence reduce learning times and impact your child's progress. Even when an absence is authorised, it still results in lost lessons and missed learning opportunities.

What Does Attendance Really Mean?

It is a common misconception that 70% attendance is acceptable. In reality, 70% attendance means a child has missed 30% of the school year, which equates to:

- 57 days of lost learning
- Around 11 school weeks
- Nearly a whole school term

This level of absence creates significant learning gaps that are challenging to close and this affects a child's academic progress and wellbeing.

At half term, parents were given an update of the number of days of school their child had missed, showing how small odd days here and there, repeated absences or suspensions quickly accumulate. If a child is absent from school for one day per week over a seven week half term period, then they have missed over a week (1 week and 2 days) of school.



How Can I Support My Child's Attendance?

There are some easy wins, which parents can access:

1. Create a Healthy Sleep and Morning Routine

A simple step is to establish consistent routines. A traditional alarm clock can help children wake up independently and reduces the reliance on mobile phones. Setting a phone curfew, removing devices from bedrooms overnight, switching off Wi-Fi and maintaining a regular sleep schedule all support better attendance.

Looking for a stocking filler this Christmas?

An alarm clock not only could help with waking, but also great for helping to read the time!

2. Deciding if Your Child Is Too Ill for School

If you are unsure whether to send your child to school, consider whether they could attend for part of the day, or whether they may feel better after a short rest. If your child must stay home, encourage independent learning such as reading or using resources like BBC Bitesize.

3. When a Child Is Suspended

Suspended children cannot attend school during the period of their suspension, but they can still access online learning through Google Classroom. Supporting your child to complete work at home during school hours, helps minimise learning gaps and relieve boredom.

The Rule of 5 Activity

If your child is finding school attendance difficult, the **Rule of 5 Activity** encourages them to reflect on:

- What is stopping them from attending
- Identify 5 things they like about school
- Identify 5 things they dislike about school



This activity will be used again during the Student Performance Review Day (SPRD) in January to help families and staff identify barriers and put support in place.

If you have questions or need support with your child's attendance, please contact the school team.

Cedars Attendance Update – Autumn Term 2025

As we come to the end of our Autumn Term, it is time to celebrate once again, the fantastic attendance of all our children at Cedars.

Halloween (Pumpkin Prizes)

There were 36 school days for the first half of the Autumn Term, 'Pumpkin Prizes' were awarded by Mrs Porritt and Mrs McGleish to all of our Cedars children in recognition of their amazing attendance and resilience in attending school. Special mention to Reggie who received 100%



A special guest appearance by Daisy, who was able to showcase her wonderful Halloween costume and congratulate her Cedars friends on how smart they were for coming to school. Our children (and staff) had a fun-filled time at this spooktacular event.

Christmas (Rudolph Rules)



Our elves are currently busy working on our Christmas celebrations for the end of term 'Rudolph Rules' rewards. Our children's attendance for the second half of the Autumn Term have been equally impressive to date.

One Cedars' child received an impressive 23/24 days for his attendance, last Friday. Our children will be receiving their Rudolph Rules prizes and certificates at our Christmas Lunch on Tuesday 16 December.

Mrs Porritt, Trust Attendance Officer

Eco School Award with Distinction! 🌱

We are thrilled to announce that our school has been awarded the **Eco School Green Flag with Distinction!** This prestigious recognition celebrates our commitment to sustainability, environmental learning, and community action — and it's all thanks to the hard work of our Eco Team, staff, and children.

The **awarding body were hugely impressed** with our Eco School bid and the breadth of initiatives we have undertaken. They praised the school for its creativity, teamwork, and long-term commitment to sustainability, congratulating everyone involved on a truly outstanding team effort.

Over the past year, we've been busy running a wide range of eco-initiatives:

👉 **Bees and Biodiversity** – We renewed our beehive and welcomed a new swarm of bees, while planting bee-friendly flowers such as salvia and buddleia. Around the hive, we've created a mini orchard and planted trees and wildflowers to encourage pollinators and wildlife. We also launched "No Mow May" again, added to our Remembrance Garden with a poppy area, and are planning a pond in the car park with support from our successful STEM funding bid.

👉 **Growing Greener Grounds** – From planting wildflower gardens and perimeter trees to developing outdoor spaces for both learning and recreation, our grounds have never looked greener! The upcoming outdoor gym, BBQ and pizza-making days (using recycled wood chippings for fuel) are all part of our mission to make outdoor spaces more engaging and sustainable.

👉 **Waste and Recycling** – We've made major strides in reducing waste through clothes recycling (Bag2School) and crisp packet recycling with Morrison's St Albans. The funds raised are helping us buy composters and a wormery, allowing us to manage our food waste sustainably. Our new recycling facilities, clearer labelling, and re-tendering of collection contracts are making recycling easier and more effective across the school.

👉 **Sustainability and Healthy Living** – Working with the 101st Foundation and DofE participants, students have been learning about sustainable farming, foraging, and outdoor cooking. "No Meat Mondays" and "Grow Your Own" projects are helping everyone understand where food comes from and how to eat in a more planet-friendly way.

👉 These initiatives demonstrate our school's belief that **every small action makes a big difference**. We are incredibly proud of this achievement and of the collective effort that has made our school a true example of environmental leadership in action.



Mr Buckland, Assistant Headteacher/DSL

Elf-Care Kits: Christmas Hygiene Gift Bags

This Christmas season, the staff at Links are delighted to share a little extra warmth and care with our families through festive hygiene gift packs. The holidays can be a busy and sometimes challenging time, and these small bundles of essentials are our way of offering comfort, kindness, and a touch of seasonal magic.

Packs have included everyday hygiene items—such as soap, toothpaste, deodorant, and other practical essentials—wrapped with our Christmas spirit to remind you and your young people that you are valued and supported.

At Links, we believe that Christmas is about community, connection, and looking out for one another. By sharing these hygiene gift packs, our staff hope to bring a little joy into homes, strengthen relationships, and to let you and your families know we're here for you—not just during the holidays, but all year long.

From all of us at Links, we wish you a warm, healthy, and Happy Christmas season.



Mrs Backhouse, Higher Level Outreach Worker



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'How to be outstanding in your field'

We began the new school year with a handful of new recruits for our '**Growing Futures**' farming project, working alongside colleagues from the 100&First Foundation.

Our children have enjoyed several un-bale-ievably fun sessions at Cheyney's Farm, Great Missenden, led by farmer Max and the foundation's Head of Delivery, Izzy.

Cheyney's is a working farm, using organic methods, *supporting long-term* soil health, eliminating the use of harmful pesticides, and *promoting biodiversity*.



Checking the beds



Scavenging by the
grain silo



Our children have demonstrated the LINKS character school qualities of resilience, responsibility and respect, joining in with the activities even when the weather has been challenging.

Sessions so far have included goal-setting, team-building exercises, a scavenger hunt, egg-breaker games, soil testing, and pepper picking.



Constructing a smash-proof vessel

Eggs-cellent fun

One activity which has fully engaged our young farmers has been the 'Egg-Breaker' game. A competitive 'Boys versus Girls' atmosphere quickly developed, and it was game on!

Teams had to find their apparatus, hidden around the grounds, and use them to construct the perfect smash-proof vehicle. The finished crafts were then powerfully propelled skywards, and everyone winced when they crash-landed. Referee Max checked the wreckage to assess the damage...or the intact egg within. Early attempts were surprisingly successful, and nobody left with egg on their faces (or boots).



Farmer Max prepares to launch



Capturing cheeky caterpillars



A year of activities are planned, and by the end of programme children will have had the opportunity to plan what food to grow, prepare the soil and kitchen garden, speak to industry insiders, use composting methods, dig the beds, plant in Polytunnels, care for various farmyard animals, learn recipes, and ultimately cook and present their food. There may even be a fantastic 'reward' trip for those who engage and attend fully...

The project is a wonderful opportunity for our children to learn about where the food on our plates comes from and how to sustain ourselves in healthy and practical ways.



Children persistently picking peppers



Weighing the harvest to see who gathered the most



Mr R Boxer, Healthy Lifestyles Lead

Hello Yellow - World Mental Health Day

On the 10th October, the team at Woollam participated in **Wear it Yellow for World Mental Health day** to show our young people that we stand together for young people's mental health.

Mental health refers to any aspect of a person's emotional, psychological and social wellbeing.

We know that it is important to take care of our physical health, but it is just as important to look after our mental health.

Having good mental health allows you to:

- make the most of the opportunities available to you;
- maintain healthy relationships with family, friends and other people in your life;
- cope with change and uncertainty in life.

Your mental health can fluctuate throughout your life depending on what stage you are at and your personal circumstances. Many people will experience poor mental health at some point in their lives.

Our mental health exists on a continuum, ranging from excellent mental health to severely poor mental health. Most people find that their mental health varies along this continuum throughout their lives.



Poor mental health

Anxious
Exhausted
Overwhelmed
Struggling to cope with everyday tasks

Excellent mental health

Motivated
Energetic
Joyful
Able to overcome challenges

It's OK Not to Be OK. We all have times when we feel upset, stressed or worried. Most of the time we are able to cope with these feelings and they will eventually pass. However, sometimes they can develop into more serious issues.

It usually isn't as easy to spot a mental health issue as it is to spot a physical health issue, but there are signs that you can look out for to know if someone is struggling with their mental health, for example:

- withdrawing from friends and family;
- losing interest in hobbies or activities they used to enjoy;
- tiredness, low energy, having trouble sleeping or struggling to get out of bed;
- lower confidence or self-esteem;
- extreme mood changes, for example acting very happy then very sad;
- behaviour that is unusual for that person (this might include being loud and outgoing if they are normally quiet and reserved);
- confused thinking or being unable to concentrate on everyday tasks;
- poor time-keeping or missing deadlines;
- not washing or taking care of themselves;
- changes in eating habits;
- self-harm or suicidal thoughts.



There are a number of different ways that you can improve and maintain your mental health and wellbeing. These are sometimes called the Five Ways to Wellbeing.

1. **Connect** – make an effort to see and speak to others. If you are feeling low or troubled, speak to someone you trust. It can feel awkward to talk about our feelings, but opening up can help you to feel supported and less alone.
2. **Keep active** – regular exercise can improve your self-esteem and help you concentrate and sleep better, all of which have a positive impact on your mental health. Try to get outside for a walk each day, or take up a new sport or exercise that you enjoy.
3. **Learn new skills** – taking up a new hobby or working on a project can help to boost your self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as giving you a sense of purpose.
4. **Give to others** – offering your time to others can be rewarding. Helping out family and friends or volunteering in your local community can help you feel connected to others and give you a feeling of self-worth.
5. **Practise mindfulness** – this involves taking the time to pay attention to the present moment. This could mean doing things like breathing exercises or meditation, or focusing on how your mind and body feel, or what you can see around you, at a particular moment.

There are several things we can do to raise awareness about mental health:

Start a conversation – developing awareness of mental health relies on us being able to talk freely and openly without judgement or stigma. Talking about mental health or sharing your own experience could empower others to ask questions or seek their own support.

Share reliable information – if you or someone you know has been diagnosed with a mental health condition, make sure that the people in your life have a good understanding of what this means and what they can do to help.

Wear it Yellow - the team at **Woollam** have come together in **yellow** on **World Mental Health day** to show our young people they're not alone with their mental health.

For more information about mental health and where to get help and advice, you may wish to visit the following websites:

Mental Health Foundation
(www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

Mind
(www.mind.org.uk)

Rethink Mental Illness
(www.rethink.org)

Childline
(www.childline.org.uk)



Mrs Backhouse, Higher Level Outreach Worker & DSP



Nip in the Bud was set up to encourage awareness about mental health disorders in children.

Daniel Nabarro was the co-founder, and the gap in mental health support for children led Daniel to come up with the concept of Nip in the Bud using short films to raise awareness among teaching staff, parents, carers and others working with children to highlight the positive benefit of early diagnosis of mental health issues.

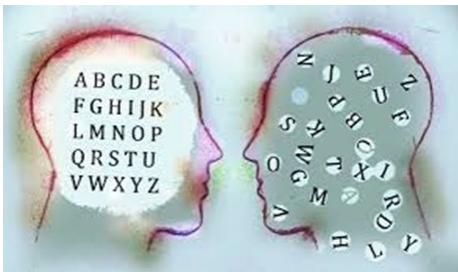
Mental health had an immense impact on Daniel and his wife's lives as their daughter first displayed OCD symptoms at the age of eight but wasn't diagnosed until her late teens precisely because there was a lack of information about children's mental health conditions at that time.

These relatively common problems which begin in childhood and adolescence can have wide-ranging and long-lasting effects, affecting a child's relationships, their educational attainment and job opportunities. If left untreated, they could also develop into serious mental and physical health problems and have significant economic and social costs, not just to the individuals and their families, but later in life to the health and criminal justice system too. With early intervention things can be very different.

Nip in the bud make short evidence based films provided by experts from South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, Great Ormond Street Hospital, Anna Freud, King's College, Imperial College and others. The films show real-life experiences with interviews with young people and parents who have been affected and who speak frankly and movingly about their experiences. The films illustrate the behaviours common in different conditions in children. They are accompanied by downloadable fact sheets explaining the symptoms to look out for, to spot early signs of distress which may require further monitoring, and information on how to follow up and get help through the 'Where to go for help' page.

You can find these films by clicking on the following link: <https://nipinthebud.org/>

Mrs Backhouse, Higher Level Outreach Worker



October is Dyslexia Awareness Month.

What is dyslexia?

It's a learning difference which can affect your learning in a number of different ways. Most people don't find out that they have dyslexia until they are over the age of seven.

This is the age where most children have learnt the skills that we think of as the foundations of reading. It is also the age when students can start to feel self-conscious and anxious about how they are learning in comparison to their peers.

As this is a difference that affects one in ten of us, it's useful to understand what dyslexia is and to be able to talk about it confidently. We all have unique qualities. Part of being human is that we have physical differences, for example in height; skin colour, eye colour, fingerprint patterns or how spicy we like our food. Our brains are unique.

Neurodiversity is a helpful word because it means that brain differences are normal. In the same way that we look different from each other, we may think and see things differently from each other and our learning experiences may be different too. Dyslexia is one of many differences that we know about. With dyslexia, learning and thinking can be more challenging in some situations or provide you with strengths in other areas. For example, learners with dyslexia are often very good at seeing patterns where other people cannot. They are also known for being able to understand and relate to other people with high levels of skill. They may have lots of fantastic ideas but getting all those ideas written down could be a problem.

Dyslexia is a difference in the way that the brain handles information. No two people with dyslexia are alike even though they may share similar experiences.

Here are some common experiences that people with dyslexia describe:

- Struggling to hold information in their short-term memory. A good example of this is when you have a maths problem and you forget what the number you started with was while you are trying to work out the rest of the problem.
- Remembering longer sequences of information.
- Being able to decode words and remember their meanings.

Dyslexia is a spectrum so it might be a mild to a manageable problem or it might cause serious difficulties with learning.

We don't know exactly how many people have dyslexia. An estimate is between 10 - 15% of the world's population – that is around 700 million people. In a class of thirty students, you could expect three students to be somewhere on the dyslexia continuum – this means that they are experiencing dyslexia as a mild or as a profound difference in the way that they think and in the way their brain likes to learn things.

SECONDARY OUTREACH TEAM

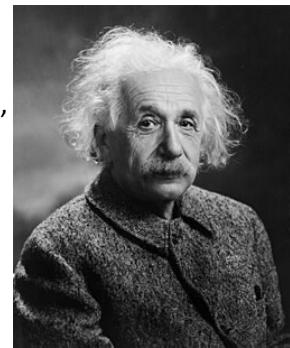
The brain is an electrical network made up of small cells called neurons. The neurons talk to each other and make connections electrochemically. The connections enable you to process information, feel and interact with the world. We all have a brain that's individual to us, that is why we see and understand the world in different ways. Dyslexia is a way of describing the way that the brain manages the information it sees and hears.

Here are some of the most common differences and difficulties that people with dyslexia can experience:

- Reading – learning the different skills that we need to read and write, such as structuring a sentence and spelling or sounding out individual words
- Matching letters to sounds and sequencing letters
- Using a dictionary can be difficult if you can't remember the alphabet sequence
- Remembering many instructions or being able to hold a piece of information in mind while you work something else out can also be tricky

There are other differences that people with dyslexia can experience too, like:

- visual disturbances that might make letters seem to move around when reading;
- juggling many pieces of information without understanding the bigger picture first, which can make understanding something new difficult;
- trouble telling left from right;
- needing more thinking time to remember the right word;
- finding it difficult to hold a pencil and to write by hand;
- getting organised and staying organised.



People with dyslexia will experience these things in different ways. It might make learning feel almost impossible or one or two things may just be a bit tricky. It is fair to say that for some, having dyslexia can be a real challenge. It can feel like you are doing your very best to learn and that the information just won't go in the same way that it does for other people.

With so many challenges linked to learning, we shouldn't be surprised that dyslexia can have an impact on emotional wellbeing and self-esteem.

One of the most challenging issues for a child with dyslexia is when there has not been recognition of their learning difference or if the level of dyslexia challenge is very high. If your young person is struggling and feeling like they are not making progress, it is going to make them feel frustrated. That is why the understanding, friendship and support of friends and classmates is so important.

Although some of the differences can make things difficult for people with dyslexia, there are other positive differences that are assets and highly valued in the workplace. People with dyslexia can have a different skill set that makes them very useful people to have on your team, especially when you are solving tricky problems.

Famous people with dyslexia include: Albert Einstein; Leonardo da Vinci; John F Kennedy; Whoopi Goldberg; John Lennon; Jamie Oliver; Richard Branson; Tom Holland; Steven Spielberg; Jay Blades; Guy Richie; Holly Willoughby; Sally Gardener; Rio Ferdinand and Dominic Woo.

People with dyslexia have changed the world and the way that we all see it. There are strengths to having dyslexia. If you would like more information please visit:

Website: bdadyslexia.org.uk

Website: goredfordyslexia.org/ Email: Go-red@succeedwithdyslexia.org

Mrs Backhouse, Higher Level Outreach Worker & DSP

The secondary Outreach Team have had a busy start to the new Academic year, 2025-26 covering 25 schools across St Albans, Harpenden, Welwyn, Hatfield and Hertsmere, supporting students in their existing mainstream settings.

The team managed by Mrs Haynes, provide a pivotal role providing a service that supports schools in understanding and developing practical and creative strategies to enable students with social and emotional needs and challenging behaviour, to become more successful learners in school.

As a team, they work to support the emotional wellbeing and behaviour of young people promoting a holistic approach to understanding and supporting the emotional wellbeing, engagement and behaviour of learners.

The outreach team work with school staff, parents/carers and the children to help:

- To reengage disaffected pupils in their mainstream school.
- To support children on reintegration or managed moves.
- To engage and work with parents/careers in their child's educational provision.

The Outreach Team use their knowledge and skills to provide practical interventions within mainstream settings and have a proven track record in successfully supporting and enabling schools to aid children with social emotional and mental health needs to find practical, creative ways to meet the needs of the school and children alike. The team provide 1-1 support developed to suit the needs of the individual along with bespoke group work.

As a team they support children and young people experiencing social, emotional, mental health, and behavioural difficulties helping to reduce impacts of challenging behaviour (e.g., refusal to follow instructions, defiance, verbal/physical aggression, attention-seeking, disruption) so learners can succeed in school.

They work therapeutically to support emotional wellbeing: self-esteem, anxiety and withdrawal. Interventions are short-term, personalised, and measured via assessments, progress tracking, and regular reviews.

They support each other through peer supervision, most importantly with a cup of Yorkshire Tea.

Mrs Backhouse, Higher Level Outreach Worker





Meet Father Christmas Church Farm Ardeley

Selected dates in December



Festive Farm Entry includes
 Christmas Activity Pack * Festive Woodland
 Walk the farm & see the farm animals



Meet Father Christmas
 Father Christmas in his outside grotto
 (includes a quality toy)
 Meet the Elves
 Write a letter to Father Christmas
 Write a wish for the Wish Tree
 Bag up reindeer food & carrot to take home to Rudolph

Additional Activities

Santa Paws – bring your beloved pooches to meet Father Christmas include treat & toy
 Harvest your Own Christmas Tree
 Festive Tractor & Trailer Ride
 Feed the farm animals

Book online www.churchfarmardeley.co.uk

This is an outdoor event so plenty of fresh air. Wrap up warm & wear wellies!



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 A Free Range Experience



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by maximus

You don't need a new year to start new habits

Start small, start now!

Sign up to one of our free healthy lifestyle services today to kickstart your health goals for 2026 and beyond.

Beezee **FAMILIES**

- Free, fun, family-focused support
- Learn about healthy eating
- Get moving more
- Connect with other families
- One-to-one support also available!

Beezee **YOUTH**

- 13-17 year olds can talk about topics that matter to them
- Learn about physical, mental and social wellbeing
- Get free health resources
- Join a safe space.



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- Free support for families with children aged 0-5 years
- Explore parenting and healthy lifestyle tips
- Chance to make new friends
- Free toolkit provided.



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24-30/07