



Christmas Newsletters



‘Do not be afraid! I am here with Good News for you,
Which will bring great joy to all people’

This was what the angel said to the terrified shepherds on a hillside above Bethlehem. The Good News was that a ‘Saviour’ had been born. God had sent his son to Earth to come and live alongside us to show the world that it is better to bring peace rather than conflict, to love our neighbour as ourselves and to serve rather than be served.



Many churches have a Christingle service around this time of year; it is a way of helping us to remember the meaning behind Christmas: the orange symbolising the world; the fruit and sweets on sticks representing the different seasons; the candle, the light that Jesus brings to the world; and the red ribbon, the sacrifice that he made for us.



I occasionally wonder if the orange should be replaced with a pear because it sometimes feels like the world has gone a little ‘pear-shaped’! We often hear about international conflicts, national inequalities and the challenges and heartbreak that friends and family face. It can feel like we need some ‘good news’ and a ‘rescuer’!

However, the excitement and enthusiasm that the children bring to this time of year gives us much to be joyful about. Also, our wonderful Book, Brew and Biscuit event was a great example of our community coming together with a shared purpose of spending time with the children and each other in a warm and welcoming way.



However you hope to find good news and happiness this festive period, be it from the Christmas message or quality time with those you love or both, I wish you some pure, unbridled joy & smiles during the holidays.

Andrew Denham



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Early Years Team

Mrs Dyer (Penguins) writes: We have had a very busy term. We started by learning to tell the story 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'. We learnt to join in with the repeated refrains and to sequence the story. We made a dark bear cave in the classroom and used torches to be able to see inside.



We have been learning about the changes from Autumn to Winter and studied celebrations that happen at this time of year. We looked inside a pumpkin and used spoons to scoop out the seeds. We learnt about Bonfire night and firework safety, along with the celebration of Diwali. We made some very pretty Diya lights with salt dough, then painted and decorated them with glitter.



In maths we have been learning about what the word subitising means. This is being able to recognise a small number of objects without counting them. Over the last couple of weeks, we have started to learn about the Christmas story and have been practicing songs to perform at our singing concert. We decorated our Classroom Christmas tree and were lucky enough to see Santa flying above our school in a helicopter.



Miss Tierney (Puffins) and Mrs Stanley (Swans) write: We have had a very busy term. We started by learning to tell the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'. We also enjoyed listening to some different versions, such as 'Goldilocks and the Three Crocodiles'. We made maps of Goldilocks' journey from her house to the bears' house and thought about what she might have seen.



We found out why we have fireworks on the 5th of November. We made rockets and painted fireworks. We also enjoyed making breadstick and melted chocolate sparklers and eating them at Forest School while watching real sparklers. Exploring the Jewish celebration of Hannukah was great fun. We listened to traditional

Hannukah music, learned the Hannukah story and lit candles. We wrote a class prayer and enjoyed a Hannukah treat of doughnuts.

The children have relished the opportunity to put on a Nativity play! We now know the story very well and are looking forward to performing to the school and to our families.



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Year 1 & Year 2 Team

Mrs Parsons & Mrs Snowball (Wrens), Miss Kellock (Robins) and Miss Richardson (Nightingales) write:



The children in Year One and Year Two have been working exceptionally hard this term. We have been investigating the characteristics of living things in our science lessons and how animals are linked within their habitats. We have delved into the story of Guy Fawkes in our History, and have explored the work of Andy Goldsworthy in our Art.

Our overarching work this term has been our RE, where we have been learning the Christian story of Christmas. We thoroughly enjoyed making Christingles to mark advent and are incredibly proud of our performance of the Christmas story – we hope you all enjoyed it as much as we did. We wish you all a peaceful holiday and look forward to an exciting term with you in the new year.



Mr Guy (Owls), Mrs Smith (Falcons) and Mr Macfarlane (Hawkes) write:



The children have continued from the end of a great Term 1 with a brilliant Term 2. Our big topic term has been the Arctic Circle and it has been great to see the children learning about such a large & diverse area of the planet. Learning about polar bears was a highlight especially when they learned just how big & dangerous they are but also how extremely vulnerable to they are to climate change.

We have also had a visit from Thames Valley Police, and we heard the story of PC Ben who taught us about how it is OK to be different. This visit fitted in well with the work we have done in our PSHE lessons as well as Anti-Bullying Week that occurred this term.



Our science topic question was, 'Which part of the digestive system is most important?' This has led to us learning about why we have different teeth along with an experiment to highlight how bacteria attack our teeth and why it is important to look after them. We also looked at tracking food through our bodies and how it is processed, this created both awe and disgust in equal measure!

'What is the Trinity?' has been our big question in R.E. We have learned about the role of water in baptism and the symbolism behind it. Our leaning continued on with the exploration of the Gospels of John, Luke and Matthew and the ways the birth of Jesus is portrayed in these scriptures.



Our literacy has seen us look at the amazing picture book *The Tin Forest* by Helen Ward, which we utilised to help us with our descriptive setting writing. We have also used it to assist us with learning to write an informal letter. Everyone in Lower Key Stage 2 would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous 2025, where Term 3 also promises to be equally exciting after a well-earned break.

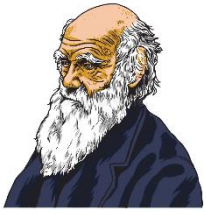
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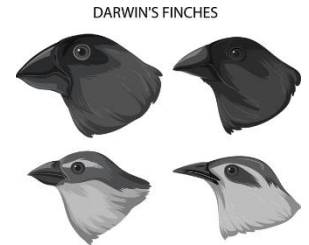
Community

Year 5 & Year 6 Team

Mrs. Allmond (Kites), Miss Hill (Eagles) and Mr. Mallam (Kestrels) write:



We can't believe it's nearly Christmas already! This term has zoomed by. The staff in Upper Key Stage 2 are so impressed with the children, how they are flourishing and continuing to push themselves in all that they do. In Science, in our Evolution and Inheritance unit, we learned about Charles Darwin and his voyages on the HMS Beagle, examining the evidence he collected, the theory he made, and how modern science has proved this to be correct. We explored the concepts of adaptation and inheritance, and how these random changes can create animals better suited for their habitats. We also investigated how Galapagos Finches' beaks were adapted for specific food types.



In Geography we have been focused on Mountains and the different mountain ranges of the world. We've used maps & atlases to explore different ranges, looked at the different processes that form mountains, explored the climate data of different mountains & looked at the impact tourism has had on the most popular mountain ranges.

In D&T, children have been learning to sew, creating the most beautiful bags. They examined different bags for different purposes, pulling them apart to see how they were made, before designing and creating their own bags from pillowcases. The final bags are incredible – no gaps and super strong!



Our literacy has been focused on animals, and those species which are at risk of extinction, either due to hunting or poaching, or from habitat destruction. The children were appalled at the questionable acts of some people and decided that something needed to be done. After exploring the WWF website, they decided to raise money to adopt animals, first writing formal persuasive letters to Mr Denham (he was incredibly impressed with the children's convincing arguments) asking for permission, and then organising and running a bake sale that saw them raise £288. We are so proud of the way the children took the lead to raise money for such an important matter.

In PE, we have thrown ourselves into Dance, learning and creating moves in a street dance-style version of Sax by Fleur East. We are certain the children will never forget the moves. The children have really impressed us with how they have all had a go to learn and perform the moves together. We've also explored Basketball, learning how to dribble, pass and shoot, working as a team to play quick moves to attack and defend well.



What an action-packed term! Thank you for your continued support. We hope you have a lovely restful Christmas and a happy New Year, and we will see you back in 2025.

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Our vision for the school is to **Nurture Excellence**. Every seasonal term we finish with our Excellence Awards assembly where we celebrate the children who have particularly impressed their class teacher by demonstrating excellence during the term. Congratulations to the following children:

Puffins: **George Smith** for making excellent progress in all areas of learning. He consistently tries his best and is always keen to help others. He is a kind and caring member of the class. **Eli Waller-McGibbon** for his positive and enthusiastic approach to learning. He works hard and shows resilience when something is tricky.



Swans: **Perry Savage** for showing such amazing determination and resilience, approaching challenges with enthusiasm and humour. **Ariah Stevens** for showing fantastic behaviours for learning and embracing our school rule of 'Be Your Best'. She is a kind and helpful member of our team.



Robins: **Daisy Mays** for showing such a fabulous attitude towards her reading and Maths this term, including extra work at home. All of this with an excellent sense of humour. **Freya Clements** for becoming an expert in 'Courage' since she started by overcoming the challenges of starting a new school, making new friends, PE lessons and singing in front of an audience, to name a few!



Nightingales: **Woody Drewe** for making us proud with how much commitment he has made to his learning this year. His reading has come on so far and we are so proud of his motivation for his home reading and wanting to better himself. **Grace Hillier** for finding her confidence to speak up in class. She has shown so much courage in wanting to share answers in class in various subjects.



Wrens: **Jennifer Ho** for working so hard and approaching each challenge with a smile. On top of that, she has also shown wonderful compassion and care to the people around her. **Isla Clapham** for working really hard on improving her writing and listening to instructions carefully. Isla's positive attitude to her learning makes her fun to be with and she is always careful to be kind to her friends.



Owls: **Lana Hillier** for her quiet focus and incredible effort that have been consistently demonstrated over the course of the last two terms. Her are hard-working, conscientious and have exhibited excellence in every task you've been set. **Zane Clibbon** for being someone we can always rely on to be their best in class. In his first two terms of Year 4, he has focused so well on using the learning he does in class in his own independent work. His contributions to class discussions always move the learning of the class on and he has become an excellent role-model in his work as a school councillor.





Falcons: **Mia Parker** for a fantastic start to Year 3. It has been amazing to see her grow in confidence and come into school every day with a smile on her face. She is such a kind and considerate member of the class who always looks out for others. **Marcus Szeto** for his growth in confidence since the start of the year and we love hearing all his wonderful ideas in class. He demonstrates such great learning behaviours and we are so proud of all his achievements so far.

ACHIEVEMENT

Hawks: **Destan Bas** for making a real effort in all areas of his learning and giving his best across all subjects. We have been pleased to see that all his hard work on his reading and writing has been rewarded during our end of term - assessments. **Ernie Headen** for having an amazing start to the academic year. He has shown courage by pushing himself to engage more in whole class discussion. During this term we have noticed a real change in his attitude in his writing, especially in our whole school write.

Awesome!

Kites: **Levi O'Dell** for his thoughtful and confident contributions to class and his openness to challenging himself in his learning, particularly in Maths. **Alice Kinnaird** for demonstrating all our school values in everything she does. She approaches every task with careful consideration, attention to detail and a positive attitude.

SUCCESS

Eagles: **Harvey O'Dell** for impressing us week after week with his excellent attitude to learning and the exemplar behaviour he displays in class. He is always actively engaged in lessons, sharing information and his views with others. Harvey is a true role model for our values of courage, compassion and kindness. **James Mays** for impressing us with how he has risen to the challenges of being a Year 5. He listens intently in all lessons and works incredibly hard to apply the skills he has been taught. The quality and quantity of his work has gone from strength to strength.

WONDERFUL

Kestrels: **Emma Lane** for throwing herself into any task, no matter the challenge, always taking the utmost care and attention to produce the very best quality work. She works carefully and methodically, but quickly and she is keen to get work done. It has made us so proud to see her work hard and support others in everything this term. **Daniel Turner** for throwing himself into everything he does. His knowledge of so many things has impressed us and he always has something interesting to add.



Updates & Notices

Money owed.

We have several thousand pounds worth of money owed to the school for trips, lunches and clubs. The school cannot afford to 'write off' these outstanding balances. If balances are not cleared, it will have a direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning for your children because we will have to take money away from resources. Please make sure you have cleared your ParentMail by the New Year.

Pencelli Residential.

A reminder to Year 6 parents that the deadline for the final payment is the 7th of February 2025. Staff have spoken to parents about any special arrangements that need to be in place to support families financially. If the 7th of February deadline is going to be difficult for you to meet, please speak directly with the class teacher.

Wrens Class and SEND Support across the school.

From next term, Mrs Snowball and Mrs Jones will be job-sharing the teaching of the class, with Mrs Jones in the classroom every day of the week. This is so that Mrs Parsons can provide more support to children and families across the school, where the child has special educational needs. Year 2 children will be very familiar with Mrs Jones who taught in Wren Class last year. Mrs Jones has worked in KS1 over many years and is familiar with the curriculum and in meeting the needs of our younger children.

School Run Clubs

We are aware that there are not many clubs available for children to attend during the school term. This is something that Mr Denham and the team want to address in the future because we are keen to ensure that our school provides a wide range of activities for all the children, throughout the week. For now, the clubs that will run during Term 3 (from 3.15-4.00pm) are as follows: *(Parents can sign up in the first week of Term 3, ready to start in Week 2).*

Tuesday: Multi-Sports Year 1&2

Wednesday: Drama Year 3-6

Thursday: Choir Year 1-6

Friday: Football Year 5&6

Term 2 Key Dates

Details and timings for these events will be given in the Start of Term Letter

Term 3

Monday 6th Jan: **First Day Back**
Wednesday 15th Jan: **Year 5/ 6 Sportshall Athletics Event**
Thursday 16th Jan: **School Census Day**
Monday 27th Jan: **Dance Festival (Dance Club Only)**
Tue 4th & Thu 6th: **Plas Pencelli Parents Meeting (Yr 6)**
Friday 7th Feb: **NSPCC Number Day**
Wednesday 12th & Thursday 13th Feb: **Learning Reviews**
Friday 14th Feb: **Last Day of Term 3**
Monday 17th – Friday 21st Feb: **Half-term Break**

Term 4

W/C 24th Feb: **Y6 Residential to Plas Pencelli**
W/C 24th Feb: **Y5 Bikeability (Level 1 & 2)**
Tuesday 4th Mar: **Reception and Y6 National Weighing and Measuring Programme**
Thursday 6th Mar: **World Book Day**
Thursday 27th Mar: **Y6 Junior Citizens**
Tuesday 1st April: **Easter Church Service at St Peters**
Thursday 3rd April: **Last Day of Term 4 for Nursery**
Friday 4th April: **Last Day of Term 4 – 1:15pm finish (R-Y6)**
Monday 7th April – Tuesday 22nd April: **Easter Break**

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