

Dear Families,

Welcome back to the start of a new year and a fresh Spring Term. We hope you enjoyed a restful break and would like to wish all our families a very happy and healthy New Year. The children have returned full of enthusiasm and curiosity, even if the dark mornings and cold weather have taken a little getting used to for us all!

The beginning of a new year is always a moment to pause and refocus, and one priority we intentionally bring to the forefront every January is reading. Regular reading at home remains one of the most powerful ways to support children's learning, confidence and long-term success across the curriculum. Strong language and vocabulary underpin everything children do in school – from solving maths problems to explaining scientific thinking – and daily reading makes a real, measurable difference.

Educational research reminds us just how significant this is: children who read for around 20 minutes a day are exposed to nearly two million words a year, while those who rarely read may encounter only a fraction of that. That difference has a profound impact on comprehension, vocabulary and overall progress. We encourage you to protect time for reading at home, even on the busiest days, and to continue supporting number facts, times tables, *Winning with Numbers* and *Times Table Rockstars* as part of regular home learning.

Attendance also remains a key priority for us this term. We know winter brings coughs and colds, but unless your child is very unwell, has a temperature or an upset stomach, being in school really does matter. Every day counts, and children miss vital learning and social opportunities when they are absent.

Finally, we want to share just how excited and grateful we are following the incredible fundraising success that has enabled us to purchase the bus. Reaching this milestone is no small achievement, and now comes the truly exciting part – designing and transforming it into something magical for the children. A huge thank you to the Friends and a 'shout out' to Mrs Hannon who has worked tirelessly behind the scenes, quietly making things happen with what can only be described as magic. We are so lucky to have such a supportive and generous community.

Finally, the staff and I would like to thank you for your generous Christmas gifts and well wishes this year and for supporting your children and the school in events that took place in the last few weeks of term.

Have a lovely weekend,
Sinead Connolly, Headteacher

Diary Dates

31/01/26 Farmers' Market
12/02/26 Willow Class workshop Scott Polar
13/02/26 Half-Term Begins @3:15
02/03/26 Learning Together afternoon EYFS
03/03/26 Learning Together Morning Year 4
05/03/26 Learning Together Morning Year 3
09/03/26 Learning Together Morning Beech
10/03/26 Learning Together Morning Willow
12/03/26 Learning Together Morning Maple
24/03/26 Poetry by Heart
25/03/26 Parent Consultations 1pm
27/03/26 End of term 1pm

Loose Parts @Little Hadham Primary

Once again, we're looking to replenish our loose parts play resources. Loose parts are versatile items like tyres, crates, wooden planks, and tarpaulins that spark creativity and allow children to play in endless ways—from building pirate ships to creating obstacle courses or dens.

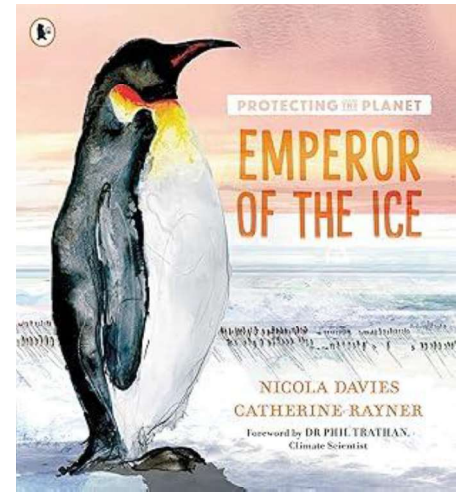
If you have any of the following items cluttering up your home or garden shed, we'd love to give them a new lease of life! Donations can be dropped off at the school office.

We're looking for:

- Tarpaulins (various sizes, types, and colours)
- Milk and bread crates
- Tough buckets
- Tubes, guttering, funnels, hosepipes, bore pipes
- Ramps and lengths of plastic or corrugated transparent plastic
- Nets
- Tyres (bicycle, motorbike, go-kart, or car tyres)
- Trolleys for tidying up
- Wheelbarrows

Empathy Assembly In our fortnightly Empathy Assembly this week, we shared the beautifully illustrated book *The Emperor of the Ice*. The story follows an emperor penguin on a long and perilous journey across the frozen Antarctic, showing extraordinary resilience, determination and care for others in the harshest of conditions. As we listened, the children were encouraged to think about what the penguin might be feeling at different points in the story and how small acts of perseverance and compassion can make a big difference.

The book opened up thoughtful discussions about empathy, responsibility and the impact our actions can have on the world around us. A special thank you to Rupert, who asked questions that helped everyone think more deeply about the penguin's challenges and the importance of understanding life from another's point of view, and how we as humans can help take care of our world. Assemblies like these continue to support our children in developing kindness, curiosity and a strong sense of empathy for others.



Staff Training

Last week, staff took part in a really positive and thought-provoking INSET day focused on supporting children both academically and emotionally. In the morning, Mrs Tweedale, led training on reading fluency and why it is such a crucial part of becoming a confident reader. Drawing on professional research, staff explored how fluency allows children to focus on meaning rather than decoding, building comprehension, confidence and enjoyment. As many experts highlight, "*Fluency is the bridge between decoding and understanding*," and it was wonderful to reflect on the strong reading practice already in place at Little Hadham, alongside practical ways to strengthen it further.

In the afternoon, we were delighted to join other schools to hear Luke Mitchell from Positive Regard, who delivered engaging training centred on children's emotional regulation and behaviour. Staff explored why many children are currently finding it harder to regulate their emotions, how interruptions to physical and emotional development can affect behaviour, and why staying calm in a busy classroom can be challenging for some children. We also learned about stretching a child's *window of tolerance*, managing resistance during play, and using therapeutic play techniques to support regulation and connection.

Positive Regard's mission closely aligns with our values at Little Hadham: creating an inclusive environment where every child feels safe, understood and able to thrive. The training prompted excellent reflections on the strong relational practice already embedded in our school, while giving staff practical strategies to deepen this work further. It was an uplifting day that reinforced our shared commitment to supporting the whole child, emotionally, socially and academically so that every child feels a true sense of belonging and is able to succeed.

This week in Early Years, we have been building our vocabulary! With a focus on descriptive language, the children thought of different ways that Jack moved up the beanstalk. The children had Jack **reaching**, **stretching**, **clambering** and even **hopping** up to the giant's castle!

The children enjoyed using this vocabulary to contribute pieces of writing to our class display, along with bean stalk paintings and delicious looking jelly beans (though we weren't too sure about the 'smelly sock' flavoured ones)!



In maths, Saplings have been using positional language to describe where Cheeky Monkey has been hiding, focusing on **on** and **under**. Ash have been exploring number bonds to five, looking at the different parts of five to understand the composition of the number.



In PSED, the children enjoyed listening to our story Hold On Harold! In the story, Harold needed help to understand what was safe to go inside his body. The children shared their understanding of safe items to go inside our bodies such as food and drink, and unsafe items, such as chemicals and certain medicines. We spoke about how it is our grown ups' job to look after medicines and give medicines when we are feeling poorly. This fruitful discussion led to a real eagerness to explore books all about the human body and to look at real x-rays to see what is inside our bodies.

During PE this week the children enjoyed developing their throwing and catching skills. They started off throwing balls before challenging themselves to throwing a smaller bean bag. The children used their team working skills well to work in pairs and take turns throwing and passing the balls and bean bags in different ways.



Continuing with our fairytale topic we read the story of 'The Three Little Pigs'. Inspired by the tale the children discussed what materials would be best to build houses from. We then had a science investigation exploring materials. The children drew and labelled designs and made their houses out of a variety of materials. They tested out what materials were the strongest and explored ways to attach materials together to ensure they are structurally sound. There was lots of excitement and giggles as the children had fun testing their houses to see if they were strong enough to not be blown down by 'The Big Bad Wolf!'-a hairdryer! It was great fun!

Beech Class have had a busy and enjoyable time learning across the curriculum and we are very proud of the effort and enthusiasm the children have shown.

In English, the Year 2 children have been writing recounts based on an imagined trip to the Amazon rainforest. They worked hard to write in the past tense, sequence events clearly and include descriptive detail to engage the reader. The quality of vocabulary and imagination was impressive, with children writing phrases such as, "When I landed in the Amazon rainforest, my eyes widened in astonishment," and "The lush, leafy trees amazed me." Some children also reflected on their experiences, writing, "What a spectacular place this is!" These recounts showed growing confidence in sentence structure, punctuation and word choice, as well as careful editing to improve their work.



Meanwhile, the Year 1 children have been recounting the familiar story of *Jack and the Beanstalk*. They focused on retelling events in the correct order and writing simple, clear sentences using capital letters, full stops and key vocabulary from the story.

In mathematics, the Year 2 children have been learning to tell the time to the nearest five minutes using analogue clocks, while the Year 1 children have been learning problems related to the days of the week and months of the year, as well as developing their understanding of the passing of time and time-related vocabulary.



In science, the Year 2 children enjoyed investigating a pretend crime scene involving a broken window. They searched carefully for clues and used their knowledge of materials to decide which material may have caused the damage. The Year 1 children explored how daylight hours change across the seasons, making observations and discussing patterns they noticed.

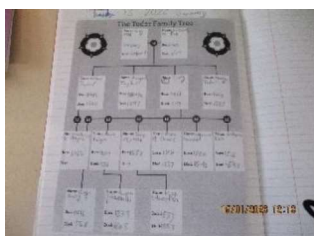
In design and technology, the Year 2 children have been studying the work of Barbara Hepworth and spent time sketching her sculptures in preparation for designing and creating their own. The Year 1 children sketched and labelled their favourite fruits and wrote about which parts of the fruit were edible, linking their learning to healthy eating and clear communication.

This week in English, the year 3 children have been having fun with some familiar fairy tales — with a twist! We began by exploring an alternative version of *The Three Little Pigs*, retold from the wolf's point of view. Was he really the villain of the story, or simply misunderstood? The jury is still out! This sparked thoughtful discussion and helped pupils consider perspective and character motivation. We then moved on to *Hansel and Gretel*, where the children questioned whether the stepmother was truly wicked, encouraging them to look beyond first impressions and think more deeply about storytelling.

In year 4 the children have been learning to write persuasively, writing letters to ensure that adults are good role models! We'd better watch out.....

In Maths, both year groups have been building confidence with multiplication. Year 3 have been learning how to multiply two-digit numbers by one-digit numbers by partitioning the tens and ones, using base ten resources to support their understanding. Year 4 have been developing more formal written methods, practising both expanded and short multiplication. It has been wonderful to see the children growing in confidence and accuracy as they apply these strategies.

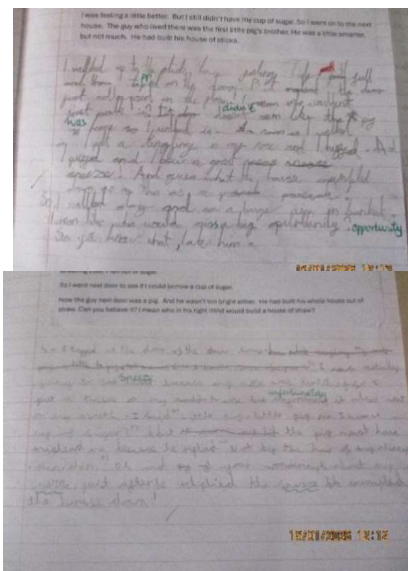
In computing we dived into the world of coding – learning how to create, move and change sprites, sounds and backdrops using Scratch.



History lessons took us back to Tudor times, where we explored the fascinating Tudor family tree, including Henry VIII and his many wives. This led to an engaging discussion about how succession to the throne worked hundreds of years ago and how ideas around inheritance and leadership have changed over time. The children asked thoughtful questions and showed real curiosity about life in the past.



In French, pupils have been expanding their vocabulary by learning the names of different fruits. They have been thinking carefully about whether nouns are masculine or feminine and how this affects the determiner used, helping them build a stronger foundation in the language. Meanwhile, in Art, we continued our exploration of Impressionism. The children recreated famous artworks using pastels, experimenting with colour, texture and light in the style of the Impressionist artists.



Music lessons were filled with atmosphere as the children listened to a piece called *Storm Interlude*, discussing how the music creates mood and tells a story. In our yoga sessions, we focused on breathing techniques and gentle pressure exercises to promote calm, focus and wellbeing. Finally, in Science, Year 3 enjoyed learning all about the Sun and its importance, while Year 4 got creative exploring sound, investigating how it is made and how it travels.

It has been a rich and varied week of learning, and the children should be very proud of their enthusiasm and effort across all subjects!

This week in Maple class, the Year 5 children developed their narrative writing skills in English by creating imaginative and engaging stories that used rich description to build atmosphere and tension. The Year 4 children focused on writing strong opening paragraphs and using persuasive sentences to engage the reader and bring their writing to life.



In Maths, the children worked on dividing numbers using partitioning and the written method of short division. They applied these strategies to solve a range of problems, building confidence and improving accuracy in their calculations.



In History, the children learned how society in Ancient Egypt was organised. They explored the social pyramid, identifying the different groups within society, including the pharaoh, vizier, nobles, priests, scribes, soldiers, craftsmen, farmers and slaves. The children then reflected on which role they would like to have and why, as well as which role they would least like to be, prompting thoughtful discussion.



In Art, the children learned about the life and work of Vincent van Gogh, focusing on some of his most famous paintings, including Sunflowers. They created their own observational drawings, carefully studying shapes and details while taking inspiration from Van Gogh's distinctive style.



In PE, the children focused on asymmetrical balances, emphasising strong body tension to maintain control and stability. They also worked with a partner to create and practise partner balances, developing creativity, cooperation and teamwork.



In PSHE, the children explored the actual norms around smoking and discussed why there are often misperceptions about how common smoking really is. They talked about how media, peer influence, and assumptions can make smoking seem more widespread or acceptable than it actually is. Working collaboratively in small groups, the children completed a crossword activity and created small posters offering tips on how to quit smoking, reinforcing key vocabulary and ideas while developing teamwork and discussion skills. This lesson linked to UNCRC Article 24 (Right to Health) by helping children access accurate information about smoking so they can make informed, healthy choices.



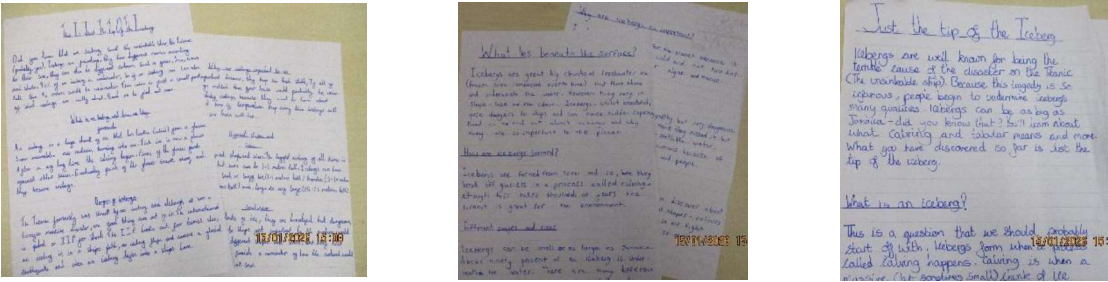
In computing this week, the children experimented with filming using different camera angles. They explored how close-ups, high angles, and low angles can be used for different purposes in video, such as showing

emotions, power, or important details. The children worked creatively and thoughtfully, developing their understanding of how camera choices can change the way a story is told.



This week in Willow Class, we have been stretching our brains with scale factors and enlargements. We learnt that in maths, the word “similar” has a very specific meaning – it describes an *exact enlargement* of the original shape, not just one that looks a bit alike. Using our knowledge of scale factors, we carefully drew enlarged shapes and tackled some tricky missing value problems. There was lots of careful measuring, problem-solving and a few “aha!” moments along the way.

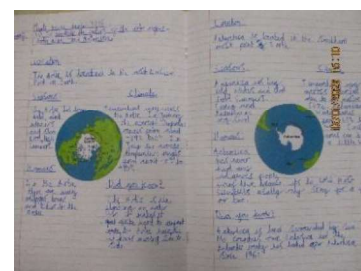
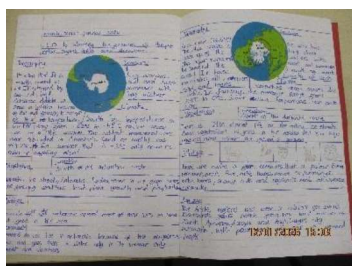
In English, we’ve been putting the finishing touches to our non-chronological reports all about icebergs. We worked hard to polish our writing and proudly applied our knowledge of hyphens, colons and brackets for parenthesis. These punctuation skills helped us add extra information clearly and professionally, making our non-fiction writing informative and engaging.



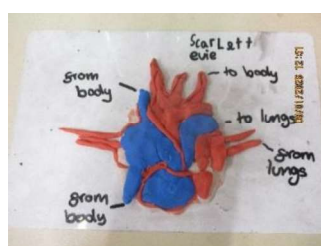
We kept with our frozen theme in Art and explored different drawing techniques using chalk pastels. After experimenting with blending and shading, we created our own stunning polar bear drawings. The results were icy, atmospheric and very impressive!



In Geography, we embraced the cold and went on a fact-finding mission to explore the similarities and differences between the Arctic and Antarctica. We learnt about the topography (landscape features) of each polar region and were amazed to discover that the Arctic, despite its freezing temperatures, is home to around 4 million people and approximately 1,700 species of plant life. Who knew the Arctic was so full of life?




We began an exciting new Science topic on the circulatory system. To help us understand how the heart works, we made plasticine models of the heart and explored how it pumps oxygenated blood around the body to our vital organs. There was much talk of chambers, ventricles, atriums and valves. Getting hands-on really helped bring this important system to life. Heart surgeons of the future? Perhaps a few more lessons needed first!



In PE, we got our hearts pumping with a fast-paced warm-up before practising different gymnastic shapes and learning how to perform a straddle roll. We quickly discovered that rolling onto one shoulder first – then smoothly over to the other – was the key to success. Some of us even took it a step further by developing partner and group straddle rolls, which were very impressive (and great fun!).



Parent Talk: Raising Kids in the Smartphone Era, Please join us at for practical ideas and a friendly discussion about helping kids thrive in the digital age. We'll look at what's working for families right now — from first phones to healthy habits at home. No judgement, just real talk and small steps that make a difference. Everyone's welcome – whether you've already made decisions about smartphones or are just starting to think about it.

 Friday 30th of January at 2pm

 School hall

RSVP to reserve your seat and so we know how many cakes to bake!

<https://forms.gle/zuh68ps39XJ9qKb2A>

Or message in your class WhatsApp group

An external speaker is coming in so it would be really great if as many parents as possible could come along to show their support for this issue (and to me, I promise homemade cake as bribery 🙌!). I have borrowed a couple of brick phones for people to take a look at too as an alternative. Mrs Groot (parent)