



Ashford Hill Primary School Newsletter



November 29th 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

Non-school uniform day has been a hit with the children today. Thank you so much for sending in the wonderful array of goodies to be made into the hampers for the raffle. I can hear our wonderful PTA working away clinking all of the bottles that we have received and wrapping them up into the most wonderful display of hampers. I will share some pictures next week.

The PTA play such a pivotal role in our school community and they are working hard to bring the Christmas spirit to Ashford Hill this evening ready for a lovely surprise for the children on Monday morning. Thank you to all of our volunteers – it is fantastic to see such a wonderful team working together.

The nights are getting darker and the coldness is sneaking in so please do take care on school drop offs and pick-ups. Named hats and gloves will certainly be required over the next few weeks.

We have a really busy few weeks ahead of us and this all starts with our Christingle service for the children next week – if you are able to volunteer to walk up to the church with us, please do let the office team know.

I hope you have a wonderful weekend – I shall mostly be putting up our Christmas decorations at home whilst trying to silently let the family enjoy placing baubles wherever they like on the tree without judgement!

We will see you on Monday morning. Have a great weekend.

Kirsty Kingham

Principal

Attendance

Attendance % (whole school target 97%)							
Whole School	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
95.3	94.3	94.7	96	96.3	97.5	99.4	88
Lots of illness this week. Please wrap up warm and look after yourselves over this period.							

Reading At Home

This week we have had our termly Pupil Progress Meetings with teachers. During these meetings teachers discuss how well the children are doing in the class and the progress that is being made.

This is also a time for us to consider anything that we might like to implement to ensure further progress with our children. As you are aware, reading is one of our highest priorities at Ashford Hill and our aim is that all children leave us a confident and curious readers. Reading at home plays a big part of children's development in reading and we would like to have a push on children reading at home with parents or on their own for at least five minutes daily. All children have a reading record in that should move between home and school daily – when reading with your child, please ensure that you log what you have read in this book. Teachers will check these on a Friday and sign the book off each week.

I have included some information at the end of the newsletter regarding the importance of reading at home with your child.

Homework Expectation Reminder

Each week children have homework of reading daily for at least five minutes, spellings (from their spelling log (KS2)), number bots (KS1) times table rockstars (KS2) for 5 mins a day if possible. This leads to approximately 10 – 15 minutes of homework per day. Reading should be logged in reading diaries that are to be sent back into school each day.

Along side daily homework is the spelling word lists that were sent home earlier this term. These are to be learned throughout the term and we will assess the children over the year on their knowledge of these spelling lists.

After Christmas, year 6 will have an additional half an hour of homework each week. This will consist of three ten-minute test sheets in Reading, Spelling and grammar and Maths. These will be due in on a Friday and marked in class with the teacher.

Thank you for your support with homework, it really supports learning in school and also gets our year 6 children ready for secondary school.

Nativity

Thank you for your responses to book your tickets for the nativity – if you have not booked your tickets yet, please do so; this will help us to confirm numbers in the church all ready for this year's performance.

Shrek Jr The Musical

We had great news this week as we found out that we have gained the rights to perform Shrek Jr at the Haymarket Theatre on 3rd July. The performance will start at the slightly later time of 6pm. Please save the date. We are already looking forward to it.

Change to Menu on Friday's

Please note that as from next Friday 6th December we will not be serving BBQ Pasta on a Friday, this will now be replaced by Mac & Cheese

Smart Phone Free Childhood Movement Update

Thank you to everyone who participated in our recent survey about smartphones and screen time. Your feedback highlights shared concerns and valuable insights to help us navigate this complex issue together.

What the Survey Told Us

- **Support for the Pact:** Over half of parents (51%) support the [SmartPhone Free Childhood Pact](#), with another 30% eager to learn more. Support spans all year groups, showing this resonates widely.
- **Excessive Screen Time:** Around 10% of parents reported challenges with screen use affecting their children's hobbies or activities.
- **Alternative Solutions:** 58% of parents would consider a simple "brick" phone for their child if peers made the same choice.
- **Interest in Support:** Nearly half (46%) of parents are interested in additional resources or guidance.

If you do support the pact and haven't yet signed up, I encourage you to sign the [SmartPhone Free Childhood Pact](#). It's anonymous and helps demonstrate collective support for delaying smartphone use without feeling like your child would be the only one. While opinions on this may differ (and that's okay!), the pact creates an option for those who share these concerns.

Progress on Our Project Plan

Since launching this initiative, I've worked with the head teacher and the school's digital leaders to find creative ways for children to engage with this topic. Plans include designing posters promoting healthy alternatives to screen time, such as *Tech-Free Evenings* or *Screen-Free Saturdays*.

In the new year, I'll also host a parent event to share insights into the risks of excessive screen time and smartphones and to provide practical advice for those curious to learn more.

Find Out More

Here are some recommended resources to explore:

- **1-Minute Video:** [The Safer Phones Bill explained.](#)
- **Article:** [Parents back campaign to delay smartphone access.](#)
- **Webinar:** [Insights from a social psychologist on the shift from a play-based to a phone-based childhood.](#)
- **Article:** [Teens who spend five or more hours daily on devices are 71% more likely to show suicide risk factors compared to those who spend an hour or less.](#)
- **News:** [Health professionals criticise lenient screen-time guidelines.](#)

Looking Ahead

In future columns, I'll share practical tips, progress updates, and more ways we can support our children's growth and well-being in a digital world. If you'd like to learn more about the pact or join the conversation, please reach out. Small steps can make a big difference—and together, we can make a lasting impact.

Tania Jesney

Importance of Reading at Home with your Children:

We cannot emphasize enough the profound impact that reading at home has on a child's development. While the school plays a crucial role in fostering a love of learning, it is in the home environment that children often develop the foundational skills they need to succeed academically and socially. Reading with your child is one of the most effective ways to nurture their growth, ignite their imagination, and build a lifelong love for books and learning.

Building Literacy Skills

Reading together at home strengthens a child's literacy skills in ways that go beyond what they learn in school. When parents or caregivers read with their children, they are not only improving their vocabulary but also helping them grasp essential concepts like sentence structure, phonics, and grammar. These early experiences create a strong foundation for reading comprehension and writing skills. The more children are exposed to a wide range of words, ideas, and stories, the more confident and capable they will become in expressing themselves both in writing and in conversation.

Encouraging a Lifelong Love of Reading

When reading becomes a regular and enjoyable activity at home, children begin to associate books with comfort, joy, and fun. The emotional connection they form with reading often becomes the driving force behind their

desire to continue reading independently as they grow. Whether it's a picture book before bed or a chapter book shared during quiet time, these moments together show children that reading is not just a task, but a way to explore new worlds, understand different perspectives, and find joy in learning.

Strengthening Parent-Child Bonding

Reading with your child also strengthens your relationship with them. These special moments provide an opportunity for meaningful interaction, open discussion, and shared experiences. As you read together, you may find that your child becomes more curious, asking questions about the story or the world around them. This interaction not only fosters intellectual curiosity but also deepens emotional connections. The simple act of sitting down to read together gives children the sense of being loved, supported, and valued, which boosts their self-esteem and confidence.

Fostering Critical Thinking and Imagination

Books are gateways to critical thinking and creativity. Reading allows children to explore new ideas, challenge assumptions, and expand their imaginations. Whether they are reading about dinosaurs, outer space, or fairy tales, books introduce them to new concepts, people, and cultures. When parents engage with their child during reading, such as asking open-ended questions or discussing the story, it helps children think critically about what they are learning and apply that thinking to real-life situations. Through reading, children not only gain knowledge but also develop the problem-solving skills that will benefit them for years to come.

The Role of Consistency

Like any positive habit, the key to successful reading at home is consistency. Aim to read with your child every day, even if it's just for a few minutes. Whether it's in the morning, before bed, or during quiet moments in the afternoon, the more regularly reading is incorporated into daily life, the more it becomes a natural part of your child's routine. Consistent reading at home supports what children are learning at school and helps them retain and apply that knowledge.

How You Can Make Reading a Fun Experience

- **Create a reading-friendly environment:** Set up a cosy reading nook with plenty of books and a comfy spot to sit. Make sure your child has easy access to books they enjoy.
- **Explore different genres:** Encourage your child to explore a variety of books—fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and even graphic novels. This broadens their interests and keeps reading exciting.
- **Read aloud together:** Take turns reading aloud or act out parts of the story. Your enthusiasm and engagement will inspire your child to appreciate the power of storytelling.

- **Discuss the stories:** After reading, talk about the characters, the plot, and what your child thinks will happen next. Encourage them to ask questions and share their thoughts.




In conclusion, reading at home is not just a way to improve literacy; it is a powerful tool for fostering a child's overall growth and development. The time and effort you invest in reading with your child will pay off in countless ways, setting them on a path toward academic success, strong critical thinking skills, and a lifelong love of learning.

Let's continue to work together, both at school and at home, to cultivate the bright minds of tomorrow through the power of reading.

Safeguarding:

Safeguarding is our number one priority. Together we want to ensure that all children are safe, happy and secure at all times. If you have any concerns about another child or your own, please do not hesitate to contact one of our Safeguarding Leads.

Our Designated Safeguarding Leads are as follows:

		
Mrs Kirsty Kingham	Miss C Hudson	Mr B Dixon
Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Vice Principal and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Class Teacher and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

Dates for your diary

29th November – Non School Uniform Day for Christmas Hampers

10th December – Whole school trip to Pantomime

11th and 12th December - Nativity Performance (please remember cash for the PTA refreshments)

18th December – Christmas Lunch and Parties

19th December – 2.45pm Curriculum Showcase for Parents

20th December AM – iRock concerts

20th June- Sports' Day

Summer Fayre and Car Show - TBC

3rd July – Performance at the Haymarket Theatre (year 2-6)
