



Whitwick St John the Baptist CE Primary School

Autumn Term 1 Newsletter

Headteacher

As we come to the end of this first half term, I'm delighted to look back on what has been a truly positive and energetic start to the year. The children have settled in beautifully, embracing new routines, exploring the forest with enthusiasm, and showing great curiosity in their learning. The school has been alive with music, creativity, and the happy buzz of children working and playing together.

This half term, our Collective Worship value has been **Trust**. Through a range of Bible stories and discussions, the children have reflected deeply on what it means to trust others and to be someone who can be trusted. Their insights and thoughtful contributions during worship have been wonderful to hear, and it has been lovely to see them demonstrating trust and honesty in their daily interactions. As we move into the next half term, our new value of **Peace** will guide our reflections and learning together.

Our celebration assemblies have once again been very busy. It has been inspiring to see them using their **Penguin Power** to develop new skills, show perseverance, and celebrate one another's successes. Watching their confidence grow week by week is a real highlight.

We have also had a strong start on the sports field, with the children showing brilliant teamwork, determination, and school spirit. Their enthusiasm and sportsmanship have been excellent, and we are very proud of all they've accomplished so far.

Thank you for your ongoing support. It's been a joyful and productive first half term, and we look forward to all the learning, growth, and exciting opportunities that the next one will bring.

Pippa update 🐾

Pippa has had a wonderful start to the school year! She has been in school three days a week since the beginning of term and has quickly settled back into her important role as our school dog.

Over the half term, Pippa has visited every class and joined us in assemblies, where she's been a calm and friendly presence. Each morning, she can be found greeting the children at the gate with a wagging tail — and, of course, enjoying all the cuddles that come her way!

Pippa's work in school helps to make our community an even happier and calmer place. The positive impact she has on the wellbeing of children and adults alike is clear to see. We're very proud to share that, in recognition of her wonderful work, we have been awarded **The Gold Dog Mentor Award** — a fantastic achievement for Pippa and our whole school!



Lunchtimes Just Got a Lot More Exciting!

This year, we have launched a brand-new lunchtime project focused on **child-initiated play** and it's already making a huge difference to our school day!

Each lunchtime, children have access to **two different sets of resources and activities**, designed to spark creativity, movement, and fun. These include:

- A disco with cheerleading pom-poms
- Large paper for doodling and drawing
- LEGO building
- Beanbags, hoops, balls and more!

The beauty of this approach is that children are free to use the resources **however they choose**, creating their own games, stories, and imaginative play experiences. It's been wonderful to see how engaged and enthusiastic they are — many children now say lunchtime is their favourite part of the day!

We have also noticed a **significant drop in injuries** and a rise in **positive interactions**, showing just how powerful purposeful play can be.

Many of our fundraising efforts this year will go towards **enhancing this provision even further**. We are hoping to introduce larger play items such as crates and tarpaulin for den building, large-scale art equipment, sensory toys, and a wider range of board games.

Thank you for your continued support and donations — they are helping us create a lunchtime experience that is joyful, inclusive, and enriching for every child.



Rockhopper Club

The first half term at Rockhopper Breakfast and After-School Club has been a great success; with strong attendance and many children choosing to come even when childcare isn't necessarily required.



We have been lucky with the weather, allowing us to enjoy plenty of outdoor play in the adventure playground, ballcourt, and woodlands. A standout event was our *Autumn Craft Week*, where staff ran a different craft activity each day.

This was a fantastic addition, with children eagerly participating in activities like Leaf creatures, Autumn wreaths, Leafy hedgehogs and more. The week was hugely popular and allowed the children to express their creativity while learning about the season. Overall, it's been a positive start to the term, and we look forward to more exciting activities in the future.



PreSchool

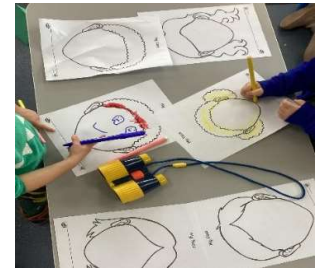
We've had a wonderful term learning all about *ourselves*! The children created beautiful self-portraits, celebrating what makes each of us unique. In the kitchen, little hands have been busy honing their chopping skills — future chefs in the making!

Our nature area was full of excitement as we went on a scavenger hunt, discovering all sorts of autumn treasures. We also had a lovely visit from Vicar Darren and spent time

with Pippa, our friendly school therapy dog, who brought lots of smiles and cuddles.

To finish our busy days, we enjoyed some calming chair yoga — the perfect way to relax and reflect.

What a fantastic term of learning, exploring, and growing together!



EYFS

The children in EYFS have had a wonderful start to their journey at big school! They are already showing great independence, settling into new routines, and feeling very grown up as part of our school community.

Our story focus this term has been *Handa's Surprise*. The children have loved exploring the story, writing their own lists of fruits using their initial sounds, and retelling the story in their own words. They have also been very creative, weaving beautiful baskets for Handa to carry to Akeyo, decorating fruit to place inside them, and even using real fruit to print with paint.

We are so proud of how quickly the children have embraced phonics. They have made an amazing start and are feeling very grown up with their very first reading folders. Already, their enthusiasm and progress in reading has been fantastic!

Year 1

This half term, Year 1 have been learning about the artist Paul Klee and have shown great creativity in producing their own portrait artwork. The children have explored a variety of shapes, identifying both *organic* and *non-organic* forms, and have experimented with different lines, mediums, and textures to enhance their work.

As part of their learning on the five senses, the children took part in a range of hands-on activities. They enjoyed exploring *feely boxes* to describe and identify different objects by touch, investigating *mystery pots* to experience a range of smells, and guiding each other *blindfolded* around the playground to develop trust and awareness. The children demonstrated a clear understanding of which body parts link to each sense and worked exceptionally well in pairs, showing cooperation and respect for one another.

We are also very pleased with the progress children are making in their reading. We would like to extend our thanks to parents and carers for their continued support with home reading (at least three times a week) and for encouraging children to practise their reading and writing in their pink books. Your support plays an important role in helping the children develop confidence and enjoyment in their learning.

Year 2

Our first topic of the year has been all about exploring our wonderful local area. The children loved learning about Whitwick and even went on a walk to discover its landmarks firsthand. They created some fantastic **Whitwick landmark collages** and produced excellent pieces of writing, including a **story retell** and a **non-chronological report** inspired by *Tad* by Benji Davies. It has been a brilliant start to the year — the children have shown great enthusiasm for their learning and have already made **fantastic progress**.



Multi-Skills Event - Year 2 had the exciting opportunity to take part in their very first sporting event, representing the school at the **Multi-Skills Festival** held at Coalville Leisure Centre. The children showed fantastic enthusiasm, teamwork, and determination throughout the day — a wonderful start to their sporting journey with Whitwick!

The Great Fire of London

To launch their new history topic, Year 2 took part in an exciting **immersion day** that transformed them into detectives! Armed with curiosity and keen observation skills, the children explored a series of clues to uncover the mystery behind the **Gunpowder Plot**. Their enthusiasm and teamwork shone throughout the activity, sparking plenty of interest and discussion as they began to learn about this fascinating period in history.

Year 3

Year 3 Journey Back in Time!

Year 3 have had an exciting start to the year with their fascinating topic “Stone Age to Iron Age.” The children have been exploring what life was like thousands of years ago — and have had plenty of hands-on fun along the way!

One of the highlights was their immersive Stone Age day, where pupils created their own paints using natural resources such as mud, berries, and chalk. They then used these to recreate cave paintings, just as early humans did. A messy but memorable experience really brought history to life!

In science, the class have been studying the different types of rocks — igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary — and even had the chance to go fossil hunting. Everyone enjoyed discovering how rocks are formed and what fossils can tell us about the past.

To continue their journey through history, Year 3 recently visited Tamworth Castle, home to one of the last Norman towers in England. During their visit, they took part in exciting workshops where they prepared a feast in the banquet hall, set the tables like medieval servants, and even trained as medieval soldiers!

The trip was a fantastic way to see history come alive, and Year 3 cannot wait to keep learning more about how people lived and worked in the past.

Year 4

We started the year off with a trip to the rainforest immersion day, where the children tasted and smelt various fruits and spices, which grow in the rainforest regions and they also listened to the sounds of the jungle, before undertaking life study drawings of exotic plants and flowers. The children had a fabulous time, challenging themselves to try new things and asking lots of pertinent questions to further their learning.



Our ‘Rainforest Rumble’ topic has allowed the children to think like Geographers, practising and apply geography skills and expand their technical vocabulary. In English, we have learnt the story of ‘The Great Kapok Tree’ and used descriptive language for setting descriptions and story writing.

In maths we have consolidated our knowledge of place value and practiced our addition and subtraction skills. We have developed our understanding of our relationships in PSHE and in PE, we have enjoyed learning new skills in both dodgeball and handball. It's been a great first half -term and the children are very excited for our new Ancient Egyptian topic, starting with our visit from Queen Cleopatra! The children learned all about life in ancient Egypt including jobs, farming and mummification.



Year 4 have made a fantastic start to the new school year and have settled in beautifully! The children have shown great enthusiasm, curiosity, and teamwork as they've embraced all areas of their learning.

Our first topic, *Rainforest Rumble*, was a huge success. The pupils explored the layers of the rainforest, the incredible animals and plants that live there and the importance of protecting these vital habitats. Their research and creativity truly shone through as they wrote and published their own non-chronological reports, filled with fascinating facts and colourful illustrations. It was wonderful to see how proud they were of their finished pieces!

We've now begun our new topic, *The Ancient Egyptians*, which is already off to a fantastic start. The children were introduced to the topic in an exciting way—with a special visit from a “queen” who helped transport us back in time to ancient Egypt! Since then, we've started exploring life along the River Nile, Egyptian gods and goddesses, and the fascinating world of mummification. The children are thoroughly enjoying uncovering the mysteries of this ancient civilisation.



Alongside our topic work, we've been developing our musical talents by learning to play the djembe. The pupils have loved creating rhythms together, learning about tempo and dynamics, and experiencing the joy of making music as a group.



We've also been lucky to have sessions with our local badminton coach, where the children have been learning new skills, improving their coordination, and developing great sportsmanship. It's been brilliant to see their confidence grow with every session.

It's been a busy and exciting start to the year, and we're so proud of how well Year 4 have settled into their new routines. We can't wait to see what the rest of the term brings!

Year 5

This half-term, Year 5 have enjoyed a wide range of exciting and engaging learning experiences. In Maths, children have explored place value, ordering and comparing numbers, rounding, and addition and subtraction, including checking answers using the inverse operation.

In English, we have enjoyed a Japanese folk tale about a fisherman and a mermaid and produced imaginative non-chronological reports about an underwater world.

Our science lessons have taken us on a journey through the solar system, while in Geography, we've investigated the challenges facing Poorly Planet Earth.

The highlight of the half-term was our amazing performances at the Coalville Arts Festival, where the children delivered two powerful World War II-themed pieces. Their confidence and creativity were outstanding!



Year 6

A Brilliant Beginning!

The first eight weeks in Year 6 have flown by and what a busy yet exciting start it has been! Our fantastic children have thrown themselves into every opportunity, working with determination, stepping into leadership roles and having plenty of fun along the way.

One of the highlights early on was the Team Captain campaigns. The candidates impressed us with their enthusiasm and creativity as they put together their campaign videos, hoping to be chosen to represent their houses. Their confidence and teamwork really shone through and we were delighted by the amount of support they received from their peers. Congratulations to those children who were elected – we are sure you will lead **Mars, Neptune, Saturn and Jupiter** with pride and determination!

Alongside campaigning, Year 6 have also been preparing for other important responsibilities across school. Many pupils have stepped up as members of the Worry-Less Team, Playground Pals, Reading Pals and Librarians. These roles give our children the chance to support others, develop strong communication skills and make a positive difference to our school community. We are so proud of their willingness to volunteer and know they will flourish in these positions throughout the year.

This half term's topic, Where Would You Rather Live? Has been another exciting focus. The children have explored Whitwick, Arthog and Tulum, looking closely at the culture, climate and lifestyle of each place. They enjoyed comparing and contrasting these very different locations and discussing which one they would most like to call home.

Another unforgettable moment came with our residential trip to Min-Y-Don. From outdoor adventures to team-building challenges, the children stretched themselves, built confidence and strengthened friendships. On their return, they hosted a wonderful family assembly, sharing their experiences in a story that captured their resilience and unforgettable memories.

Overall, it has been a fantastic start for Year 6 and we are really looking forward to everything the rest of the year has in store!



Sporting News

TAG Rugby Success!

We are incredibly proud of our pupils who took part in the recent TAG Rugby event. Two Whitwick teams represented our school brilliantly, showing fantastic **determination, teamwork, and sportsmanship** throughout the competition. Their hard work and positive attitude paid off, as Whitwick were crowned champions for the **fourth consecutive year!** A huge well done to all the players involved — you were outstanding ambassadors for our school.



Year 5/6 Table Tennis Competition

This term, our Year 5 and 6 children represented the school in a Table Tennis competition, and what a day it was! Both the boys and girls teams played brilliantly, showing determination, teamwork, and respect. We are so proud that both teams reached the final, which was an incredible achievement!

The highlight however, was winning the *Spirit of the Games* award, voted for by other schools in recognition of our children's sportsmanship and positivity. A huge well done to all who took part, you all represented the school brilliantly!



We are delighted to share that our school has once again achieved the School Games Gold Mark Award for our commitment to sport and physical activity. This fantastic achievement.

Earlier this term, some of our Year 5 children attended Sports Ambassador training at Whitwick and Coalville Leisure Centre. They had a fantastic day developing their leadership skills and have already begun putting their new ideas into action back at school.



Food bank



Thank You for Your Generosity!

A huge thank you to everyone who donated to our Harvest Festival food.

Thanks to your amazing support, we collected a fantastic amount of food, which has now been delivered to the **Trussell Trust Foundation in Coalville** and our **school Sharing Shed**.

Your kindness will make a real difference to families in our local community. We are truly grateful!





Uniform

In preparation for the new academic year, I would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone of our school uniform expectations. We appreciate your continued support in ensuring that all our pupils come to school dressed appropriately and ready to learn.

Our current school uniform is as follows:

- **Navy cardigan or jumper** with the **school logo**
- **Black or grey trousers** (not tracksuit bottoms) or a **skirt/ / pinafore dress/shorts**
- **White or blue polo shirt** (no logo required)
- **Black shoes or trainers** with **minimal logos**

Pupils are welcome to wear **blue and white chequered summer dresses or jumpsuits**, in keeping with our school colours.

Please ensure that **all uniform items are clearly named**, so that any lost items can be quickly returned.

Wearing the correct uniform helps promote a **sense of belonging** and ensures that all our pupils feel part of the school community. Thank you for helping us maintain these high standards.

Safeguarding

Protection Children is everyone's business!!

At Whitwick St John the Baptist CE Primary School, we understand the utmost importance of having robust systems for protecting children and safeguarding their welfare. All our staff and volunteers are vigilant and alert to any potential concerns about our pupils. We have a comprehensive safeguarding and child protection policy, which is available upon request from the school office.

If you have any concerns, please speak to the head teacher. We will treat your concern seriously and with the utmost care.

Parking



Please remember to park only in legal parking spots and to respect and adhere to all posted no-parking zones. Your cooperation in maintaining a safe environment around our school is greatly appreciated. Let us work together to ensure the safety of all our students and families.

We would kindly like to remind everyone to drive and park safely and considerately when dropping off or picking up children from school. Unfortunately, we have seen and heard reports of some dangerous and inconsiderate parking and manoeuvres.

The safety of our children is always our top priority, so please ensure you are parking appropriately and driving with care around the school.

How Can You Help?

- Park further away and walk to school
- Keep your speed down
- Park in a safe place following the Highway Code.
- Do not park on pavements
- Turn your engine off as soon as you have parked
- Keep the school gates clear at all times - stopping here, even to drop off your child for a short period of time, is dangerous
- Do not enter the school car park unless authorised to do so
- Do not block local residents' drives
- Leave the middle of the road free, with enough room for other road users to easily pass through
- Leave enough room for emergency vehicles to easily pass through
- Make sure your child leaves and enters your vehicle safely to and from the pavement
- Check for pedestrians and cyclists before opening a car door
- Take care when reversing
- Remember - it only takes one vehicle to be parked inconsiderately for there to be an impact on accessibility to emergency services or others. Do not be that one.

Further to the notice sent on WEDUC on 23/01/25. Please note that parking violations can be reported through the following link. <https://www.leics.police.uk/contact/af/contact-us-beta/contact-us/driving-vehicles-traffic/report-illegal-parking/> Thank you to those drivers who put the safety of our pupils first.

Free School Meals

If you think, your child may be entitled to free school meals, please claim these by contacting the following number: 0116 3055417 or visit <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/social-care-and-supporting-families/free-school-meals> .



It is particularly important for parents of children in EYFS, Year 1, and Year 2 to register, even if your child is already receiving a free hot meal. Registering will enable the school to access funding for your child every year while they remain in primary school. They are not obliged to have a hot meal every day. This funding will help provide valuable support for your child.

Nut and Egg-Free School

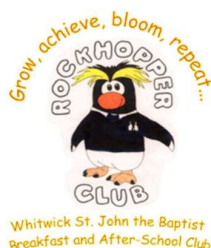
Please can we remind you that we are a nut and egg-free school due to children with allergies? Children **should not** be bringing anything into school that may contain any type of nut or egg. Anything that is brought in will be confiscated and returned at the end of the day. This includes Nutella products. Your cooperation in keeping our school environment safe for all students is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your understanding and support.



Egg Free Zone!



'Rockhopper' Breakfast and After School Club



If you require a space in our breakfast or after-school club, we kindly remind you to book via ParentPay. For any inquiries, please contact Miss Steadman on Weduc or phone 07704 144227 or the school office 01530 832116.



Term Dates 2025-2026

Autumn Term

Bank Holiday	Monday 25 th August 2025
Schools Open	Tuesday 26 th August 2025
Mid-Term Break	Monday 20 th - Friday 24 th October 2025
Schools Close	Friday 19 th December 2025

Spring Term

Schools Open	Tuesday 6 th January 2026
Mid-Term Break	Monday 16 th - Friday 20 nd February 2026
Schools Close	Friday 27 nd March 2026

Summer Term

Schools Open	Monday 13 th April 2026
May Day	Monday 4 th May 2026
Mid-Term Break	Monday 25 th May - Friday 29 th May 2026
Schools Close	Wednesday 8 th July 2026

Term Dates 2026-2027

Autumn Term

Schools Open	Wednesday 26 th August 2026
Bank Holiday	Monday 31 st August 2026
Mid-Term Break	Monday 19 th - Friday 23 rd October 2026
Schools Close	Friday 18 th December 2026

Spring Term

Schools Open	Tuesday 5 th January 2027
Mid-Term Break	Monday 15 th - Friday 19 th February 2027
Schools Close	Friday 19 th March 2027

Summer Term

Schools Open	Monday 5 th April 2027
May Day	Monday 3 rd May 2027
Mid-Term Break	Monday 31 st May - Friday 4 th June 2027
Schools Close	Friday 9 th July 2027