



Whitwick St John the Baptist CE Primary School

Autumn Term 2

Newsletter

Head teacher



Dear Parents and Carers,

The first half of the spring term has been filled with exciting learning across the school. This was particularly evident last week during the first week of our new topics, when children from all year groups were eager to share what they had experienced during their immersion days. It was wonderful to hear such enthusiasm, curiosity and pride in their learning.

This year, we have moved to teaching in six-week topics rather than fitting topics into the varying lengths of half terms. This change allows each subject within a topic to be given the time and depth it deserves; ensuring learning is purposeful, balanced and meaningful for all children. We are already seeing the positive impact of this approach.

The start of the new topics also introduced a new collective worship value: **Dignity**. This is a new and sometimes challenging concept for the children to understand, so we have been exploring it together in collective worship. We have talked about their 'Dignity crowns', which grow more shiny and bright each time they show dignity towards themselves and others. We have also been practising a shared definition: *Dignity means knowing that everyone matters.*

Penguin Power has been evident in all areas of school this term. Children have been trying new things, celebrating success and feeling proud of their achievements and it has been a joy to see their confidence grow.

Pippa, our school dog, has also been very busy this term. She has continued her visits to classrooms, carried out her morning duties and spent time listening to children read. She has also enjoyed visiting Cosy Reading and Reading Pals at lunchtime in the library. Judging by her constantly wagging tail, she is clearly enjoying her time in school, and she is always greeted with smiles and plenty of fuss from the children.

We wish you all a very happy and restful half term and look forward to welcoming the children back to school on **Monday 23rd February**.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Parking and driving reminder

Please remember to drive and park considerately and safely when dropping off or collecting children. We have recently received a number of complaints from local residents regarding inconsiderate parking, including vehicles blocking access to their properties, as well as reports of rude or aggressive responses when drivers have been asked to move. Residents have been advised by the school to report incidents of this nature to the police.

We ask all families to support us in keeping children and families safe and in maintaining positive relationships with our local community. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Rockhopper

At Rockhopper this term, we have welcomed many different faces of all ages, and there has been so much going on! Children have been busy getting creative with crafty activities, building with LEGO and Hama beads, and enjoying imaginative play with our new plastic foods and dolls. Outdoor play has been a big hit, along with energetic games of dodgeball. We have also loved spending time reading with friends — especially with our new stamps and stickers adding extra excitement.

Last week, we celebrated Pancake Week at both breakfast and afterschool club, and it was wonderful to see the children's delicious creations. From classic toppings to some very imaginative combinations, their enthusiasm made the week extra special! It has been a lively, fun-filled term, and we look forward to even more adventures ahead!



Preschool

This term we have been learning all about *people who help us* and the important roles they play in our community. We were lucky to have a visit from a nurse, who talked to us about how we can help ourselves stay healthy and when it is important to call a doctor or dial 999. The children asked thoughtful questions and learned how to look after their own wellbeing.

We also enjoyed a visit from a vet, where we have to practise doing their job and learn how to help poorly animals. The children loved role-playing and discovering how vets care for animals.

Alongside this, we have taken part in dance sessions with Lil Beatz and Kimble's, building confidence, coordination, and having lots of fun. We also celebrated storytelling with a special story from Pippa and Mrs Noon, helping us to develop our listening skills and imagination.

Throughout the term, we have continued to practise kindness to everyone, and as part of learning about healthy choices, we even made a delicious and healthy vegetable soup together. It has been a busy and exciting term full of learning, creativity, and care for others.



EYFS

We have really enjoyed the start of our *Growing and Changing* topic. The children have been fully immersed in their learning, making playdough to represent soil and using real flowers to explore textures and create beautiful designs. We have also enjoyed investigating flowers and plants closely, using magnifying glasses to observe them and learning about the different parts of a plant.

In art, we have been developing our creativity and fine motor skills through finger painting. We have been learning the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, retelling it using actions and story language, and we are now preparing to write our own versions of the story. The children are very excited, especially as we will soon be planting our very own beanstalks!



In phonics, the children are doing amazingly well and are confidently moving on to Phase 3 sounds. In maths, we have developed a good understanding of number, focusing on parts and wholes and how numbers can be broken down and put back together.

It has been a fantastic start to the topic, and we are so proud of the children's enthusiasm and progress.



Year 1

The children have made a fantastic start to their new topic, Explorers, where they have been learning all about Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole. During our immersion activities, the children produced some wonderful artwork, acted out what life would have been like in hospitals during that time, and even made their own lanterns.

They have learned about the conditions of hospitals, how Florence Nightingale helped to improve them, and how rats contributed to the spread of disease. Building on this learning, the children have written and performed their own rat poems. After half term, they will be learning information about rats and will be writing their own non-chronological reports. In Science, the children have been learning about the properties of materials. They designed and built houses using LEGO and tested different materials for the roofs to see which ones were waterproof.

In Maths, the focus has been on inverse operations, with the children confidently solving missing number problems. The children have also really enjoyed PE, where they have been learning seated volleyball, and Music, where they have explored pitch and rhythm.

We are incredibly proud of how independent the children are becoming. We are now mainly teaching through whole-class lessons, and the children are working independently on their tasks with growing confidence.



Year 2

Our recent Year 2 STEM trip was filled with fun, excitement and hands-on learning from start to finish! Throughout the day, the children took part in a range of engaging STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) practical activities designed to enrich their learning and spark curiosity through real-life experiences. One of the highlights was climbing aboard a huge truck from McVitie's, where the children learned more about how products are transported and distributed. They were fascinated to explore the vehicle up close and ask thoughtful questions.

The excitement continued as the children experimented with different ways to create static electricity, programmed a real robot with the help of fantastic volunteers from Loughborough University, and used microscopes to take a closer look at a variety of interesting objects alongside a team of students from Loughborough College and many more exciting activities – too many to mention. The room was buzzing with curiosity and discovery all day long! However, while the activities were amazing, our Year 2 children were the true stars of the show. Their excellent behaviour, beautiful manners and enthusiastic participation were commented on by several visitors, and we were incredibly proud of the way they represented our school. Great job Year 2!



Year 3

Year 3 have thoroughly enjoyed exploring their topic *Angry Planet Earth*. They learned about the location of tectonic plates and discovered where and why earthquakes happen, considering both the physical changes to the Earth and the impact on people's lives. Using this knowledge, they compared what it might be like living near the San Andreas Fault with living in Whitwick. In Computing, pupils developed coding skills using Scratch, creating projects that combined movement, sound, costumes and backgrounds. In Design and Technology, they explored shapes and structures, investigating suitable materials and how to join them effectively. Year 3 showed great curiosity and enthusiasm throughout the topic.

They have now begun their new topic, *Field to Fork*, where they are learning where food comes from and why some foods are imported. Pupils have used maps and atlases to locate countries and explore the concept of food miles, and will be thinking about how to make more sustainable choices. In Science, they have started learning about different types of skeletons and will explore why living things need a skeleton and the important jobs it does.

Year 4

Year 4 have had a fantastic and action-packed term full of exciting learning across the curriculum. In history, we consolidated our learning about the Battle of Bosworth by asking an important question: *Was Richard III a good king*. The children used evidence from different sources to discuss and debate showing great historical thinking and reasoning skills.

Our science lessons have focused on sound. The class investigated how sound travels and used their research and data-collection skills to carry out practical experiments. They worked carefully, recorded their findings and drew thoughtful conclusions.



Despite some challenging weather, Year 4 showed fantastic perseverance and resilience during our hockey lessons. The children demonstrated great teamwork and determination and we are looking forward to applying these same qualities to our rugby sessions over the next few weeks. In Design and Technology, patience was key as we designed and created our own phone cases. Using a range of stitches and fastenings, the children produced some creative and unique designs, making sure their cases were both secure and practical.

Finally, we kicked our new topic off with a bang by creating our very own volcanoes to launch our new geography topic, *Explosive Planet Earth*. The classrooms were full of excitement as we watched our models erupt and began to explore how volcanoes and earthquakes shape our world. It has been a brilliant term, and we are very proud of all the effort and enthusiasm Year 4 have shown in every subject.



Year 5

Year 5 have been on an exciting journey through time, beginning with Modern Greece before stepping back into the fascinating world of Ancient Greece. The children have been thoroughly captivated by Greek gods and myths, particularly the story of Medusa, which has inspired lots of curiosity, discussion and creativity.

In English, the children have brought characters to life through detailed and imaginative character descriptions. Their writing about Medusa has been especially impressive, showcasing rich vocabulary, vivid imagery and powerful descriptions of her terrifying gaze and snake-filled hair.

In Maths, Year 5 have been building confidence with fractions, division and decimals, tackling challenges with determination and developing their problem-solving skills through a range of engaging activities.

In Science, the children have been exploring materials and living things, carrying out investigations and developing their understanding of the world around them through hands-on learning and thoughtful questioning.

In DT, Year 5 have been developing practical skills by designing and making a healthy snack bar. They have also begun the exciting process of designing a moving toy using cams, showing creativity, teamwork and growing confidence in their design skills.

Well done, Year 5, for your fantastic enthusiasm and effort across the curriculum!



Year 6

Victorians, Victories and Year 6 Adventures!

What a busy and exciting six weeks it has been for Year 6! The children have dived into a term full of learning, showing curiosity and resilience every step of the way.

In History, our focus has been on The Victorians as we have explored the question: How do our lives differ to the lives of Victorian children today? To date, the children have learnt about Queen Victoria, key inventions of the era and the profound changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. They have also explored the stark contrast between the lives of rich and poor children during Victorian times.

A highlight of the term was welcoming members of The Whitwick Historical Society into school. They shared the story of The Whitwick Mining Disaster with the children, bringing along artefacts and historical records for the children to look through and explore. At the end of the session, The Historical Society commented on how engaged and respectful the children were - something we are incredibly proud of!

Beyond the classroom, our Year 6s continue to shine as leaders and role models, making a real difference to our school community. In their roles as Reading Pals, Librarians, Playground Pals and members of the Worry-Less Team, they consistently demonstrate maturity, teamwork and kindness, supporting both staff and, most importantly, the children. Their dedication and example not only enrich our school life but also set a fantastic standard as they prepare for the responsibilities and opportunities that secondary school will bring.

We are incredibly proud of the effort and engagement our Year 6s have shown this half term and we can't wait to see them continue to grow and achieve as we move into the next term.



North West Leicestershire Schools Gymnastics Competition

This week, our Gymnasts have taken part in the Schools Gymnastics Competition at Coalville Gymnastics Club. Both events were very well attended by lots of schools, with a very high standard of competition.

Level 1 and 2

Firstly, it was the turn of our Level 1 and 2 gymnasts to compete on floor, ribbon and vault. The Level 1 Team came in first place overall, which means they now progress through to the County Finals in March.

Individually, Scarlett Bailey came 3rd and Poppy Spendlove came 1st, taking the bronze and gold medals respectively.

This was followed by the Level 2 Team who came 2nd overall, with Orla Perry taking 1st place and being awarded another individual gold medal of the evening.



Level 3 and 4

In a 2nd. evening of competition, our Level 3 and 4 teams took to the floor, ribbon and vault, performing some excellent routines.

Our Level 3 team came 4th overall, whilst our Level 4 team won overall 1st place. They are now also through to the County Finals.

Individually, Alba Perry came 1st, taking the gold medal, which was another incredible achievement.

Well done and congratulations to all our gymnasts, who have clearly improved their skills, performances and overall confidence; They have all demonstrated what true penguin power looks like in action!

Sporting News

Archery

On Wednesday 4th February, our Year 5 Sports Ambassadors took part in an NWLSSP archery event. They learned a range of archery activities and skills, which will support them in running a lunchtime club during the spring and summer terms. Well done to all our Sports Ambassadors for your excellent effort and enthusiasm.



Handball

On Friday 6th February, some of our Year 5 children took part in a handball festival at Castle Rock as part of the NWLSSP festival competitions. The children demonstrated excellent teamwork and enthusiasm throughout the event. Well done to all the children and staff who were involved.



NWL Cross Country Season 2025–2026

What a fantastic Cross Country season we have had as part of the NWL Cross Country 2025–2026 season, with three races in total. There were at least 50 runners at every event, which is a brilliant turnout and shows great commitment from our pupils.

We are extremely proud that five children received individual medals for their performances, and three of our teams achieved great success across the season winning the team shield for their effort.

We also have ten runners qualify for county. Well done to all the runners for their determination, enthusiasm, and thank you to the staff who supported the events. Some of our runners will be involved in the County Race at the end of February – good luck to them!



Year 6 Development Basketball

On Tuesday 20th January, our Year 6 Development Basketball Team took part in an event run by NWLSSP at Ivanhoe School in Ashby. The children demonstrated their skills and excellent teamwork while playing against other local schools. At the end of the event, every school voted for the team showing the best sportsmanship and our team won the Spirit of the Games Award. Well done to all the children involved.



NWLSSP Year 5-6 EXCEL Basketball Event.

Our Year 6 team were fantastic at the recent basketball competition. They showed brilliant teamwork, determination and sportsmanship throughout, always encouraging one another and playing with big smiles on their faces.

After strong performances in the group stages, they made it through to the semi-finals and secured an impressive win to reach the final. The final was incredibly close and went into extra time, where we unfortunately lost by just one basket.

The children should be extremely proud of their efforts. They represented the school fantastically!



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 Free School



Please can we remind you that we are a nut school due to children with allergies? Children **should not** be bringing anything into school that may contain any type of nut or 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.

'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 th 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