

Friday 15th May 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I have been hugely impressed with our Year 6 children this week, taking their SATs tests. Their attitude and hard work have been inspirational and I am sure that they have done their absolute best. Well done to them all!

Meeting for New Year 3 Parents

There is a parents' meeting at St Nicolas School on Wednesday 20th May at 9.15am for all parents of new Year 3 children joining the school in September. The meeting will last around an hour and will include a tour of the school by our Year 6 children and a talk by Mr Harvey and Mrs Allen to welcome you to the school.

Early Years Share and Celebrate

We will be holding a share and celebrate for our Reception and Nursery children next week. Please do try to come along to one of the sessions so that your children can share their learning with you. The sessions are either on Tuesday 19th May or Thursday 21st May at 8.45am.

Pentecost Service and Picnic Advanced Warning

On Thursday 4th June, we will be holding our annual Pentecost service and picnic. The children (from Years 1 to 6) will gather together on the St Nic's playground to share a picnic together at lunchtime, before all heading to St Nicolas Church for a Pentecost service. This is a lovely opportunity for our two schools to join together, which we do not get to manage very often.

St John's children (and any St Nic's siblings) can be collected from St Nicolas Church at 2.30pm. Unfortunately, due to the number of children in the church, we are unable to invite parents to attend this service. However, those parents that can walk with the children are welcome to stay to the service. I will send out a request for walkers in next week's update.

WhatsApp – Children's Usage

We have become aware this week of some concerning uses of WhatsApp among our Year 6 children. We were alerted to a group chat that some of our Year 6s are part of, where some very inappropriate messages have been shared. I understand that when the messages were shared, several of our Year 6 children made the right decision and left the group. However, it raises some uncomfortable questions about children's access to social media.

WhatsApp should not be used below the age of 16 but unfortunately, it is clear that many of our children are using the app. I would recommend that parents check their children's phones and have a discussion around any inappropriate usage that is found. It may be worth considering suggesting

alternative methods of communication, as WhatsApp can have quite worrying uses for younger children.

Promoting the School

You may be aware that birth rates have been lower nationally in recent years. Because of this, our numbers in certain year groups are below what we would like, which has a negative affect on our budget and what we are able to provide for children.

We would like parents to consider promoting our schools in any groups that you may be in – cultural, religious etc. In particular, we have spaces in our current Year 2 and Year 3 – there are a small number of places in some other year groups as well.

If you know of anyone looking for a quality nursery place for September, we would ask you to speak to them about visiting us to see if we are a good fit for their child.

School Games Mark

We are delighted to announce that we have achieved the School Games Gold Mark Award for the 2025/26 academic year.

The School Games Mark is a government-led award scheme launched in 2012, facilitated by the Youth Sport Trust to reward schools for their commitment to the development of competition across their school and into the community, and we are delighted to have been recognised for our success.

We are extremely proud of our pupils for their dedication to all aspects of school sport, including those young volunteers, leaders and officials who made our competitions possible.

As part of our application, we were asked to fulfil criteria in the areas of participation, competition, workforce and clubs, and we are pleased that the hard work of everyone at our school has been rewarded this year.

We look forward to applying once again in 2027!

Term and Holiday Dates for 2027/28

Proposed School Term and Holiday Dates 2027/28 (West Berkshire)

<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/draft-term-dates>

West Berkshire Council is consulting on school term and holiday dates for community and voluntary controlled schools for the 2027/28 academic year. The consultation runs to 24 June 2026. Please could all schools share the link to the consultation with parents.

Background

Local authorities set term dates for maintained schools under the Education Act 2002.

Schools must be open for 190 days per year and have 5 INSET days.

In West Berkshire, schools are scheduled to open for 194 days, with one fixed INSET day at the start of the autumn term.

Most neighbouring authorities have a one-week October half-term; only a small number of local schools currently operate a two-week break.

What's Being Proposed

Three options for the 2027/28 academic year:

Option 1

- One-week October half-term
- Earlier Easter
- Two balanced six-week spring terms
- Aligns with Hampshire and Wiltshire
- Starts 1 September 2027

Option 2

- One-week October half-term
- Later Easter
- Uneven spring term (7 weeks before Easter, 5 after)
- Aligns with Reading, Oxfordshire, and Wokingham
- Starts 2 September 2027

Option 3

- Two-week October half-term (using INSET days within holidays)
- Later Easter
- Uneven spring term
- May place pressure on working and low-income families
- Not aligned with neighbouring authorities and may lead to different school calendars locally
- Why Views Are Sought

The council wants feedback on:

- Preferred option and reasons
- Impacts on families, childcare, finances, wellbeing, and learning
- Importance of aligning with neighbouring authorities
- Effects of a two-week October break
- Implications for schools, teachers, and parents
- How to Take Part

Responses can be submitted via an online survey by midnight on Wednesday 24 June 2026:

<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/draft-term-dates>

If you have any questions about the survey, please email educationconsultation@westberks.gov.uk

Multiplication Check Meeting for Parents

Thank you to all of the parents that joined us for the multiplication check meeting this week. The PowerPoint that was shared at the meeting is available on our school website:

<https://www.stjohnandstnicolasschools.org.uk/assessment-information-for-parents/>

Autism Advisor for Families



CAMHS DIAGNOSIS PATHWAY

Diagnosis comes directly to the Autism Team



Your Autism Families Advisor
Lizzie Paterson

PRIVATE DIAGNOSIS PATHWAY

Parents of children with a private diagnosis can forward full details directly to learningsupportteam@westberks.gov.uk or to your child's school.

MY ROLE

I provide guidance and support to families to enhance understanding of autism, explore autism informed approaches, and navigate available services through appropriate advice and signposting.

HOW I CAN HELP

Pre- diagnosis	Post diagnosis
✓ Parents and carers can attend coffee mornings and drop-ins to speak directly with the Autism Advisor for Families. ✓ Schools and professionals can signpost parents and carers to Autism Advisor drop-ins and coffee mornings. ✓ Schools can ask for the Autism Advisor for Families, to attend their own coffee mornings and drop-ins. ✓ Parents and carers can attend autism team training (excluding post- diagnosis workshop). ✗ I do not provide home visits or individual phone calls.	Schools and professionals can refer to the Autism Advisor for Families for an initial phone call. ✓ Referrals from schools/professionals are accepted for individual family support. ✓ Parents and carers can be part of the autism team's updates service and monthly newsletter. ✓ Parents and carers can attend post-diagnosis workshops and autism team training. ✗ I do not offer home visits.

you can contact me via email at:
Lizzie.paterson1@westberks.gov.uk

SEN Coffee Morning

Please see the below message from Ellen Clinch, our new Family School Support Worker:

We would like to warmly invite you to our upcoming SEN Coffee Morning - Let's Talk Sensory.

This relaxed and friendly session will explore the different senses, how sensory needs can impact children, and practical ways we can support sensory challenges at home and in school.

It will also be a great opportunity to meet other parents/carers and professionals, share experiences, ask questions, and gain advice in an informal setting. Please note that no diagnosis is necessary to attend.

Event Details

Date: Thursday 21st May

Time: 9:00am - 10:30am

Location: Community Room, St John Evangelist Infant & Nursery School

Let's Talk Sensory

A discussion exploring the different senses, how they can impact our children, and ways we can support sensory challenges.

SEND Coffee Morning

Come along to our relaxed coffee morning to gain advice and support from other parents/carers and professionals working across a range of agencies in SEND.

Feel part of the community sharing experiences of supporting neuro diverse children or other Special Educational Needs; no diagnosis necessary.

9am to 10.30am Thursday 21st May
Community Room
St John Evangelist Infant & Nursery School



Charlie Taylor - Helpline Service Manager : Parenting Special Children
Jessica Monteith-Chachuat - Specialist Information officer West Berkshire Council
Lizzie Paterson - Autism Advisor : West Berkshire Council
Sara Kordowski - Liason & Activity Worker : ASD Family Hub



Professionals from a range of services will be attending to offer guidance and support.

We would be delighted to see you there and hope you can join us for coffee, conversation, and community support. Please email me if you want some more information.

Attendance

Congratulations to Cherry Class at St John's with 99.4% attendance and 6N at St Nic's with 100% attendance. Both classes have won our attendance aardvarks for this week.

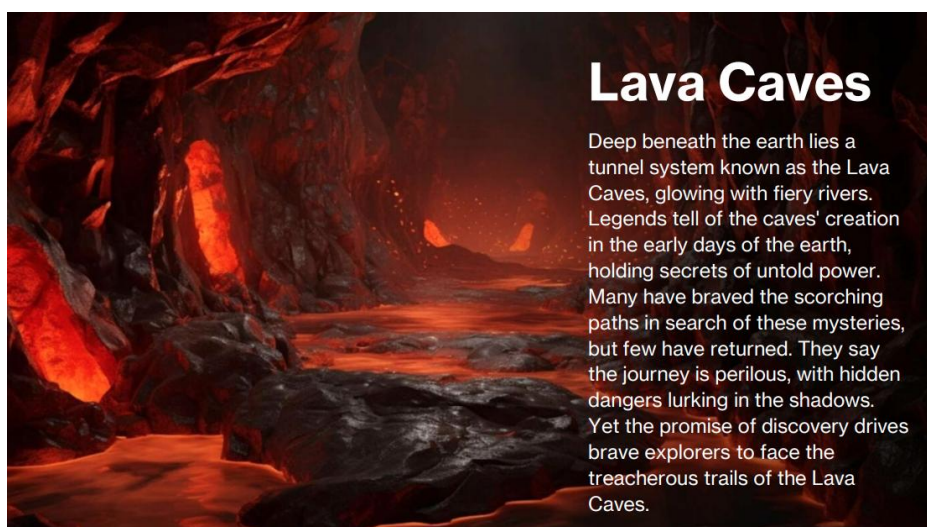
Attendance at each school last week was as follows:

- St John's: 94.5%
- St Nic's 96.0%

Across the two schools, there were 48 late marks last week. Every minute that a child is late can impact on their learning. Please ensure your child is in school, on time, each day.

Writer of the Week

Well done to Sylvie in Year 3, who was this week's writer of the week. Also well done to Isla in Year 4 for achieving her bronze reading badge. The inspiration for next week's writer of the week is below:



Year 2 Homework

Maths

This week we continue to look at telling the time with a real focus on how many minutes past the hour and how many minutes to the hour.



What do you notice about the hour hand for times that are "past" and "to"?

For "to" times, the hour hand should be more than halfway between two numbers.

For homework this week get your child to look at the time and see if they can tell you how many minutes past or to the hour.

TEACHING ONLINE CLOCK: <https://www.topmarks.co.uk/time/teaching-clock>

Spelling

In spellings this week: suffixes (-ment, -ness)

pay + ment agree + ment govern + ment punish + ment amaze + ment improve + ment judge + ment

ill + ness mad + ness fit + ness weak + ness sick + ness well + ness dark + ness

Introduce the rule for adding the suffixes to root words ending in /-y/ with a consonant before it, but only if the root word has more than one syllable. Model happy + ness = happiness merry + ment = merriment

Phonics Books for the Week

Reception: https://parents.fft.org.uk/viewer/?pdf=S25_Dad-s_Shearing_Shop&d=Dad%E2%80%99s%20Shearing%20Shop
<https://vimeo.com/692012847/4885fe2e2d>

Year 1:

https://parents.fft.org.uk/viewer/?pdf=S61_A_Wind_Band_Workshop&d=A%20Wind%20Band%20Workshop
<https://vimeo.com/731076620/4c7937ae2f>

Drawing Club

Drawing Club is a way of igniting joy and a love of stories with the early years and follows Greg Bottrell's beliefs and passions. Your child will be using their imagination to create new characters, settings, and events for this story. They will be adding marks, codes, labels, and messages to their work and realising that they are writers! Each week we will choose a different story or an animation, this week our animation is Mr Benn.

They will also be learning some exciting new vocabulary with actions. This week's vocabulary list is:

**LIBERATE
CAPTURE
HABITAT
TEARFUL
PROTECT
SHELTER
RELEASE
FORLORN**



See if they can teach you the actions!

Primary School Bangers Live!

Featuring the Voices of Incantata



Rediscover your favourite primary
school bangers and help raise money
for the West Berks Foodbank



Friday the 22nd of May
Doors open at 7:00pm

St Johns Church, Newbury, RG14 7YP

Tickets are £10 with a drink included
(Beer, Wine or a Soft Drink)

Scan the QR code to book
your tickets now!



Upcoming Dates

WB 18 th May:	Arts Week across both schools
Tuesday 19 th May:	Early Years Share and Celebrate 8.45am
Wednesday 20 th May:	St Nic's meeting for new Year 3 parents 9.15am
Thursday 21 st May:	Early Years Share and Celebrate 8.45am
Thursday 21 st May:	Celebration worship 10.10am
Friday 22 nd May:	Geography Day at St John's
25 th to 29 th May:	Half term break
Monday 1 st June:	Start of Summer Term 2

Yours sincerely,

Keith Harvey
Executive Headteacher