

15th March 2024



Dear Parents and Carers

I am sure that many of you will have seen discussions on the national news about children's school attendance. Since the pandemic, attendance has dropped nationally and here in Devon. We have been doing some analysis in school around our attendance and there is a clear pattern of children's attendance improving as they get older, with years 4, 5 and 6 having the strongest attendance.

We have also just had an assessment week where we have been looking at the progress children have made since September. There is a clear link that where attendance is low, progress in English and maths is poorer than those children with good attendance.

I apologise if this is just stating the obvious, but I wanted to give some context to the letters regarding attendance that have been sent out this year. We currently have far too many children with attendance below 90% which is classed as persistently absent and this impacts on their learning.

The letters are designed to raise your awareness as it is easy not to realise how a few days here and there build up. If you have concerns about attendance, the best person to speak to first of all is your child's teacher.

Hopefully, as the weather improves, we will see the back of coughs and colds!

Just a reminder that we are in school next week for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Top Readers

Well done to these children for their super reading from 11th to 18th March.

3H	Rowan H	5T	James D
3S	Anya M	5W	Imogen H
4E	Ore J	6P	Reuben M
4F	Star C	6BD	Heather C

Exe Factor 2024

Well done to everyone who took part in last week's Exe Factor competition! It was a fantastic show, as always! A special well done to the following winners:

KS1: Esme & Grace in Y1

KS2 runners up: Naomi & Heather in Y6 & Beau, Freya & Jessica in Y5

Solo Winner: Lewis in Y6

KS2 winners: Reuben & Daniel in Y6:

Thank you to Miss Habbishaw and Miss Grist for judging - it was a tough competition to judge! We look forward to seeing more incredible acts in Exe Factor 2025, with a new sound system to make the whole thing even more professional!

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Easter Concert

On the final day of term, Thursday 28th March, we are holding a short Easter concert on the back playground. This arrangement will be just like Christmas, with years 1-6 standing in their year groups towards the parents, sharing some of the songs they have been working on this term. We look forward to seeing you then. The gates will open at 2.20pm and we will start at 2.30pm promptly. You will be free to collect your child(ren) from their classrooms once the performance has finished.

Clubs

Your child will come home with a letter regarding clubs for the first half of the summer term next week. The forms need to be back in to school by Wednesday 17th April. You will then get an email for every club that your child has a place for by Friday 19th April. Clubs will begin the week beginning Monday 22nd April. Thank you to all the staff that give up their own time to provide a club.

There are no clubs next week.

Wooden Spoon Story Characters

We had well over 200 entries for our World Book Day wooden spoon competition. What a creative bunch you are; it was incredible to see the variety of techniques and materials used.

We announced the winners in assembly and they were all awarded a book to keep and take home.

Well done to the following winners:

Early Years – Paisley B

Years 1 and 2 – Ella W

Years 3 and 4 – Harriet and Olivia R

Years 5 and 6 – Frankie F

No Jewellery

As per the School Uniform Policy for health and safety reasons, we do not allow children to wear jewellery with the exception of stud earrings in pierced ears. These earrings also must be taken out for PE.

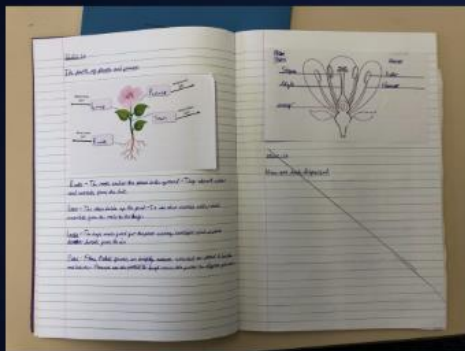
Snacks for Break Time

Just a reminder that for break time we only allow **fruit** as snacks (no oranges). No crisps or chocolate bars please.

Wildlife Champions

I wanted to pass on to you how well all the Wildlife Champions behaved on our day out at Mincinglake on Wednesday. They were all polite, well-mannered and asked great questions. Our day included making recyclable paper, planting trees, learning about ocean conservation, listening out for different bird songs, as well as making our own nature prints using real plants. We were working in a group with Countess Wear and the Wildlife Champions showed great teamwork and friendship with children from the other schools as well as each other. Well done to you all.

Year 3



In Year 3 this week we have been completing our final write on our book *The Story of the Windrush*. The children all wrote their own stories from the perspectives of one of the passengers. We have also been focusing on the features of a plant during science and have been learning all the skills needed to be successful in netball during PE!

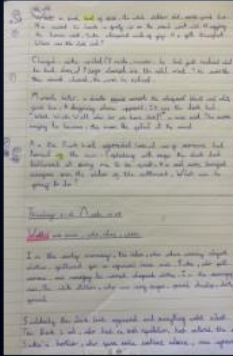
Year 4



This week in Year 4, we have been practising cartwheels in gymnastics and learning how to play small games of tennis. We have also been starting to code our fairground rides to spin! In English, we have been writing about Christophe's story and adding/subtracting fractions in maths.

Year 5

We have also completed some fantastic writing based on A Story Like the Wind!



Year 5 had a visit from the Space Dome where we learnt so much about planets, the moon, astronauts and all things space!



Year 6

These are a few pictures from our Year 6 trip to London which everybody loved. The children all behaved excellently and were role models for our school. Since we have been back at school we have been working hard in our preparation for SATs after the easter holidays!



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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Main Meal	Main Meal	Main Meal	Main Meal	Main Meal
Beef Bolognaise and Pasta, Garlic Focaccia, Mixed Salad	Mild Chicken Curry, Rice and Sweetcorn	Roast Gammon, Roast Potatoes, Seasonal Vegetables and Gravy	Margherita Pizza, Saute Potatoes and Peas	SCHOOL CLOSED
Vegetarian Option	Vegetarian Option	Vegetarian Option	Vegetarian Option	Vegetarian Option
Vegetable Ratatouille and Pasta, Garlic Focaccia and Mixed Salad	Mushroom Biryani with Sweetcorn	Veg Filled Yorkshire Pudding, Roast Potatoes, Seasonal Vegetables and Gravy	Quorn Sausage with Saute Potatoes Peas	SCHOOL CLOSED
Jacket Potato	Jacket Potato	Jacket Potato	Jacket Potato	Jacket Potato
With Cheese / Beans / Tuna Mayo	With Cheese / Beans / Tuna Mayo	With Cheese / Beans / Tuna Mayo	With Cheese / Beans / Tuna Mayo	SCHOOL CLOSED
Dessert	Dessert	Dessert	Dessert	Dessert
Flapjack Or Fresh Fruit/Yogurt	Cake Or Fresh Fruit/Yogurt	Ice Cream Pot Or Fresh Fruit/Yogurt	Muffin Or Fresh Fruit/Yogurt	SCHOOL CLOSED

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

ENCOURAGING OPEN CONVERSATIONS AT HOME

With tricky topics and occasional clashes of opinion, it can be challenging to maintain an environment where children feel able to talk candidly and honestly. However, encouraging such conversations helps to develop trust – making it easier to unpack even sensitive subjects as children get older. Here are our top tips for promoting open conversations at home.

1 CREATE A SAFE SPACE

Criticism, blaming or shaming can all prevent children from feeling emotionally safe – while showing affection, positive attention and an interest in what a child has to say builds their sense of security. These formative years are when children's opinions and values begin to take shape, so it's important to provide a non-judgmental environment in which to discuss them – especially if their opinions differ from your own.

2 CONSIDER OTHER OUTLETS

Some children may find it easier to talk while they're participating in another activity such as drawing, writing, walking or sport. If it's possible, taking part in these activities together presents you with an opportunity to communicate while doing something side by side. A child may feel less pressure that way and can be more inclined to open up of their own accord.

3 NORMALISE CHATS ABOUT FEELINGS

Incorporate mental health and emotional wellbeing into everyday conversations, using age-appropriate language and examples to help children understand their emotions. Ask questions like "How are you feeling today?", "What was the best and worst part of your day?", "If you could start today again, what would you do differently?" and "Is there anything you want to talk about?"

4 LISTEN ACTIVELY

When children express themselves, make it obvious that you're listening closely and giving them your full attention. Maintain eye contact and validate their feelings without immediately trying to solve the problem. It's not helpful to dismiss their issues as childish or "teenage angst" – or to assume that they'll simply "get over" whatever they're feeling. Children don't have your life experience; their resilience is still developing as they learn to push through difficulties and handle problems.

5 ASK OPEN QUESTIONS

Encourage children to share their thoughts by asking open questions about their feelings and experiences. Closed questions (such as "Did you enjoy school today?") are more likely to elicit a simple "yes" or "no" response. Instead, you could ask things like "Who did you spend time with at break?" or "Who did you sit with at lunchtime?"

6 RESPECT THEIR BOUNDARIES

If a child isn't ready to talk to about something yet, respect their boundaries: this reinforces that their feelings are important and worthy of consideration. Ideally, you're aiming to let them know you care without smothering them, so just make it clear that you're there for them whenever they're ready to chat. Gentle, regular check-ins can sometimes be the best form of progress.

7 LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Model open, honest and healthy communication in front of children and young people. Try to demonstrate kindness when talking about others and yourself, because if children hear adults being overly harsh, critical or judgmental, or see them having unrealistic expectations of themselves, it makes them more likely to adopt and repeat this behaviour themselves as they grow.

8 HAVE REGULAR CHECK-INS

Check in with children periodically to discuss how they're feeling and what's going on in their lives. This could be a weekly or monthly conversation, where the child has an opportunity to share whatever's on their mind. For parents and carers, getting away from the house and other distractions might be productive here: you could consider regular trips to a coffee shop or a cafe, or just a weekly walk.

9 PROVIDE RESOURCES

It's often beneficial to let children know about other support that's available to them if they're struggling to talk to you specifically. Encourage them to talk to school counsellors, trusted adults or even a therapist, if necessary – while normalising this route and dispelling the harmful stigma around asking for help. Older children could engage with resources such as Kooth or YoungMinds.

10 CELEBRATE EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

It's beneficial to praise children for expressing their feelings honestly – emphasising how important it is to talk about their emotions and how proud you are of them for doing so. This can be especially pivotal for boys, who often experience more of a stigma around talking frankly about their feelings and their mental health – a barrier that can be overcome, with enough love and support.

Meet Our Expert

With 30 years' experience as a teacher, trainer, consultant and interim executive board member, Anna Bateman has a superb understanding of what works in pedagogy, school improvement and leadership. She has also advised the Department for Education on their mental health green paper.



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