



Newsletter: 6th March 2026

Dear Families,
We hope you had a lovely half term break.

World Book Day

This week, our school was filled with excitement as we celebrated World Book Day and our shared love of reading. Across every class, pupils immersed themselves in stories, creative activities and rich discussions about the books and characters that inspire them.

Throughout the day, children took part in a variety of activities — from exploring favourite stories to creating artwork, acting out scenes and sharing recommendations with friends.

Pupils also joined live and video remote sessions with authors, including Robert Tregoney, Mitch Johnson and Onjali Q Rauf, giving pupils the chance to hear directly from the people who bring incredible stories to life.

A particular highlight of the day was the fantastic response to our 'Book in a Box' challenge. The entries were nothing short of outstanding — thoughtful, inventive and beautifully crafted. Each one showcased the remarkable talent, imagination and enthusiasm of our pupils. Everyone who sent in their creation should feel incredibly proud of what they achieved. We hope our grown-ups enjoyed joining in with the fun too.

Days like these remind us how special it is to share stories together and celebrate the joy that reading brings to our school community.

Congratulations to our winning entries. There are more entries on our Facebook page.

Happy reading and happy weekend!
Mrs Burgess



General News

Non-Uniform Day

As part of our fundraising efforts, we will be having a non-uniform day on **Thursday 12th March**, led by our wonderful Friends of St Patrick's.

Instead of a donation of money for school funds, we ask that each child brings in some form of chocolate (sounds good already).

This could be a bar of chocolate (big or small), a chocolate egg or a box of chocolates.

The friends of St Patrick's group will then combine the contributions into some choc-a-block hampers. Raffle tickets will be on sale before and after the Easter celebrations/liturgies week beginning 30th March. Please send in donations by **Wednesday 25th March**.

Thank you, in advance, for your support.

Big Lent Walk

This year, we will be taking part again in the Big Lent Walk to help raise money for less fortunate in our society through CAFOD. The dates for the walk for each year group will be shared soon. In the meantime, families can support this wonderful cause by donating through the Arbor School Shop or send in £2 cash donation to school.

Thank you for your continued generosity and support in helping others during the season of Lent.

Y3 and Y4 Girls' Football Festival at North Durham Academy

We were delighted that our girls were able to participate in this event as we are always keen to encourage all our pupils to get involved in sport. We want to make sure we give our girls the message that all sports are for them too. Events like these help break down barriers by offering a positive, enjoyable experience where every girl feels welcome, encouraged and included.

General News

Parent/Carer Governor Role

We are recruiting a parent/carers governor. Could it be you?

We are looking to appoint a parent/carers governor to join our Local Governing Committee and we would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in supporting the continued success and development of our school.

Parent/carers governors play a vital role in school life. Their responsibilities include:

- Championing the views of parents and carers within the governing body.
- Supporting and challenging school leadership to ensure the very best outcomes for all pupils.
- Helping shape the strategic direction of the school.
- Promoting the school's vision, values and mission within the wider community.

No previous experience is needed — just a commitment to our school community and a willingness to contribute your time and perspective.

Full training will be provided, and you will be supported by a knowledgeable, friendly and dedicated team of governors and school leaders who work closely together to make a positive impact.

If you are passionate about helping our school continue to thrive, we would love to hear from you.

Please email the school at stpd@stpd.bwcet.com by **Friday 13th March** to express an interest.

St Joseph's and St Patrick's Newsletter

Please click [here](#) to view this week's parish newsletter for St. Patrick's and St. Joseph's parishes. Here you will find news about upcoming parish events and news.

Online safety

We will give regular updates throughout the year regarding the need for vigilance with online safety. Please alert us to any concerns you may have.

Please see the following guidance and advice from National Online Safety.

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators USING TECHNOLOGY TO BOOST READING SKILLS

The way we engage with text has changed dramatically over the years. Whether reading captions on social media, instructions in a video game or an e-book on a digital device, technology plays a major role in modern literacy. While traditional books remain invaluable, digital tools can enhance reading skills by making text more accessible, interactive and engaging.

1 CHOOSING THE RIGHT TYPE OF TEXT

Before integrating technology, consider the types of text that a child engages with. If they need help on occasion, digital reading pens can assist by scanning and reciting words or sentences. These tools are especially useful for students with reading difficulties, and can even be used in exams if they're part of their routine learning process. Proper training and practice are required, but they can be a great help when tackling printed text.

2 READING ON SCREEN

Many devices now allow users to customise text for better readability. Adjusting font type, size and background colour can significantly enhance comprehension. For many readers, white text on a black background is the easiest to see, whereas other styles – such as dyslexia-friendly fonts – are designed to help those who are struggling. Teaching children how to personalise text settings on their devices empowers them to read more comfortably and with greater confidence.

3 ACCESSIBILITY TOOLS

Most modern devices include built-in tools designed to support readers. These features can be found in Settings under Accessibility and may include text-to-speech, speech-to-text and screen magnification functions. Enabling these tools can make digital reading more user friendly, especially for children with learning difficulties or visual impairments, who might have an easier time with spoken language than the written word, or who might simply require a closer look at the text.

4 INTERACTIVE READING PROGRAMMES

Many digital reading devices, such as Kindle and other e-readers, offer features like word highlighting, adjustable text speed and built-in dictionaries. These tools help learners to break down complex words and phrases while maintaining an appropriate reading pace. Some programmes even allow users to track their progress, making reading a more structured and motivating experience.

5 VIDEO GAMES AND READING SKILLS

Many video games require players to read instructions, character dialogues and mission objectives, making them an unexpected but effective literacy tool. Games that involve storytelling, puzzles or problem-solving often include large amounts of text – encouraging children to read these texts aloud or discuss them can improve their comprehension and vocabulary in a fun, engaging way.

6 SUBTITLES AND CLOSED CAPTIONS

Watching videos with subtitles or closed captions is an effective way to enhance reading skills. As children watch their favourite shows or online videos, they can follow along with the text, gaining a better understanding of how written words sound when spoken aloud. This is particularly beneficial for reluctant readers, as it exposes them to words in a familiar, engaging context. Regularly watching content with subtitles reinforces word recognition and comprehension.

7 USING AUDIOBOOKS

Audiobooks are an excellent way to develop listening and reading skills simultaneously. Children can follow along with the text while listening to a narrator, reinforcing word recognition and fluency. For struggling readers, listening to an audiobook before attempting to read the text independently can boost their confidence and comprehension.

9 TEXT-TO-VOICE TECHNOLOGY

Text-to-voice software reads digital text aloud, making it easier for learners to follow along. Most smartphones, tablets and computers come with this function built in. When enabled, users can highlight a passage or sentence and press play to hear it read aloud. This tool is particularly helpful for auditory learners and those who struggle with decoding written words.

8 VOICE-TO-TEXT FOR WRITING AND READING

Voice-to-text tools allow users to dictate words, which are then transcribed into text. This feature helps children see the connection between spoken and written language. By using text-to-voice to have their dictated words read back to them, learners can identify mistakes and improve their reading and writing skills simultaneously.

10 SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARENTAL CONTROLS

While social media provides opportunities for reading, most platforms have age restrictions of 13-18 years old, making parental guidance essential. Many social media videos include captions and comments that can encourage reading. However, it's important to use the platform's parental controls (such as time limits and content filters) to create a safe and educational online environment for children. Encouraging responsible social media use can ensure a balanced and productive approach to digital literacy.

Meet Our Expert

Catrina Lewis is a qualified special needs teacher and experienced SENCO. She recently launched her own site, Neuroteachers, which offers a library of short, 'how-to' and explanation videos for educators. Catrina also writes and delivers online training and events for multi-academy trusts, businesses, schools and training organisations.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

March Wellbeing Activities

I am loved.

I am thankful.

Acts of Kindness March Calendar

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

1
Draw a picture and give it to someone special.

2
Help tidy your classroom or home.

3
Write down something you are grateful for.

4
During a family meal, ask everyone to share the best part of their day.

5
Donate books or toys to a local charity.

6
Ask your teacher how their day is going.

7
Give someone a compliment to help them feel better about themselves.

8
Share a favourite memory with a friend or family member.

9
Introduce yourself to someone you haven't met before at school.

10
Write a thank-you note to someone who helped you.

11
Play a boardgame or do a puzzle with your family.

12
Set yourself a goal to achieve today.

13
Encourage someone that you see is struggling.

14
Write a note to someone to show them that you care.

15
Wish the first person that you see an amazing day.

16
Offer to help someone.

17
Share your toys with a friend or sibling.

18
Do a chore to help someone in your family.

19
At the end of the day, write or draw one great thing that happened.

20
Find a positive quote and share it with someone.

21
Be kind to yourself and do something special for you.

22
Help a teacher without being asked.

23
Be a friend to someone in need at school.

24
Do something nice for someone who is special to you.

25
Help prepare a meal with your family.

26
Donate food to a local food bank.

27
Teach someone something you are good at.

28
Tell a joke to make someone laugh.

29
Do something that you love to do.

30
Recycle.

31
Make a card for someone special.

Outdoor Mindfulness Scavenger Hunt

Go outside and use all of your senses to complete this scavenger hunt.



Find something that makes you happy.



Listen to a bird singing.



Find something that smells nice.



Listen to leaves rustling on a tree.



Find something that is your favourite colour.



Find something that makes a noise.



Find something that is smooth.



Find something the colour of the sky.



Find something as small as your fingernail.



Look for a cloud that is shaped like an animal. Watch it change shape.



Follow an insect. What it is doing?



Find something that is soft.

St. Patrick's Day Potato Pancakes



Ingredients

- 2 medium sized potatoes or 250g cold mashed potato
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp sunflower oil
- 75g plain flour
- 2 eggs
- knob of butter
- 125ml milk

Method

This recipe requires adult supervision.

1. If you need to make the mashed potato, peel and chop the potatoes into chunks. Then, add them to a pan of water and boil for 15 minutes or until they are soft.
2. Drain the potatoes using a colander. (Adult supervision is required as the water will be extremely hot.)
3. Mash the potatoes and then weigh out 250g. Allow this to cool.
4. Sieve the flour and baking powder onto the mashed potato.
5. In a bowl, whisk the eggs and milk together. Then, add this to the mashed potato and flour mixture and stir well. Whisk the mixture until it is smooth.
6. In a large frying pan, heat half of the sunflower oil and a bit of the butter. (Adult supervision is required as the fat and pan will be extremely hot.)
7. Carefully, add 1 tbsp of the batter for each pancake to the pan. You should be able to fit four pancakes in the pan.
8. After about 1 minute, small bubbles will appear on the top and the bottom of the pancake should be light brown. Turn the pancakes over and cook on the other side.
9. When both sides are light brown, carefully remove from the pan.
10. If you have any mixture left, you can cook more pancakes in the same way.
11. Finally, serve and enjoy.



Head Teacher's Awards

The following children have received a head teacher's certificate this week:

| | | | |
|-----------|----------------------|-----------|---|
| Reception | Being Ready To Learn | Charlotte | For sharing fantastic ideas during class discussions. |
| Year 1 | Being Ready to Learn | Charlie | For always being sat on the carpet focused and ready for the lesson. |
| Year 2 | Being Respectful | Finn | For being a polite and caring member of our class. |
| Year 3 | Being Ready to Learn | Eden | For giving teachers 100% of her attention. As a result, she contributes thoughtfully to whole-class discussion. |
| Year 4 | Being Ready to Learn | Bella | For such a fantastic attitude to learning times tables. |
| Year 5 | Being Respectful | Lara | For always listening carefully in class. |
| Year 6 | Being Ready to Learn | Lexi | For always giving 100% to every task. |

Class Teacher Special Mention Awards

The following children have received a Class Teacher Special Mention certificate this week:

| | | |
|-----------|-------------|---|
| Reception | Whole Class | For their fantastic approach to all of the activities during World Book Day. |
| Year 1 | Poppy | For her amazing focus and precision when completing her art during World Book Day. |
| Year 2 | Jory | For listening carefully and always trying her best. |
| Year 3 | Eva | For being a positive and fantastic role model to her peers. |
| Year 4 | Logan | For producing some fantastic artwork based on 'The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse'. |
| Year 5 | Melissa | For making good progress in maths this week. |
| Year 6 | Olivia | For such an excellent attitude in maths and making super progress. |



Summary of upcoming events

| | |
|--|---|
| Tuesday 10 th | Little Acorns Meeting 9-10.30am. Led by Caroline Daly SEND & Inclusion Advisory Team. Invited carers |
| Wednesday 11 th | Rec-Y6 Parents'/Carers' Evening 3.30pm-6pm in school |
| Thursday 12 th | Non-Uniform Day |
| Friday 13 th | Y5/Y6 Basketball Festival at Consett Leisure Centre pm |
| Tuesday 17 th | St Patrick's Feast Day Mass in church 9.30am. All welcome. |
| Friday 20 th | SEN drop-in session 2.30pm- 3.15pm with Miss Clish SENDCO |
| Monday 23 rd – Friday 27 th | Community Challenge Week |
| Tuesday 24 th | Rec-Y6 Parents'/Carers' Evening 3.30pm-6pm in school |
| Thursday 26 th | Rec/Y3 Hall Hill Farm Trip |

**[Please click here to view our Diary of Events
for the rest of the Academic year](#)**