



Newsletter

Friday 20 December 2024

A Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year

As 2024 draws to a close, I would like to thank you for your continued support of Sandy Lane Primary School. It has not been an easy year with the departure of Mr Davies at Easter followed by the news that his replacement would not, after all, be joining the school in September.

Schools across Bracknell continue to face budget, recruitment / retention and SEND challenges and 2025 is unlikely to see respite. I will be working with leaders at Sandy Lane and the wider Trust to mitigate these challenges so that we can make Sandy Lane the school we all want for the children. I do not pretend this will be quick or easy, but I am committed to doing so.

On that note, I would like to thank the hard-working and dedicated Sandy Lane staff for all they have done during 2024. It has been a privilege to work with them this term and while 2025 will almost certainly bring further challenges, I have absolute confidence in their ability to meet them.

I have also been pleased with the children's attitude to learning in class and to see that the vast majority of children behave well and display our values, 'Taking Pride' in all they do. Like every school in the country, however, there are a small minority who display more challenging behaviours and this is something we are working hard to address.

We also thank you for your support in getting children to school and on time. Our overall attendance (95.4% at the end of the Autumn Term), while still lower than it was pre-pandemic, is in-line with the national averages and better than this time last year. The number of late arrivals – and particularly those after the register has closed - continues to be better than last year also. We know that there are sometimes challenges getting children to school and we appreciate the way you have engaged with us to support them where needed. We very much hope 2025 will see a new Pastoral Support Advisor in post too!



Finally, on behalf of the staff, governors and board of Sandy Lane Primary School and the Greenshaw Learning Trust, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a

Happy New Year. We look forward to seeing you and your children safe and well in January!

Mr G Strudley (Headteacher)

Staffing Update

We say goodbye to **Miss Emma Lovell** and **Mrs Hannah Whitehead**, who are leaving us at the end of term. Miss Lovell has taken a promotion and will be working at Garth Hill College, while Mrs Whitehead will be taking up a role outside education. I am sure you will join me in thanking them for all they have contributed to Sandy Lane and to wish them the best of luck in their new roles. We will be recruiting replacements in the New Year and will have interim staff in place in the meantime.

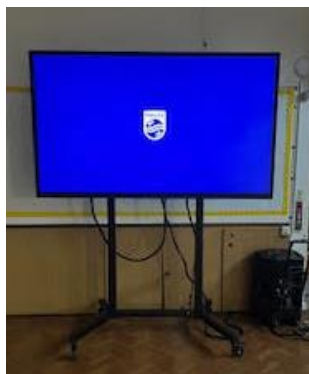


We are pleased to welcome **Ms Leanne Hopton** as the Level 3 EYFS Practitioner to the Nursery Team from January 2025, when we will be full with a waiting list. Ms Hopton's skills and experience will strengthen the Nursery and I know you will join me in welcoming her to the school.

Mrs Louise Whitehead will, as part of her teaching training, be on placement at another school during the Spring Term. During this period **Mrs Natalie Doyle** and **Ms Emma Falconer** will be teaching the class. Mrs Whitehead will return for the Summer Term.

As well as the Teaching Assistant posts mentioned above, we are currently advertising for a new Pastoral Support Advisor (PSA) and an additional Site Assistant (shared with Wooden Hill Primary School). Until we recruit the PSA, we are receiving support from **Mrs Sandra Ruck** from Crown Wood Primary School and **Mrs Hayley Garland** from the Trust's Attendance Team.

Thank You SLSA
The school received an early Christmas Present from our fantastic Sandy Lane School Association (SLSA) recently when they agreed to fund 50% of the cost of this new 85" screen and adjustable trolley for the Upper Hall. The screen has toughened glass, is fully interactive and has integral sound. It replaces the old – and failing - projector we previously used. The is already being used for assemblies (making it easier to use video clips and sound), but it will also be used for teaching PE, intervention groups, parent presentations and staff training. We are grateful to the SLSA and to everyone who has contributed.



Year 6 – Team Bracknell

Team Bracknell explored what sustainability means, project managed a booklet for the library and created an Eco display. The week consisted of exploring and investigating on computers, working together in teams, creating pages for the booklet and art work for the display.



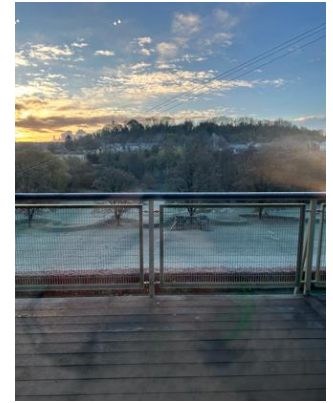
The children had the opportunity to attend a session in our Forrest school, and absolutely loved the experience. The children were playing on the stage, making food and all you could hear was laughter.

Team Bracknell created leaf globes, they enjoyed picking leaves, punching holes and seeing they creations come alive. They reused plastic bottles and recycled paper and played bowling, much to everyone's delight. Every child in team Bracknell volunteered to work with children in another year group, year one for D.T, year three and four in German making lanterns and other years - reading with children.



Year 6 – Residential

Year 6 enjoyed a fun packed, albeit chilly week at Mill on the Bree at the beginning of November. We got cold. We got wet. We got tired. We made new friends. We learnt new songs. We celebrated a birthday; we all had the best fun. It was wonderful to see the children's confidence and independence grow on a daily basis. The camaraderie, motivational skills and team building we witnessed were outstanding.



Activities throughout the week included zip wiring across a valley and a river, high ropes, low ropes, rock climbing, night walks, camp fires, assault courses, pizza making, learning about composting and growing herbs and vegetables that are used in the kitchen. We ate lots of lovely food and the children were superb at trying things they'd never eaten before.

Mill on the Bree operate a Zero Heroes policy to reduce waste. The children really entered into the spirit, asking for smaller portions, going back for seconds or helping each other out to finish the food already on plates on the table. Two thirds of the children achieved Zero Hero status. We can't wait to take the next group next year!

Hedgehog Class



Throughout this term, Hedgehogs have been busy exploring the concepts of addition and subtraction in our Maths lessons. We worked together in groups with large number lines, moving ourselves along to find solutions to the calculations.

Year 4 Geography



This term, in Year 4, we have been learning about states of matter – solid, liquid and gas - in science and how rivers are formed and develop in Geography.

We also learnt about the water cycle in both subjects and the importance of it from a scientific and a geographical perspective. In class we created our own water cycle using sandwich bags and placed them on the windows to watch the water evaporate, condense and participate.

The children have enjoyed learning new facts, but also carrying out lots of practical activities in both subjects.

School Meals

We have been concerned by the amount of food waste being generated by Sandy Lane children and we are told that we have one of the worst records out of all the schools in the Trust. We are acting to reduce food waste by ensuring we are serving food the children will want to eat, including the reintroduction of paninis, and bringing in 'self-selection' from after February half-term.

The menu will continue to be shared with you and you will be able to discuss the meal options with your child. The difference will be that your child will tell us which meal they want or if they are having a packed lunch each morning. Payments in Y3-6 will continue to be made via MCAS as now and there will be no changes to special menus catering for children with allergies etc.



At the recent meeting of the Eco-Council, pupil representatives were asked about these plans and they commented that they liked the look of the new menu especially the paninis and that they will get to choose for themselves. It was interesting to note that they thought that adults should encourage them to eat more vegetables and to eat more of their meals. There were also suggestions about serving smaller portions of vegetables and to have different vegetable choices. These and their other ideas have been shared with the Catering Team.

GLT & The School Improvement Team (SIT)

One of the advantages of being part of a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) like the Greenshaw Learning Trust (GLT) is the access we have to professional support. As well as 'back room' functions such as Finance, HR, Estates Management, Catering, Admissions and IT, we are also able to call upon colleagues to support with Safeguarding, Attendance, SEND, the curriculum and teaching & learning. The School Improvement Team's role is to work with leaders and teachers to develop our curriculum and pedagogy so all children get the best possible education. In particular, they are supporting us to achieve the objectives set out in our School Improvement Plan (SIP).

Since September, we have been working with a number of the School Improvement Team (SIT) and as you may well see them around the school after Christmas too, we thought it would be good to introduce some of them to you!



Helen Matt was previously Headteacher at Victor Seymour Infants and now works across the Trust primary schools to provide guidance, support and direction for Early Years and Key Stage 1.



Luke Maddison, also a former headteacher, has been working with Miss Amor and teachers to enhance our curriculum offer and to develop subject leadership.



Sophie Dickin is a former SENCO and current Specialist Leader of Education (SEND). She is working with Mrs Wade on the Specially Resourced Provision (SRP) – Foxes.



Claire Ward specialises in supporting teachers and leaders to raise standards in all aspects of Reading and Writing. She will be working with Mrs Waters and Mrs Oliver next term.

We are incredibly fortunate to be able to draw on such a wealth of knowledge and expertise!

I am also pleased to report that the Trust Board has agreed to release £1m from our collective reserves to support capital projects. There will be a formula for distributing the money to schools, but all of us will benefit. At Sandy Lane, we have already earmarked several potential projects, including accelerating improving the internal decoration (we are very aware there are several 'tired' looking areas) and improving outdoor provision in EYFS. Ultimately, the number and size of the projects we can undertake will depend on the amount of money we get, but we will be guided our SIP priorities and think strategically about what we do.

German News

Year 6 have been learning singular and plural body parts as well as describing hair and eye colours. We had lots of fun playing 'Guess Who' and singing 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes' in German. They have also been working hard on singular and plural nouns and spotting adjective endings with our monster reading task.

Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDPPVkvjckQ>

Year 5 performed their weather reports really well at the start of the half term. Since then they have been working on higher numbers, learning about the history of the Adventskalender, which was invented in Germany and making their own class advent calendar. They have also worked on using bilingual dictionaries to find the plurals of Christmas nouns and using them in sentences with numbers.

Year 4 have been learning about the history of St. Martin and how he is celebrated in Germany every November by



children. They really impressed me with their reading skills, story comprehension and singing. Year 4 made beautiful Martinstag Laterne (lanterns) and we created our own procession and re-enactment! Lantern song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDPPVkvjckQ>.

Story of St. Martin Cartoon:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdJPDI03m6s>

Year 3 are getting to grips with German phonics, they have taken on a German first name and can say and ask what each other is called. They really enjoyed learning about St. Nicholas and how he visits the good children on 6th December – how amazing that he left them a gold chocolate coin as well! Story of St. Nicholas cartoon: <https://kinder.wdr.de/tvdie-sendung-mit-der-maus/av/video-lachgeschichte-nikolaus-100.html>



Fröhliche Weihnachten und einen guten Rutsch ins neue Jahr!

Frau Marshall

Year 5/6 Art Club



Over the last few weeks we have been experimenting with different media to complete various pieces of artwork, such as seasonal pictures using pastels, making mosaic coasters, Santa gongs and a Christmas table centrepiece. All the children have embraced and enjoyed the sessions. We thank Mrs Westwood for all her hard work – we know she is looking forward to running a Year 3/4 club in 2025!

Foxes



After a great term learning all about people who help us, Foxes were visited by a nurse and taught how to bandage up for different injuries! They had lots of fun showing off their 'broken' arms and legs, and practised on themselves and teddies too!

Sandy Lane Choir



Choir has been working really hard this term and Wednesday attended two residential homes in our community, singing and spreading Christmas cheer. The residents and staff were delighted and we left a little bit of Sandy Lane positivity behind.

PE

In PE lessons this half term children have been developing their gymnastics skills, demonstrating jumping, rolling and balancing skills on floor and apparatus. They have also been participating in a variety of indoor athletics events such as speed bounce and standing high jump.



There have been several sports events across the half term also, with year 4,5 and 6 pupils representing the school at cross country. Notably, our Panathlon team came 1st place in a recent competition and will now represent the county in April next year at Eton College. Our children had to compete in several different activities, each aimed at developing a specific skill as well as teamwork. Well done to all children involved!

Mr Nower, PE Coach

Year 5

This half term, as part of our space topic, the Year 5 and 6 children experienced an in-school mobile planetarium. The show took them on a journey through space and the history of space travel.



Meanwhile, in Geography, we used plasticine to create models of the earth with accurate layers (Inner Core, Outer Core, Mantle and Crust) which we then sliced open, to support our learning about earthquakes.



In DT, we have been exploring cams, a mechanism for changing one type of movement for another. The children had a real 'give it a go' attitude and showed resilience and teamwork

as they made their prototypes.

Children in Need and Christmas Jumper Day 2024

A huge thank you to all our school community for raising £232 for this year's Christmas Jumper Day in aid of Home Start Bracknell. The children looked fantastic in their jumpers and your generosity in supporting this very worthy cause is very much appreciated. Earlier in the term we also raised £96 for Children in Need.



Dates for Your Diary:

20 DEC 24	Last Day of Autumn Term (2.00pm)
06 JAN 25	INSET Day (School Closed)
07 JAN 25	First Day of Spring Term
13 JAN 25	SEND Coffee & Catch-up (TBA)
27 JAN 25	Governing Body Meeting (5.30pm)
07 FEB 25	Y1-6 Book Look (2.30pm)
11 FEB 25	Internet Safety Day
14 FEB 25	Last day of half term (3.15pm)
24 FEB 25	School re-opens
04 MAR 25	SEND Coffee & Catch-up (TBA)
06 MAR 25	World Book Day
14 MAR 25	Red Nose Day
18 MAR 25	EYFS Coffee Morning (TBA)
26 MAR 25	Parent Consultations (ip)
27 MAR 25	Parent Consultations (v)
04 APR 25	Last Day of Spring Term (2.00pm)



Taking PRIDE in all we do

Positive – Responsible – Inclusive – Determined – Enquiring

