

Issue: 13



Headteacher

NEWSLETTER



Update from Ms. Parkhouse

As we approach the end of another busy term, I want to start by thanking you all for your continued support. It has been a productive few weeks, and I hope you are all looking forward to a well-deserved half term break!

Important School Updates:

The New Ofsted Report Card: A Summary for Families



I sent out a detailed letter last week regarding the significant shift in how Ofsted inspects schools. As we anticipate an inspection at Sandy Lane during the spring or early summer, I wanted to provide a summary of what this new "Report Card" system means for our community:

- **No More Single-Word Judgements:** The old "Good" or "Outstanding" labels have been replaced. Instead, schools receive a Report Card covering specific areas like Safeguarding, Curriculum, and Inclusion.
- **The 5-Point Scale:** Most areas are now graded from Exceptional down to Urgent Improvement. Safeguarding will simply be marked as Met or Not Met.
- **A Rigorous Standard:** This is a much more precise approach. To achieve a grade, schools must now meet every single statement within that standard.
- **Understanding "Needs Attention":** Think of this like an MOT advisory. It often highlights an area where we have already started positive work that just needs time to "embed." In school, we use similar language, such as "Expected, Insecure" (EXI), to show a child is nearly there but needs a little more time.
- **Exceptional Grades are Rare:** These are now reserved for truly uncommon circumstances. Most schools will not receive them, and this should not be seen as a negative reflection on the school's quality.

We remain fully committed to our PRIDE values and ensuring every child at Sandy Lane reaches their potential.

Mobile Phone Policy

A gentle reminder that we are a "No Phone School." This is essential for the safety of our pupils and to maintain a focused learning environment. All pupil phones must be handed in at the start of the day and will be returned by the class teacher at home time. Please note that failure to hand in a phone will be addressed in line with our behaviour policy.

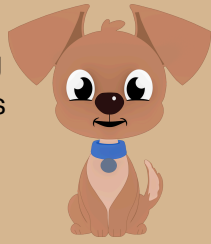


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Dogs on Site

We know many of you enjoy walking your dogs during the school run and we love seeing your furry friends! You are welcome to bring your dog to the drop-off and pick-up points provided you can carry the dog please for the safety of all. If your dog is too large to be carried, we kindly ask that it remains at the school gates.



Staffing Update

- Unfortunately, **Mr. Nower** is currently off poorly with an injury. This is not a "quick fix injury," but we hope to see him back with us the week commencing 23rd February. We wish him a very speedy recovery!
- We have two exciting arrivals on the horizon! **Mrs. Gratrix** will begin her maternity leave in the second week of next term (first week of March). We will write to you by the end of this week regarding the maternity cover arrangements.
- **Mrs. May** will be starting her maternity leave at the start of Term 5 (13th April). We are so excited for both families! We will be in touch next half term with an update on this cover arrangement.
- **Mrs. B** is remaining in touch during her recovery and we wish her well! Due to the high risk of infection in a classroom environment, her medical team has advised that she cannot return to a Reception setting for the time being. Therefore, she will not be in Caterpillars class from February as previously planned. Please be assured that there are no changes to our overall EYFS staffing structure for the remainder of this academic year. We wish Mrs B the very best with her recovery and can't wait for her return!



New Internal Alternative Provisions (IAP's)

I am thrilled to share an evolution in how we will support our SEND children at Sandy Lane. We are currently undergoing a period of purposeful growth, redefining our approach to inclusion to ensure every child has a learning environment that truly fits their individual needs.

We are introducing two specialised, internal provisions – Badgers and Dolphins Class. These have been designed to offer bespoke pathways for children who require a more tailored educational experience.

Our Badgers provision is designed for children who benefit from a high-consistency, small-group environment throughout their primary years. Rather than trying to fit every child into a traditional mainstream structure, Badgers offers a dedicated space led by a specialist SEND teacher.

- **The Philosophy:** A focus on long-term stability and specialised pedagogy.
- **The Support:** An incredibly high adult-to-child ratio, ensuring that every breakthrough is celebrated and every challenge is supported in real-time.
- **The Identity:** We chose the 'Badgers' name because it represents a space that can grow and evolve with the children as they move from Key Stage 1 through to the end of their journey with us.



Our Dolphins Class has been created following the remarkable success of our recent pilot programme. Following the pilot's success, a permanent provision will be created focused on Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) support.



- **The Philosophy:** Dolphins is a "bridge" provision. It provides a therapeutic, nurturing curriculum designed to build resilience and emotional regulation.
- **The Aim:** The aim is for children to access this intensive support and, when they are ready, transition back into their base classrooms equipped with the tools they need to thrive.
- **The Model:** Operating on a 3:8 ratio, this allows for deep, impactful work that addresses the "whole child," not just their academic output.

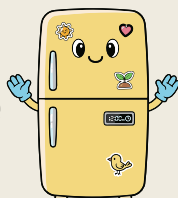
To bring this vision to life, we are reimagining the layout of our school. Over the coming days and weeks, there will be some internal repurposing of areas and rooms. These changes are designed specifically to enhance our facilities further. These adjustments are a strategic investment in our physical space, ensuring that our environment is as adaptive and supportive as our teaching staff.

These new provisions represent our commitment to being a school that doesn't just "manage" diverse needs but actively celebrates and facilitates different ways of learning. This is a dynamic time for Sandy Lane. We are building a model of support that is responsive, expert-led, and, most importantly, centred around the happiness and progress of our pupils. I look forward to sharing more details with you as these spaces come to life.

Key Dates



[Click here](#) for a handy printable for the fridge.



Term 4 Key Dates



Whilst we endeavour to ensure that you get as much notice as possible for all school key dates, there might be times when this isn't possible. Thank you in advance for your understanding when this does happen!

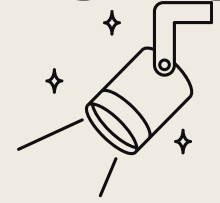
Monday 23rd February 2026	INSET Day - School Closed for pupils
Tuesday 24th February 2026	School reopens for all pupils - First Day of Term 4
Wednesday 25th February	KS2 Choir attending the O2 - All Day
Thursday 26th February	Year 5 Parent Drop In /Coffee Morning
Tuesday 3rd March	Pupil Parliament Trip
Thursday 5th March	World Book Day (Pupils are invited to 'Dress for Reading': either as a favourite character or in their 'comfies')
	World Book Day Special Lunch Menu
	Nursery Parents are invited to come and read to children at: 8:35am - 9.00am and 2:50pm - 3:15pm
	Book Sale and Golden Lucky Dip (Middle Playground) - SLSA Event
Thursday 5th March	KS2 Choir attending Whitegrove for Hexagon rehearsal - Afternoon (details sent out)
Tuesday 10th March	Year 5 German Karneval Celebration - Assembly for parents 2.40pm - upper school hall
Thursday 12th March	Year 6 Parent SATs meeting 3:30
Friday 13th March	Wonderful Women Cake and Flower Sale (Middle Playground) - SLSA Event
Thursday 19th March	Year 1 Parent Drop In / Coffee Morning
Friday 20th March	Red Nose Day (Pupils are invited to wear Red Nose Day Accessories alongside their usual school uniform)
Tuesday 24th March	School Nurse Drop In Sessions 9:30am - 11:30am (only by prior arrangement with school office for children aged 5 & over)
Friday 27th March 2026	Last day of Term 4

Easter Half Term: Monday 30th March 2026 - Friday 10th April 2026
School reopens on Monday 13th April 2026



SENCO
Mr Walsh

Spotlight on SEND



Understanding PDA

A Child's Voice: "I'm Not Defiant; I'm Anxious"

At Sandy Lane, we are committed to seeing the "child behind the behaviour." This term, we are focusing on PDA (Pathological Demand Avoidance). For children with a PDA profile, everyday demands—like putting on shoes, completing a worksheet, or even being asked to do something they enjoy—can trigger a significant "fight, flight, or freeze" response in their nervous system. It is important to remember that for these children, avoiding a demand isn't a choice or a "naughty" behavior; it is a survival mechanism.

Key Insights from the PDA Perspective: Based on guidance from 'The Contented Child', here is what children with PDA want us to understand:

- The Anxiety Gap: A child may look calm on the outside while experiencing very high anxiety internally.
- The Protective Brain: Their nervous system reacts to demands as threats. They aren't choosing to resist; their body is trying to protect them.
- The Aim is Cooperation: Most children with PDA want to meet expectations but feel physically unable to do so when their anxiety is spiked.
- Effort vs. Outcome: We must look at a child's effort, not just the end result. Some days, "trying" looks very different than others.

Scripting Our Language: If you notice your child struggling with demands, shifting how we communicate can make a world of difference. Our aim is to lower the perceived threat and increase a sense of safety. Instead of using direct commands like "Put your coat on now," try using declarative language such as "I noticed it's quite cold outside today." This gives the child the information they need without the pressure of a direct order.

Similarly, we can replace "control" with collaboration. Rather than saying "You have to do this first," try offering a choice: "Would you like to do this at the table or on the rug?" By framing tasks as invitations or teamwork, we help the child feel safe enough to engage and problem-solve.

Moving Forward Together: The most important thing we can offer a child with PDA is patience and a consistent approach. When they feel overwhelmed, they may joke, shut down, or say no. This isn't because they don't care; it's because they need reassurance and safety before they can cooperate. "I feel safest when things are framed as choices, teamwork, or invitations."





FSW

Mrs Hurley

Safeguarding at Sandy Lane



Online Safety Week

On Tuesday, 10 February 2026, our school will be joining thousands of organisations across the UK and globally to celebrate Safer Internet Day. This year's theme is "Smart tech, safe choices – Exploring the safe and responsible use of AI".

As technology evolves, artificial intelligence (AI) is playing an increasingly large role in our children's lives—from the chatbots they interact with to the algorithms that recommend the videos and games they see. Our goal this year is to empower pupils with the skills to use these tools safely, responsibly, and positively.

What will be happening in school?

Throughout the week, pupils will take part in age-appropriate activities and discussions, including:

- Exploring how smart tech and AI can be used creatively and helpfully.
- Learning how to recognise misinformation and make safe choices online.
- Understanding the importance of privacy and protecting personal information.
- Social Media and online Safety Assemblies

How can you support at home?

We encourage you to use this day as an opportunity to talk with your child about their online life. You don't need to be an expert; simply starting a conversation can make a huge difference. You might ask:

- "What is your favourite thing to do online right now?"
- "Do you know who you are talking to when you use apps or games?"
- "Who are your 'trusted adults' you can go to if something online makes you feel worried or uncomfortable?"

Further Resources

For more tips and advice on supporting your child's digital journey, please visit:

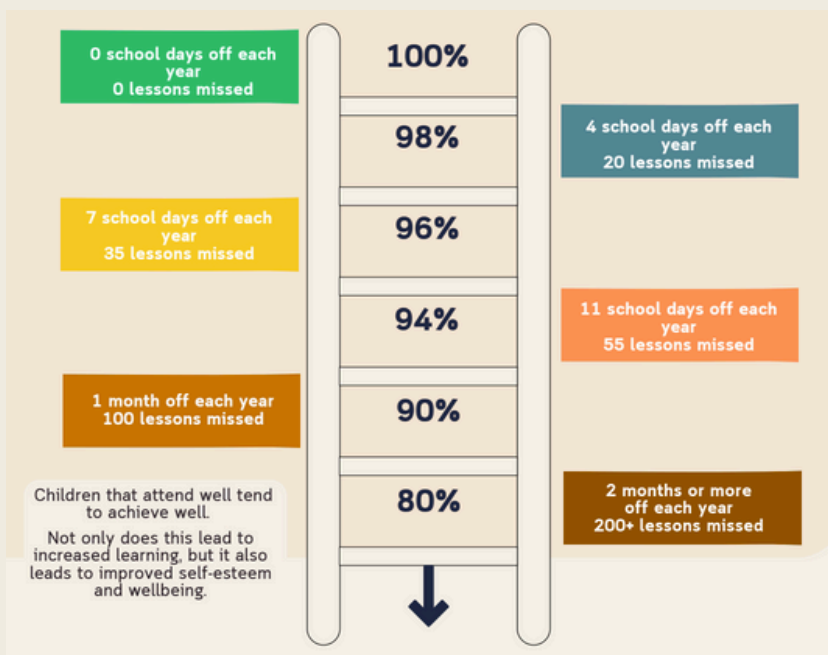
- [UK Safer Internet Centre - Parents and Carers](#)
- [Internet Matters - for guides on parental controls and apps.](#)
- [Childnet - for practical toolkits and conversation starters.](#)
- [BBC Bitesize - Tips for parents to help manage their child's life online](#)

By working together, we can ensure our children enjoy the benefits of technology while remaining safe and confident online.



Focus on Attendance

- Absence should only occur when your child is far too ill to attend.
- If your child is suffering from Colds, Headaches, Tiredness or Sore throat we would suggest that you administer paracetamol or ibuprofen and bring them into school.
- If their condition deteriorates, we will always call you.
- Family holidays and day trips must be arranged outside of school hours.
- Medical or dental appointments should be arranged outside of school hours, if this is not possible supporting evidence should be provided please.



This Term in Figures...

Date Range: 04/01/2026 - 08/02/2026



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Children's Mental Health Awareness



Monday, 9th February marks the start of Children's Mental Health Week. This year's theme is "This is My Place," which focuses on helping children find the spaces, activities, and communities where they feel they belong and can truly be themselves.

Understanding where we feel safe and happy is a vital part of building emotional resilience. By recognising these "places"—whether they are physical locations, hobbies, or groups of friends—children can better manage their well-being and sense of identity.

Supporting at Home:

If you would like to explore the "This is My Place" theme with your child at home, here are a few simple ways to start a conversation:

- The "Happy Place" Map: Ask your child to show you (or draw) their favorite spot in the house or garden. Is it the quiet, the comfort, or the toys there that make it special?
- Create a "Calm Corner": Work together to find a small space—like a specific chair or a bed nook—where they can go to feel peaceful. Let them add a favorite blanket or book to make it theirs.
- Walk and Talk: Visit a local park or favorite landmark. Use the time to talk about how different environments can change how we feel—from excited and energetic to calm and relaxed.
- Digital Well-being: For older children, chat about their "online places." Discuss which games or apps make them feel creative and connected versus those that might feel overwhelming.

What We Do at School:

Well-being is at the heart of our daily routine, and we have built-in systems to ensure every child feels seen and supported:

- Trusted Adults: We regularly talk with the children about who their "trusted adults" are—the people they can go to if they have a worry. We quiz them on this frequently so that in a moment of need, they already know exactly who to turn to.
- Safe Spaces: Every classroom and our playground have designated "safe spaces" where children can go if they need a moment of peace or to gather their thoughts.
- Regulation Stations: You may have noticed our new "Regulation Stations" in the corridors and classrooms. These are calming areas equipped with tools to help children manage big emotions and return to a "ready to learn" state of mind.

Resources:

- Place2Be: Offers practical tips and activities specifically designed for Children's Mental Health Week.
- YoungMinds: Features a huge library of "Parent A-Z" guides for specific mental health concerns and a parent helpline.
- Anna Freud Centre: Provides science-based advice and animations on building resilience in children.
- Every Mind Matters (NHS): Includes quick tools, "Mind Plans," and videos for managing anxiety and low mood in young people.



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Connecting Our Community...

Half-Term Activities (Feb 14th – Feb 22nd 2026)

Most of these are free or low-cost to ensure all families can participate.

- **Library Treasure Hunt:** A free children's treasure hunt running at all Bracknell Forest libraries (Ages 3+).
- **Theatrical Performance:** "Rabbit on the Run" – a free show for ages 2–5.
 - Crowthorne Library: Feb 14, 10:00 am
 - Bracknell Library: Feb 14, 1:30 pm
- **Space-Themed Craft Drop-ins:** Free sessions for ages 3–8 at various libraries including Harmans Water (Feb 16), Sandhurst, Binfield (Feb 17), and Whitegrove (Feb 18).
- **Eco-Crafts:** Bracknell Library on Saturday, Feb 21 (10:00 am – 11:30 am).
- **The Look Out Discovery Centre:** Running the "Yucky You" science show (human body/biology) daily throughout half-term. Note: Booking is required for the show and exhibition.

Holiday Clubs & Food Support

- **HAF Programme:** While the main government-funded HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) programme often focuses on Easter/Summer/Christmas, Bracknell Forest is offering sessions this February for children eligible for benefits-related free school meals. This includes a healthy meal.
- **uSports Holiday Camp:** Held at St Margaret Clitherow Primary. They offer multi-sports for ages 4–12. They accept childcare vouchers and tax-free childcare.
- **The Beehive Club:** Offers themed holiday clubs for ages 3–11 in Bracknell and Crowthorne.

Parenting Courses & Support

Bracknell has several "standalone" and ongoing sessions starting this month:

- **Positive Parenting (Ages 10–13):** A free session at Bracknell Open Learning Centre on Wednesday, Feb 4 (6:30 pm) focusing on managing behavior and communication.
- **Parenting Older Teens (Ages 13–16):** A standalone session on Thursday, Feb 12 at the Open Learning Centre.
- **Paediatric First Aid:** A 2-hour session on Feb 16 (ideal for parents/carers) and a practitioner course on Feb 21 & 28.
- **Togetherness (Solihull Approach):** Free online courses available 24/7 for all Bracknell residents. Use access code: parenting at inourplace.co.uk.

Community & SEND Support

- **Parenting Special Children (PSC):** A Community Parent/Carer Support Group at Great Hollands Community Centre on Thursday, Feb 12 (12:30 pm – 2:30 pm). Drop-in, no booking needed.
- **Home-Start Bracknell Forest:** Offers "Mums in Mind" groups and "Preparing to be Dad" workshops. They also provide 1-to-1 volunteer home visiting for families struggling with isolation or mental health.
- **Kids Charity (Under 11s Club):** Specifically for children with SEND who cannot access mainstream holiday clubs. Based at "The Rise."

Useful Links:

- Bracknell Forest Family Hubs: [Search activities here](#)
- Library Events: [Check the latest schedule](#)
- Parenting Course Bookings: Email community.learning@bracknell-forest.gov.uk



Email us at: secretary@sandylanebracknell.com with one page posters and we will endeavour to include it in our newsletter (please avoid emails with lots of text!)



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