



School Lane
Cookham
Berkshire
SL6 9QJ

Our Guiding Light

Jesus said

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my Disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13-34-35)

KEY INFORMATION FOR THE WEEK

It has been another busy week in school with lots of interesting things happening. We've been closely following the journey of Paddington Bear, the mascot we gave to Sarah Parfitt from Partners for Change Ethiopia last Friday, as he made his way from Cookham to the children at Debre Birhan School. You may remember our Lent Project a couple of years ago when the children filled Smarties tubes with pennies that they earned doing jobs around the home. This raised £298.47 for the charity and a year ago another £864.89 was raised through our Christmas campaign. The children set up stalls selling, among other things, bracelets and paper weights which they had lovingly made, we held a Bags2School collection and you also contributed by donating money after our Nativity performance.

Throughout the eleven years we have worked with Partners for Change we have created links with five schools helping to create a sports ground in one and providing breakfast for children in the other four. We have raised a considerable amount of money and changed the lives of many. It has been seven years since Sarah visited Ethiopia so we were delighted when she contacted us a fortnight ago to let us know she was heading over there again. Our PFC ambassadors sprung into action writing letters and drawing pictures for her to take out to the children she would be visiting. In return, all this week, she has sent us pictures of Paddington as he's travelled from place to place with her. Sarah is returning to the UK today without Paddington who the children wanted those in Debre Birhan School to have. We hope it won't be long before she comes into school to share with us stories of her adventures! In the meantime, we are planning our next fundraising campaign. The children have already come up with lots of ideas so we're hoping that we'll be as successful as we have been in the past supporting a new group of children who need our help. If you want to find out more about the work PFC does, go to:

<https://www.pfcethiopia.org/>

In other news this week Reception have learnt more about the work of the police force from Police Community Support Officer, Lorraine, who, during her visit, allowed the children to sit in her patrol car. Year 6 have embarked on a study of the artist David Hockney and Year 2 have made good use of the cereal boxes they brought in by making Ferris wheels to complement their study of the book 'Rosie Reveer, Engineer'. Year 1 have also used a story as a basis for their music lesson when they used a variety of instruments to create mood. Year 4 are rehearsing hard for their performance at the Primary Schools' Dance Festival next month and Year 3 have enjoyed looking at play scripts which have led to them acting out scenes from 'The Wind in the Willows'. There was great excitement in Year 5 earlier in the week when Miss Buckley launched the 'Ascot Racecourse and 1711 Junior Bake Off 2025' event. This is an annual competition organised by Learning to Work which we have chosen to take part in for the last three years. Twice we have won so the stakes are high this year! The theme requires entrants to create picnic food, either sweet or savoury, which might be served at Royal Ascot so already the children are considering what to bake and where to source local ingredients. Our winning team will be invited to Ascot Racecourse later in the term to face other schools and a panel of judges who will be deciding who has best met the brief.

Lots of classes took part in a '10@10 Time to Focus' live stream on Wednesday morning which got everyone up and moving. We were one of twenty four schools across the borough taking part which saw 4580 pupils join experts doing a range of exercises all designed to help us keep our brain active. It was lots of fun as was the Sportshall Athletics Competition organised by the Ascot and Maidenhead Sports Partnership at Braywick Leisure Centre yesterday. A team of eighteen Year 4 children went in the morning and a team of eighteen Year 6 children in the afternoon. They took part in a number of athletics events against schools from across the borough. Although we weren't the winning school, the children enjoyed the opportunity to take part and learn more about teamwork and resilience.

RSPB Bird Watch:

On Wednesday the Eco-Council met to discuss this weekend's RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch and consider how they could encourage as many people as possible to get involved. Today in assembly the team showed everyone how to make bird cakes which will be hung in our wildlife area for our feathered friends to enjoy. They are keen to help the RSPB build a picture of how garden birds are faring so do encourage your child to take part. It is very easy. All they have to do is spend an hour watching the birds in your patch between 24th and 26th January recording any that land. Results can be submitted online or by post. To find out more go to: [Big Garden Birdwatch](#) or take a look at the flyer sent to you today. Happy bird watching!

Lockdown Drill:

Your child may have come home this week speaking about the lockdown drill we practiced on Tuesday and the fire drill the day before. These were carried out successfully, proving the children are well rehearsed in what to do when either of the alarms go off. As part of our safeguarding policy and procedures, we carry out these tests to ensure that if a real emergency ever occurred effective systems are in place. While you will appreciate the circumstances that might call for a lockdown, we inform the children that it could be an angry dog or a frightened deer that is on the playground so as to not alarm them unnecessarily. The situation was handled sensitively and after the drill lessons resumed as normal.

Online Parent Workshops – to supporting your child through the curriculum:

For those of you who were able, thank you so much for taking the time to complete the short survey following the parent workshops we ran last week. We were grateful to receive many positive comments but we also noted how the timings didn't suit some of you. We apologise that the early slot was too close to the end of the school day for some of you to get home in time and log on, and that those of you who did make it struggled to gain access to the meeting. That wasn't the case for all so we're glad that those of you who could join the sessions found them useful. We will certainly take on board the comments you made but, in the meantime, we hope that for all of you, the slides and supporting material which has been posted on Google Classroom is helpful in guiding you on how to support your child through the curriculum. If you have any questions, staff are always available at the end of the day and can be contacted by email. We also have a second parents' evening coming up at the beginning of March.

Book Week:

On 3rd March, to coincide with World Book Day on 6th March, we launch Book Week. A number of interesting activities are currently being planned all to promote a love of reading. On Friday 7th March the children are invited to come to school dressed as their favourite book character and we hope to have Book Day vouchers to give out so they can make their own book purchase.

You can help make this week special and memorable. Would you be willing to come in for a short session and read to a class from your favourite childhood book? Do you work in the world of books or publishing and feel you could share your experiences with the class? Are you an author who would be willing to share your experience of writing your book in the hope that you inspire others? If you would like to be involved or would like to find out more about how you might be part of the week, please do contact me; I would love to hear from you.

Attendance:

I am delighted to report that our attendance figures for this academic year remain high especially given the fact that next week our data will again be reported to the borough before I meet with our Education Welfare Officer at the end of term. Your support remains invaluable.

A lot of research has been carried out on school attendance with the most recent publication, 14th January 2025, now available on line. The report by The House of Commons Library gives an overview of school attendance rules in England, and outlines concerns about increased persistent and severe absence since the Covid pandemic. It refers to the most recent DfE data which recognises a link between absence and attainment and shows that on average, pupils with higher absence over key stage 4 (year ten to year eleven) had lower GCSE attainment in 2019.

Pupils who did not achieve grades 9-4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an absence rate of 8.8%, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved grade 4 in both subjects, and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 5 or above.

It perhaps comes as no surprise that pupils who were persistently or severely absent (who missed more than 10% and 50% respectively of possible school sessions) had lower average attainment. 35.6% of persistently absent pupils, and just 11.3% of severely absent pupils achieved grades 9-4 in English and maths (compared to 67.6% of all pupils).

Absence is of course not the only factor that has a link to pupil's attainment but it is something which we continue to monitor closely. Our drive is to ensure every pupil reaches their full potential and we remain grateful for your support in helping us do this.

Keeping Children Safe Online:

With Safer Internet Day looming (11th February), and with one of this year's themes focusing on protecting yourself from online scams, Police Cyber Protect teams from the South East are running their **free** webinar for parents/carers several times in the coming weeks.

The webinar covers social media, mobile phones, gaming and emails, and aims to help parents and carers understanding some of the risks young people face online, including how to spot phishing emails, texts and more. Attendees will be provided with advice and resources to help them better protect themselves and their family from falling victim to cybercriminal behaviours.

A leaflet has been sent to you today and tickets to the webinars are available by going to:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/online-safety-for-parents-3386699>

Height and Weight Checks for Reception Children:

As part of the annual National Child Measurement Programme, the nursing team will be coming to school at some point this term to carry out height and weight checks on children in Early Years Foundation Stage. If you have a child in Cygnet Class, please refer to the letter you were sent earlier in the week which has been sent again today as an attachment.

Clubs:

Please refer to the newsletter published on 10th January for details about clubs that are running in school this term. With half term approaching, we are regularly receiving flyers advertising holiday activity camps that your child may be interested in attending. We will continue to send these out to you as attachments.

Cookham Cycling Path Update:

Having received an email from Sue Teasdale this week with a request to share an update on the Cookham Cycling Paths, I am directing you to the website: [Petition update · Cookham Cycling Paths Update · Change.org · Change.org](#) where you can find lots of information and also sign a petition which will add weight to the plan for improvements to be made.

Have a lovely weekend and we shall look forward to seeing you and the children again on Monday.

Anna Smith

CALENDAR DATES

23 rd January	Indoor athletics event at Braywick (selected Y4 to attend in the morning, selected Y6 to attend in the afternoon Selected children to be informed by letter
23 rd January (12 noon)	Opportunity to purchase extra tickets for the Primary Dance Festival from today (Please note that when tickets went on sale yesterday, the purchase of only 1 was permitted to allow at least one parent of all 800 pupils taking part an opportunity to attend. Apologies if you struggled to get your ticket. We have been informed by the organisers that the one ticket limit was not observed by some so it is likely that, where the rules have been breached, tickets will be cancelled. Do let us know if you were unable to get your ticket yesterday so we can act on your behalf.)
27 th January	B team football match vs Furze Platt Junior (home), selected children informed by letter
29 th January	Rock Steady lessons postponed – please see correspondence+ from the company
29 th January	B team netball match v Courthouse Junior (home) Selected children to be informed by letter - CANCELLED
30 th January	A and B team netball matches vs Courthouse Junior School (away), selected children informed by letter
31 st January	PTA Disco (details to follow)
4 th February	EYFS & KS1 Open House 3:15pm
5 th February	KS2 Open House 3:15pm
6 th February	A team netball match vs Riverside Primary (away), selected children informed by letter B team football match vs Riverside Primary (away), selected children informed by letter
10 th February	A team football match v Cookham Rise (home), selected children informed by letter
11 th February	B team netball match vs All Saints Junior (away), selected children informed by letter
12 th February	PTA meeting (details to follow)
13 th February	Borough Dance Festival for Y4 – 1pm
13 th February	A team football match v Cookham Dean (home), selected children informed by letter

17th February – 21st February Half Term Break

24 th February	First day of term
1 st March	PTA Annual Ball
3 rd – 7 th March	Book week
6 th March	World Bok Day
7 th March	Book Week Dress Up Day
4 th March	Virtual Parent Consultations
6 th March	Virtual Parent Consultations
14 th March	Comic Relief (details to follow)
20 th March	Ascot Bake off Event for Y5 (details tbc)
20 th March	Y4 Trip to Busy Buttons (details tbc)
4 th April	PTA Easter Event (details tbc)

7th April – 21st April Easter Holiday

22 nd April	First day of term
1 st May	Year 4 Trip to Starlight Express, Wembley Park Theatre
12 th – 15 th May	KS2 SATs

26th May – 30th May Half Term Break

9 th – 13 th June	Arts and Culture Week
23 rd – 27 th June	Y6 Residential Trip
23 rd – 3 rd July	Sports Fortnight
4 th July	Sports Day
17 th July	Last day of term